

Interview Question Guide

All questions must be job-related. Ensure that:

- the answer to the question measures or predicts job performance
- the same questions are asked of every applicant
- the questions focus on job-related functions and the applicant's ability to perform those functions
- the questions are based on the knowledge, skills, and abilities listed in the job description

Sample Job-Related Questions:

A variety of job-related questions are listed below. They are designed to assist hiring managers to obtain pertinent information from applicants.

1. Questions To Learn How The Applicant Regards Current or Past Positions

- Would you tell me about your present (last) position?
- How would you describe a typical workday?
- What activities did you enjoy most at your last job?
- What do you feel you do best? Why?
- What job functions are most difficult for you? Why?
- What problems do you encounter on the job? Which frustrate you the most? Why? How do you deal with them?
- What was your greatest contribution in your present (past) position?
- What are the reasons you left your last job?
- Give two examples of things you have done in previous jobs that demonstrate your willingness to work hard.
- In your current job, what organizational change have you made or contributed to that you are proud of? How did you go about making the change? What has been the impact of the change?
- Tell me about the last new procedure you had to learn in your job. Tell me what specifically the hardest aspect was of learning the new procedure. Tell me specifically what you liked best about learning the new procedure. How well is the new procedure working now?

2. Questions To Probe The Applicant's Relationships With People

- What do you feel are your supervisor's greatest strengths? Why? Weaknesses? Why?
- For what kinds of things have you been recognized? Criticized?
- How would you characterize your coworkers?
- What disagreements have you had with coworkers?
- How would you describe your relationships with people in other departments?
- What kind of people do you enjoy working with? What kind do you find difficult?
- What do you consider essential in the management of people?
- What types of committees have you worked on? What did you contribute?

- What types of teams have you been a part of? What was your role on the team?
- Tell me specifically which co-workers in your organization are your customers. What have you done specifically to improve the service you give these internal customers?
- Tell me about a time when a co-worker had a good idea and you agreed but no one else was willing to listen. How did you handle the situation and what was the outcome?
- Give a specific example of a time when you had to deal with an angry customer. What was the problem and what was the outcome? What was your role in diffusing the situation?
- Tell about a situation at work where you realized a person needed help. How did you realize the person needed assistance and what did you do? What was the outcome of this situation?
- Describe a time when you were able to effectively communicate a difficult or unpleasant idea to a superior. What made your communication work?
- It can be difficult to build good relationships at work but sometimes it does not always work. If you can, tell about a time when you were not able to build a successful relationship with a difficult person. How did you handle the situation? How did you accomplish the work?

3. Questions To Stimulate Self-Assessment

- As an employee, what do you consider your greatest strengths?
- In what areas would you most like to improve? Why?
- What motivates you?
- Why did you select this particular field of work?
- Name three things you have done in the past two years to grow in your job.
- What self-development activities are you currently engaged in?
- Tell us how you keep your job knowledge current with ongoing changes.
- Describe a time when you received negative feedback and turned it into something positive.
- Tell me about a specific time you sought specific feedback on your performance from subordinates. Specifically, how did you use the feedback? Cite specific changes resulting from the feedback?

4. Questions To Determine How The Applicant Would Apply Skills, Experience, and Knowledge To The Vacant Position

- What attracts you to the job for which you are applying?
- What do you believe qualifies you for this position?
- What elements of this job would be new to you?
- What additional training do you feel is required to achieve full proficiency?
- Compare what you know about the job you are interviewing for and your own knowledge and skill. What areas of development do you feel you will need to meet the job expectations?
- How do you go about explaining a complex technical problem to a person who does not understand the technical jargon?

A common type of job interview is the **behavioral interview** or **behavioral event interview**. In this type of interview, the interviewers tend to ask questions about general situations, with the applicants asked to describe how they did or would handle a specific situation.

5. Questions To Determine Behaviors the Applicant Would Display In Certain Situations

- Describe your most challenging customer service situation and explain how you handled it.
- What has been your greatest professional mistake and what did you do to recover from it?
- Describe a time when you were faced with a stressful situation and how you handled it.
- Give me a specific example of a time when you used good judgment and logic in solving a problem
- Give me an example of a time when you set a goal and were able to achieve it.
- Tell me about a time when you had too many things to do and you were required to prioritize your tasks.
- Describe your typical way of dealing with conflict and please include an example.
- Tell me about a difficult decision you have made in the last year.
- Give me an example of a time when something you tried to accomplish failed.
- Give me an example of when you showed initiative and took the lead on a project.
- Tell me about a recent situation in which you had to deal with a very upset customer or co-worker.
- Give me an example of a time when you motivated others.
- Tell me about a time when you delegated a project effectively.
- Give me an example of a time when you used your fact-finding skills to solve a problem.
- Describe a time when you anticipated potential problems and developed preventive measures.
- What do you do when your schedule is interrupted? Give an example of how you handle it.
- Have you had to convince a team to work on a project they were not thrilled about? How did you do it?
- Tell me about how you have worked effectively under pressure.
- Describe a time when you went over and above your job expectation. What motivated you to put forth the extra effort? How did you feel when the job was finished? Did others realize you had put forth the extra effort? What feedback did you get for your effort?
- Tell us about a job or setting where great attention to detail was required to complete a task. What steps were involved? How did you handle that situation?
- Describe a time when you have had to work with strong-willed peers. What did you do? How did you handle them so you could influence their decisions?
- Tell us about a time when you had to analyze information and make a recommendation. What kind of thought process did you go through? What was your reasoning behind your decision?
- Give examples to illustrate how you have generated ideas that represent thinking “outside the box.” How were your ideas received by others? What became of the ideas?
- There are times we work without close supervision or support to get the job done. Tell us about a time when you found yourself in such a situation and how things turned out.
- Describe a time when one of your staff or your work team was working below work expectations. What was your response? How did the other party/parties respond? What was the ultimate outcome?

