

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS



This handout provides samples of behavioral questions (below) and general questions (other side) that are commonly asked of college students and recent graduates. You may also encounter questions specific to the industry, company, and position to which you are applying. To enhance your interviewing skills, make an appointment for a “practice interview” with XPD.

BEHAVIORAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

In a behavioral interview, the employer will ask you to describe situations from your past in which you used certain skills. Your descriptions of each situation, your actions, and the resulting outcomes will form the basis for how well the employer believes you will perform on the job.

To prepare for behavioral questions, brainstorm several key situations/experiences that you would like to share with the employer. Here’s one way to formulate your answers - Utilize the “EAR” technique. This is similar to another technique often referred to as the “STAR” technique (situation, task, action and result). Either one works.



E = Example

■ Describe a specific situation and/or tasks that respond to the interview question.

A = Action(s)

■ Discuss the approach you took to deal with the task, breaking down your actions one by one.

R = Result(s)

■ Conclude by describing specific, concrete outcomes of your actions. Make mention of accomplishments, awards, or improvements as a result of your actions. Describe what you learned/would do differently the next time. The most common error people make when using this method is to leave out the R-Results.

MORE INFO

To help prepare for interviews for full-time service (volunteering), graduate school, or international opportunities, please see individual handouts related to each of these topics.

TELL ME ABOUT...

- a time where you were especially creative in solving a problem.
- a time when you were disappointed in your performance or failed to deliver on a project.
- a time when you were unable to sell your idea to a key person.
- a time when you were frustrated with the performance of a group that you were involved in. What did you do? What was the outcome?
- a time when you had to present complex information to a customer or peer. How did you ensure that the other person understood?
- a time when you made a mistake, and what actions you took to rectify it.
- a time when you had to make an important decision quickly even though you did not have all the information you wanted.
- a time when you were given a task you had never done before and how did you complete it?

HOW...

- do you schedule your time and set priorities? Please provide a specific example.

WHAT...

- accomplishment has given you the most satisfaction? Why?
- kind of information have you been required to analyze? Tell me about the most difficult analysis you’ve ever done.
- motivates you? Provide an example of a time where motivation was an issue for you.

DESCRIBE...

- a situation where you demonstrated initiative. What was the outcome?
- a time when you utilized your leadership ability to gain support for an idea that initially had strong opposition.
- a situation where you demonstrated _____?
(Insert any skill or quality listed in the job description)

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GENERAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Questions employers ask during interviews help them answer the three big concerns they have about you.

1. CAN YOU DO THE JOB?

Is your experience, training, education, aptitude, and interest sufficient so you will be a productive employee?

- How can you contribute to our organization?
- Why did you choose your field or major?
- Why are you interested in this position?
- What courses did you like the best? The least? Why?
- Describe your interest in the work of our organization?
- What are your long- and short- term professional goals?
- How do you expect to accomplish them?
- How would you describe the ideal job?
- Why should I hire you?
- Where do you see yourself in five/ten years?
- What are your career goals?
- Competition is tough for these positions. What separates you from the rest of the pool of candidates?
- What two or three accomplishments have given you the most satisfaction? Why?
- What have you learned from participation in co-curricular activities?

2. WHO ARE YOU?

What are you like? What characteristics do you possess?

- Tell me about yourself.
- What motivates you?
- How do you define success?
- How have you handled adversity in your life?
- What have you learned from your mistakes?
- How do you operate under stress?
- What do you like to read?
- In what areas do you need to grow as a person?
- How would a friend or professor describe you?
- What do you consider to be your greatest strengths and weaknesses?
- What is your GPA? (Do not make excuses if it is low. Have a statement prepared in advance if you feel it does not represent your overall ability to learn/perform in this position.)
- You might be asked “off the wall” questions such as “What is your spirit animal and why?”

3. HOW WELL YOU FIT WITH THE ORGANIZATION?

How will you positively contribute to the company/organization?

- What criteria are you using to evaluate the company/organization for which you hope to work for?
- How does our organization fit your career goals?
- Do you have a geographical preference? Why?
- Are you willing to relocate?
- How would you describe your last boss?
- How would you characterize your relationships with your colleagues?
- What do you know about our organization?
- Are you willing to travel?

- You should demonstrate through your answers that you can do the job in order to be considered a serious candidate.
- Employers want to gain a sense of you as a person. It is critical information and is often considered very seriously when deciding whom to hire.
- Employers want to know they are making a good decision for their organization by hiring you.