

Commonly Asked Interview Questions

An interview is a way for an employer to get to know who you are. Behavioural interviews are becoming more common, meaning the questions are not specifically related to the position you are interviewing for, and rather to find out if you would be a match for the company or the team.

It is important to focus on your strengths and focus on why it would benefit the company to hire you. While people with a visible disability may come across more difficulties in the job search process than an able bodied person, you are still a person who applied for a job because you are qualified to do it. The purpose of an interview is to get that information across.

Prior to going in to see an employer, take some time to answer these questions. Go over your answers and make sure your response involves how you can benefit the company. Keep this on your mind as you go through the interview. Try to keep your answers between 20 seconds and 2 minutes to avoid providing too much information, unless the question specifically requires a longer answer, such as a case scenario.

1. Tell me about yourself.

Creating a statement using these 4 points, make sure it all relates to you as a worker applying for this specific position:

- Personal
- Academic
- Work History
- Skills

Summarize what makes you a good candidate while still providing a little personal information.

2. What do you know about this company?

The interviewer may not ask the questions specifically, but other questions will lead to it. It is important to do some research on the company before you go in to the interview and have an idea of what they do and what the core beliefs are. It shows interest and also allows you to determine how, if at all, you are a fit. This is a good time to be enthusiastic about the company to show your interest in working for them.

3. Why do you want to work here?

The research you did will be the basis for your answer. Be more specific to the job itself and lead up to positive traits you found about the company. For example, you can mention the company's view on an environmental issue if relevant. Include specific skills and job requirements they advertised in the posting and how you are a match for them. If the company

has a history of hiring people with disabilities, it is ok to mention that as a reason, but do not focus on it.

4. What do you find most attractive about the position? What is the least attractive?

Find 3 positive aspects, taken from the job posting of research you have done. Only provide 1 least attractive quality that is not a significant part of the job.

5. Have you ever done this type of work before?

Even if you have not performed the title specifically, you can say that, but make sure to emphasize the skills you took from previous occupations that directly relate. If you were a manager before in a different industry, describe your management experience. If you do have direct work experience, provide examples.

6. What makes you qualified for this position?

Again, describe past job duties, even if they were not for the exact same position. If you applied for the job, there is a reason you feel you were qualified. Make sure it comes across to the interviewer.

7. Why should we hire you instead of someone else? What makes you unique?

This is an excellent opportunity to again reassure the employer about their main fears about your possible barriers to employment. You can say something like "If you hire me you will find I am very well liked by my co-workers and the public as well as good at _____ (critical skills to the job)." It is also a good place to reiterate your strengths. You may wish to tell them that your unique position has taught you to adapt more easily to new challenges than an average person.

8. What is your greatest strength?

Choose 1 strength that best represents you but also is relevant to the job

9. What are your weaknesses?

This is always a difficult question to answer. Try to keep your response a positive rather than something completely negative. If that is not possible, list a weakness that is not necessarily related to the position. For example, you may say you are not good at math if the job does not require any math skills.

10. What 5 words best describe you?

The employer wants to know if you'll listen to instructions by listing only 5 words.

T 604.324.3611

F 604.326.1229

InfoLine 1.800.689.2477

E info@sci-bc.ca

780 SW Marine Drive, Vancouver, BC V6P 5Y7

www.sci-bc.ca

11. How would others describe you?

This is to see how you will fit in with the company. Do you fit in with their “culture?” Be honest, but keep it neutral.

12. Think about something you consider a failure in your life, and tell me why you think it happened.

Choose something that is not too personal, but also not a big mistake you made in your previous job. The key is to show the interviewer that you have learned from the experience and would not make the same mistake again.

13. What have you done to develop or change in the last few years?

This question is about your willingness to be challenged and to improve. Employers want to hire people who are willing to continue learning. Talk about formal and informal educational opportunities you have pursued. You could also mention books and periodicals you’ve read as it related to your field of interest. Your answer would be even stronger if the educational components related to the position you’re interviewing for.

14. Why did you leave your last job?

Focus on positive aspects of that company. A potential employer does not want to hear anything negative about your past manager, and they would be concerned you may have the same problem here. It is always good to say you were looking for advancement or further challenges that your previous employer did not offer.

If you had to leave because of a physical restriction, it is ok to express it and also alleviate any fears this employer may have. For example, if your past job required you to lift heavy boxes and you no longer can, this is an acceptable answer, particularly if this new job does not have that requirement. If it is a concern for this job, you should have been able to identify it in your research or earlier in the interview.

You need to reassure this employer that you intend on staying in this position for a good long time since they may worry that you’ll leave abruptly after they’ve trained you, or that you may leave on a whim if you don’t like something about the job. Make sure you reassure the employer by saying that you love to work, and that when challenges come up you learn how to conquer them

15. How often were you absent from work in your last job?

This is a concern to a potential employer, especially if you were away from work due to a disability. If you were absent a lot due to some reason, tell the interviewer what the reason was and why you feel that it will no longer be a problem. Stress your past reliability and give assurance of your future reliability.

