

Common Interview Questions

Tell Me About Yourself

Use the past, present, and future format to brainstorm how you can respond to this question. Don't forget to add something personal, professional, and one thing you're passionate about! Most of what you say in this section should relate to the job you are applying for.

Present	<p>What are you doing now? What is your current job/school/volunteer position? Do you have a recent accomplishment? Something you're proud of? Share it in this section!</p> <p><u>Example:</u> I am currently a high school student. I have been taking a career development class that has made me excited about getting a job. I recently got an award from that class for getting exemplary grades.</p>
Past	<p>This can be tricky if you do not have much experience. Talk about previous experience, things you have learned, and how you have become passionate about the position you are applying for. Remember: keep it relevant to the specific job!</p> <p><u>Example:</u> I used to be a volunteer at Harvest Manitoba. The skills that I have learned there will help me transition into this position. My time at Harvest Manitoba has made me passionate about helping others, working as a team, and giving back to my community.</p>
Future	<p>Why are you interested in this role? How will this role be fulfilling/meaningful to you?</p> <p><u>Example:</u> I want to gain experience in the workforce. I think this position is a great opportunity for me to utilize my various skills and experiences.</p>

Why Should We Hire You?

Tell the employer about your hard and soft skills, and how they can be beneficial to the overall functioning of that specific workplace.

Examples of Hard Skills:

- High school diploma
- First Aid & CPR training
- University degree
- Foreign language skills
- Awards
- Work experience
- Volunteer experience
- Computer skills

Examples of Soft Skills:

- Communication
- Team-work
- Problem-solving
- Time management
- Critical thinking
- Decision-making
- Organizational
- Stress management

Other Tips:

- Bring up what you know about the company and how you can be a good fit
 - Example: I often come into this location and see how the staff solve problems and work together. I know I can be a great addition because of my experience working in a team setting.
 - Example: I shop at this store and I am knowledgeable about the products and services you provide.
- Interviewers will often ask: **Why should we hire you over someone with more experience?**
 - You can say:
 - Someone with more experience can have some bad habits
 - I feel that my lack of experience is outweighed by my passion and eagerness to learn
 - I am confident that I have the skills and qualifications you are looking for (list examples/reasons why this is true)

What Are Three Words Someone Would Use to Describe You?

These should all be positive words. You should have examples of when and how you demonstrate these qualities.

GREAT Words:

These words are unique and descriptive. Provide a specific example!

- Ambitious
- Confident
- Decisive
- Imaginative
- Personable
- Approachable
- Reliable
- Goal-oriented
- Flexible
- Honest
- Leader
- Organized
- Observant
- Resourceful
- Versatile

OKAY Words:

These words lack meaning and are often used by applicants. They are not bad words, but you should use something more unique and descriptive. If you want to use one of these words, use a thesaurus to find a different, but equal word to use. Remember to always have examples!

- Authoritative
- Hard-worker
- Independent
- Team-player
- Adaptable
- Respectful
- Results-driven
- Committed
- Intelligent
- Unique
- Disciplined
- Passionate
- Humble

- Likeable
- Motivated

DO NOT USE:

Don't use words that are offensive, negative, or have negative connotations

- OCD (a condition that maybe people live with, not a personality trait)
- ADHD (a condition that many people live with, not a personality trait)
- Guru (s a personal religious teacher and spiritual guide in Hinduism, not a trait)
- Sherpa (an ethnic group, not a personality trait)
- Nazi (ex: grammar Nazi; not a personality or positive trait)
- Obsessive
- Perfectionist

Do You Have Any Questions for Us?

You should ALWAYS have questions for the interviewer. Have a set of questions you want to ask. If you come with a set of questions before the interview, if they are answered throughout the interview, don't ask them!

Good questions to ask in an interview:

- What does your day-to-day look like?
- What is one thing you look forward to every day in your position?
- What is your favourite thing about this company?
- How has your workplace changed because of COVID?
- Are there opportunities for professional development training?
- What attracted you to the company?
- Would I be working with a team or independent setting?
- When I expect to know if you got the position?
- Is there anything else I can provide that would be helpful to you?