6. Questions related to Veterans

- What challenges do you foresee as a new civilian employee?
- What people or resources were you responsible for in the military?
- Looking across your recent military work experience, what key knowledge, skills, abilities and experience would you say are most valuable?
- Tell me about a specific time when you suggested to improve the quality of the work done in your unit. Tell me about a specific time when you suggested to improve the efficiency of your unit.

Performance-Based Interviewing Tips

- Performance-based interviewing (PBI) can be a useful method in attracting high-quality, high-performing candidates; it assesses the candidate's ability to do the job, fit, and determines if the job represents a career-move for the candidate.
 - Like behavioral interview questions, PBI questions ask job applicants to tell about what they did (their behavior) in the past. When deciding who is the best applicant, the interviewer will look at the degree to which each applicant possesses the important knowledge, skills, abilities and other characteristics necessary for successful job performance.
- Ask the candidate to solve a realistic job-related problem. Pay attention to how the person would solve the problem rather than the answer as this uncovers strategic and analytical skills.
- Ask about the culture of the current/previous employment experience and their manager's leadership style, and how this impacted the candidate's job performance. This explores how the candidate can work in different organizational cultures and with different managers.
- Explore the candidate's accomplishments by using "the most significant accomplishment question".
 - What is the best work that you have ever done? (such as a career-defining event). When was it? How long did it take? What challenges and changes did you face? What did you learn and what would you change?
- Also explore nontechnical skills and leadership qualities, such as proactively coaching a peer or team management and organization skills to achieve results.

Permissible Inquiries During Interviews

SUBJECT	PERMISSIBLE INQUIRIES	NON-PERMISSIBLE INQUIRIES
Name	Whether applicant has worked for the University under a different name. Whether any additional information relative to change of name or use of an assumed name or nickname is necessary to enable a check on applicant's work and educational record	Inquiries about the name that would indicate applicant's lineage, ancestry, national origin, or descent. Inquiries into previous name of applicant when it has been changed by court order, marriage, or otherwise.
Marital and Family Status	Whether applicant can meet specified work schedules or has activities, commitments, or responsibilities that may hinder the meeting of work attendance requirements. Inquiries as to duration of stay on job or anticipated absences that are made to males and females alike.	Any inquiries indicating whether an applicant is single, divorced, engaged, etc. Inquiries about number and age of children. Any such question that directly or indirectly results in limitation of job opportunity in any way.
Age	If a minor, require proof of age in form of a work permit or certificate of age. Require proof of age by certificate after being hired. Whether applicant meets the minimum age requirements as set by law; or statement that upon hire, proof of age must be submitted. If age is a legal requirement, whether applicant, if hired, can furnish proof of age; or statement that hire is subject to verification of age.	Requirement that applicant state age or date of birth. Requirement that applicant produce proof of age in the form of a birth certificate or baptismal record before hiring. (The Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967 forbids discrimination against persons who are age 40 and older.)
Citizenship	If applicant is not a U.S. citizen, whether he or she has the legal right to remain permanently in the U.S. Statement that if hired, applicant may be required to submit proof of citizenship. If not a citizen, whether applicant is prevented lawfully from becoming employed because of visa or immigration status.	Inquiries into applicant's lineage, ancestry, national origin, descent, birthplace, mother tongue, or national origin of applicant's parents or spouse.
Ancestry or National Origin	There are no acceptable pre-employment inquiries regarding race, color, or national origin. It is unlawful to discriminate against an applicant on the basis of race, lineage, ancestry descent, place of birth, or national origin/citizenship. Inquiry should be limited to asking whether applicant is legally eligible to work in the United States.	Inquiry asking specifically the nationality, racial, or religious affiliation of a school. Inquiry as to applicant's mother tongue or how foreign language ability was acquired.

SUBJECT	PERMISSIBLE INQUIRIES	NON-PERMISSIBLE INQUIRIES
Education	Inquiry into applicant's academic, vocational, or professional education and schools attended. Inquiry into language skills such as reading, speaking, and writing foreign languages.	
Experience	Inquiry into applicant's work experience, including names and addresses of previous employers, dates of employment, reasons for leaving, and into other countries visited.	
General	Are there other factors that we have not discussed that would impact your decision to accept this position if offered?	
Address or Duration of Residence	Inquiry as to applicant's address and place and length of current and previous addresses. Inquiry into how long applicant has been a resident of the state or city.	Specific inquiry into foreign addresses that would indicate national origin. Inquiry into names or relationship or persons with whom applicant resides. Whether applicant owns or rents home.
Military Record	Inquiry into type of education and experience in service as it relates to a particular job, dates of service, branch of service.	Type of discharge.
Photograph	Statement that it may be required after hiring for identification.	Request photograph before hiring. Requirement that applicant affix a photograph to his or her application. Request that applicant, at his or her option, submit photograph. Requirement of photograph after interview but before hiring.
Disability	May ask about an applicant's ability to perform specific job functions. May ask applicants to describe/demonstrate how they would perform job tasks. Once a conditional job offer is made, disability-related questions and medical examinations are permissible if required for all employees in the job category.	Inquiries about an applicant's physical and/or mental condition. Disability-related questions or request for medical examination prior to making a conditional job offer to the applicant.