If you have a visible disability, reassure the employer that it will not make you unreliable or incapable of doing the job. The key is your ability to do the job. Continually stress your strengths which would make you the best person to do this job.

16. Can you explain the gap in your employment? (if you have one)

Good time to reassure the employer that you want this job, that you're committed to being there every day, and that you're completely capable and able to do the full skills required of the position.

17. In your most recent position, what was your most significant accomplishment?

Be specific and try to find one that is relevant to the job you are interviewing for.

18. Give me an example of a time when you worked under pressure in your last position.

Think about experiences, achievements and skills that you've developed to deal with being "under pressure." You can discuss important deadlines or a project you were in charge of. It does not have to be big, but it should reflect your ability to meet job requirements under pressure.

19. Describe a situation in which your work was criticized.

Everyone's work is criticized as a way of improving their work (likely in a job review). Be specific by using an example and keep your answer brief. Don't get emotional or defensive since criticism is just part of working. What is important is how you handled it and what you learned.

20. Give me an example of a time where you showed leadership and initiative.

Choose a specific example of a time when you recognized that a job needed to be done and you did it. You do not have to have been a manager. Describe a project you started or helping a coworker without being asked.

21. Give me an example of how you solved a problem in the past.

Give a specific example. It's important to be able to show the process you go through when presented with a problem. State the problem and the steps you followed to reach the solution. The employer wants to know how you problem-solve in a workplace, hopefully on your own without their input.

22. Give me an example of a time when you were able to contribute to a team project.

Choose a specific example that speaks about the team process and explain how you were a key member of the team

23. Do you prefer to work independently or on a team?

It is best to show flexibility and explain how you are able to perform in either situation, unless the job requires you to work specifically on a team or independently.

24. Describe a difficult work environment and how you overcame it.

They want to know that you took proactive steps to make the situation better. Come up with an example of a difficult situation that you handled well.

25. What ongoing challenges or problems did you face in your past job and how did you handle them?

Present the problems matter-of-factly (because all jobs have challenges). Make sure that you present yourself in a good light.

26. How do you handle stress?

Employers want to see that you have appropriate outlets for stress, especially if the job could be stressful. Discuss hobbies you have that relieve stress or any stress relief techniques you use, such as taking a deep breath.

27. What was the most rewarding part of your job?

It would be good if you could tie in the rewarding parts of the job with the position that you're currently interviewing for. Pick key job duties and characteristics, particularly those most similar to the job you are applying for.

28. What kinds of computer programs have you worked with?

Include job specific programs, even if it was specialized for your previous workplace. It may be similar to the program this company uses. It also shows you can learn to use new software.

29. What did you learn about yourself from your previous job?

The employer wants to know that you're reflective about your previous job, and that you learned something. You can also include references to skills you did not have before or computer programs you learned how to use.

30. What qualities do you find important in a co-worker?

Include something about co-workers having good communication skills so that you can resolve differences that may arise.

31. What would you do to resolve conflict between yourself and a co-worker who is obviously upset with you?

How would you speak with them? In front of other people? Privately? How would you approach them? Include details about the process of resolution. What would you do if you couldn't resolve this with them directly?

32. What are your short-term goals?

Keep it related to your job search and the type of position you are looking for.

33. What are your future goals?

Keep this focused on your work life only, and think of your goals for the next 5 years. Make sure you reassure them about your commitment to stay with the company and growing in your career with the company, should you be hired. You could say "I hope to become valuable to the company and to be promoted as I earn it". You may include specific positions within the company if you found the information during your research.

34. Are you willing to travel?

Ask the employer if travel is important to this position. You want to present yourself as a person who is flexible and who wants this position.

35. Have you ever been fired?

36. Do you have a criminal record?

37. If we were to offer you this position, how much would you expect for a salary?

The employer wants to know whether they can afford you, whether your salary expectations are too high. It's best to keep salary negotiation until the end of the interviewing process – when the employer wants you and you decide that you want to work for this employer. If they're trying to pin you down for a specific number and won't take anything less, offering them a range is good: "My understanding for this field and my experience is a range of \$__ to \$__ according to websites I researched for salary ranges. "

38. When are you available for work?

You can let them know you are available as soon as possible to show your enthusiasm. If you are currently employed, be sure to let them know you will need a certain amount of time (usually 2 weeks) to give appropriate notice. They will appreciate that you do not just leave a job without warning.

T 604.324.3611

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E info@sci-bc.ca

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39. What will your references say about you?

Answer, then offer to give them a copy of your references.

40. Do you have any questions?

This is the time to express any questions you have about the workplace and duties. Do not make up questions to fill the time.

Send a thank you note or email following every interview.

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