DO NOT ask these questions:

- How much will I get paid?
 - If it didn't say on the posting, assume it is minimum wage
- What will my hours/days of work be?
 - Many jobs have shift schedules that change week to week. Ensure the availability you put in your application (or stated in the interview) is accurate.
 - This question will make you look unavailable or picky with your times
- Do I have to work weekends, evenings, holidays, etc.?
 - If the store is open, assume you will be working some of those days, hours, holidays, etc.
 - Most grocery stores, retailers, and restaurants are open during these hours and holidays
 - This question will make you look unavailable or picky with your times
- How many weeks of vacation will I get?
 - As a new employee, you will be on probation and won't be able to use vacation time

Tell Me About Yourself

- This is an opportunity to talk about yourself in a nutshell – they may have only reviewed your cover letter and resume briefly, so make sure to prepare a memorable *elevator pitch* – in other words a short summary of your professional life
- Be brief and concise – you’ll have an opportunity to go into greater detail in the upcoming questions – you don’t have to fit everything in the first question
- **EQAL** – Education, Qualification (match the job posting), Atttributes (who you are), Life (what you for outside of work that is relevant)

What is Your Greatest Strength?

- Speak about qualifications from the job posting and demonstrate that you have those skills by connecting it to past work/volunteer experiences
- Support your answers with examples from your resume – allude to how you built up that strength/skill
- Explain a time you demonstrated that strength to go above and beyond in your job

What is Your Greatest Weakness?

- A weakness is not a bad thing – tailor it to be a strength
- Show that you have self-awareness – no one is perfect, so focus on how you are working on your weakness and show how you are overcoming it
- Growth mindset – explain steps you’re taking to improve (at work, school, training, new experiences, etc.)
- Make sure your weakness is rooted in truth
- Do not choose a red flag or an actual negative weakness (like being late for work, lazy, negative)

Why Do You Want to Work in this Industry/Company?

What Has Prepared You to Work Here?

- Research the company (i.e. website, social media, LinkedIn) and find out what they are doing now
- What are they emphasizing in the job posting and their website? What are they proud of?
- Explain why you are passionate about this job/company. What excites you about the field?
- Show your interest in learning and growing; Show that you are eager to take on new responsibilities and learning opportunities within the company
- Talk about their positive work culture and why you are a great fit
- Demonstrate that you are prepared for this job based on what you’ve learned in past work experiences

What Do You Look for in Your Next Job?

Or, If You Were to Work Here, What Would Your Job Look Like?

- Employers are interested to know if your goals are a good match for the company

- Will you be a good fit long term and are you interested in growing within the company?
- Opportunity to learn and grow, to be innovative and successful – show that you are passionate, have goals, want to help others, etc.
- Show that the company's values align with yours, and can reach the same goals together
 - I.e., "I'm looking for a position where I can have the opportunity to use *X-skill*. I can apply my current *Y-skill* as a successful employee and be able to work on things that I can excel at and enjoy."

Why Did You Leave Your Last Job? What Did You Like Least About Your Last Job?

- Always put yourself in a positive light – looking for a new opportunity, looking to grow professionally
- Speak highly of past employers, talk about what you learned at old jobs
- Looking to change career paths, pivot into the new field of work
- Be positive about your previous workplace and colleagues
- Explain gaps in employment in a positive light (i.e., school, caregiving, personal health reasons, other important commitments)

Tell Me About a Time.../What Would You Do If...? (Situational/Behavioral Questions)

- Use the **STAR** method as a guide to structuring your answer
 - **Situation**: Paint a picture of the scenario and use a specific example from your past experience. What happened?
 - **Task**: What was the problem that you needed to solve, fix, and complete?
 - **Action**: What did you do to solve the problem? Explain your role or contribution
 - **Result**: What was the outcome of your actions?
- Focus on the logical steps you took and highlight results; don't spend all your time talking about the scenario
- Brainstorm multiple stories for different situations
- Explain those times you went above and beyond; how you handled difficult situations

Why Should We Hire You?

- Use the **JEEP** method as a guide to structuring your answer
 - **Job Requirements**: How do you meet the top requirements?
 - **Experience**: Provide examples from previous experience.
 - **Enthusiasm**: Show your excitement and passion for the job
 - **Personality**: Show how you are a great fit by speaking about your attributes relevant to the job
- In a way, you are summarizing your cover letter; tailor your answer to the specific job

- Talk about what they need and how you can fit into that role/company
- Review your resume and cover letter so you can re-explain anything to them
- Remind them about your skills and qualifications
- Show that you would be a pleasant person to work with every day

Do You Have Any Questions for Me/Us?

- Have about 2-3 prepared
- This is an opportunity to open up the conversation and demonstrate your enthusiasm and interest for the job – this will help them remember you out of all the other candidates
- Avoid asking questions about wage, salary, benefits, or job perks