

UVA STUDENT CAREERS CENTRE

Frequently asked questions in a job interview

Explanation

Certain questions always come up, in every job interview. In order to prepare thoroughly for an interview, it is a good idea to formulate answers to these questions and think about which other questions you can expect to be asked. Write down your answers on paper, but do not memorise these: the point is to have thoughts about what you want to say. The phrasing will come naturally once you are at the interview. Below are examples of frequently asked questions for you to think about.

Background

The purpose of the interview is for both sides to become acquainted with one another: the new organisation with you and you with the organisation. In that respect, it is an equal conversation. You might conclude that this is not an organisation where you would like to work. In other words, you are both looking for the match between you and the position, on a professional as well as a personal level. Keep this purpose of the interview in mind when answering the questions that you are asked.

Put yourself in the interviewer's shoes and ask yourself what you would want to know about an applicant in order to determine whether that person is qualified to come work for you. Before you start formulating your answers to the questions below, review the organisation and the position in detail by reading through the vacancy to which you are applying.

Frequently asked questions

1. Can you tell me something about yourself?
Purpose: getting to know you as a person
Tip: You can give many different answers to this question. In any case, make sure that you share something about yourself as a person, not just about your studies and prior work experience.
2. What do you know about our organisation?
3. Why do you want to work for us?
4. What do you think this position involves?
5. What appeals to you about this job?
6. Why did you spend more than ... on your studies?
Purpose: getting to know the motivation behind your choices. People would like to see that you have done things deliberately and thoughtfully.
7. What are your strengths/weaknesses?

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8. What do you find really annoying? Have you ever experienced that? What did you do in this case?
Purpose: getting to know your coping mechanism when things don't go how you would like them to go.
9. What are you really proud of?
10. Why should we hire you?
11. Why did you choose your degree programme?
12. What was positive/less positive about your prior job?
13. Do you have any good ideas/plans for our organisation or our project team?
14. Where do you see yourself in five years?
Purpose: to identify your ambitions. People like to see that you know where you intend to go. The question is whether that intention is realistic. It helps in any case to think about what this position will do for you.
15. Have you ever had a conflict? What conflicts have you encountered recently? How did it go?
16. Which elements must be present in your work for you to enjoying doing it?
17. Do you have any questions?

How to deal with questions for which you have not prepared

No matter how well prepared you are, you will be asked questions that you did not expect. This situation is normal. You can take your time to think about an answer on the spot. And if you do not know something, do not worry. Indicate that you are just taking a moment to answer and see what comes to mind. Your intuition will often help you more than coming up with answers using a rational approach only, so try to stay calm and take your time.

Tip: Think beforehand about what you definitely want to say during the interview. This way, you will be less dependent on the questions that you receive and you will have already formulated a common theme in the answers that you give.