



Prepare for Common Job Interview Questions

A key to a successful job interview is being able to answer interview questions well. To answer questions well, it's helpful to know what they want to know, to prepare your answers, and to practise your answers.

Why prepare?

Businesses want to hire someone who is a **good fit for the job**. Prepare answers that show how you are a good fit for the job. Practise saying those answers. This will show the interviewer:

- You are **interested** in the job.
- You are a **good match**.



Support for you

It can be helpful to have someone help you to get ready for your interview.

- Do you have someone who can help you?
- You may have a family member or a friend who can help you prepare.
- Do you have a support person who works at an employment agency? This person might be called a **job coach**.



Get started

Think of real-life **examples** that show your strengths, skills, and experiences are a good fit for the job. You may want to ask your friends, family, or previous co-workers to help you think of these real-life examples:

- A time when you achieved a goal
- A time when you tried your best
- A time when you worked with a friend or a co-worker to finish something important
- A time that a friend, teacher, or co-worker complimented you on your work



If the interviewer asks you the questions in this guide, you'll be ready. You can use these examples to help you build answers to the questions that follow.

If you don't have previous work experience to answer an interview question, think about answers or examples you can give from your experiences in:

- School
- Sports
- Community groups
- Volunteering
- Or even within your family

General questions

Question #1	Tell me about yourself. Tell me more about yourself.
<p>What they want to know</p>	<p>They want to know your skills, experience, and strengths that fit the job.</p>
<div data-bbox="228 869 425 1054" data-label="Image"> </div> <p>How to answer</p>	<p>Start by looking at the job posting.</p> <p>What skills does it list? What experiences does it ask for?</p> <p>Think about your own skills and experience. Which of your skills and experience match those listed in the job posting?</p> <p>Give a short overview of those skills and experiences. You can include something from outside of work if it helps show how you match the job posting.</p>
<div data-bbox="266 1264 386 1381" data-label="Image"> </div> <p>Example</p>	<p>“ I have two years’ experience working in a library. I have great customer service skills and I like meeting new people. I work well by myself and in a team. In my free time, I like reading mystery books.”</p>
<p>How would you answer this question?</p>	

<p>Question #2</p>	<p>Why do you want to work here? Why are you interested in working for our business?</p>
<p>What they want to know</p>	<p>They want to know what you like about their business. They want to hear that you know about their business and you are interested in their business.</p>
 <p>How to answer</p>	<p>Learn about the business before your interview. Visit the business's website and social media sites (for example, Facebook and LinkedIn). What is exciting about the business? What does the business care about?</p> <p>Show how your interests, skills, and experience match with the business. Say that you want to help the business be successful. Only talk about good things about the business you are interviewing with.</p>
 <p>Example</p>	<p>“I respect how much your business gives back to the community by donating the bakery’s leftover supplies to the food bank. I like that the work you do is creative because I’m creative too! I’m excited about this job because I think my experience working in a kitchen will make me a great fit for your bakery.”</p>
<p>How would you answer this question?</p>	



<p>Question #3</p>	<p>Why do you want this job? What are you most excited about with this job?</p>
<p>What they want to know</p>	<p>They want to know you're interested in the job and why you want it. They want to know if you understand what the job involves. They want to know you're excited about this job.</p>
 <p>How to answer</p>	<p>Learn about the job you're applying for. Read the job posting. Look at the company website. Talk to your friends and family who might know about this type of job. What kind of work would you be doing? Why is that work exciting to you? Explain how your skills and experience fit the job.</p>
 <p>Example</p>	<p>“ I’m excited about this job because it’s a chance for me to combine my data analysis skills with my interest in project management.”</p>
<p>How would you answer this question?</p>	

<p>Question #4</p>	<p>What are your strengths? What do you do best?</p>
<p>What they want to know</p>	<p>They want to know you'll be good at the job. They are looking for examples that show this.</p>
 <p>How to answer</p>	<p>Talk about three of your strengths that are a good match for the job. Give an example of each strength. This is a time to be proud and confident of your hard work, successes, and accomplishments. If other people on your team helped, say it was a group effort.</p>
 <p>Example</p>	<p>“ I’m very detail focused. I’m excellent with details in data and documents. When I worked at City Hall, my co-workers would ask me to read their reports. I often find little errors that others miss.</p> <p>I’m good with deadlines. My past manager told me she appreciated that my work was always done on time.</p> <p>I’m organized in my personal life and at work. I stay organized by using a calendar, putting reminders in my phone, and writing down important information. I think my organization helps me be successful.”</p>
<p>How would you answer this question?</p>	



<p>Question #5</p>	<p>What are your weaknesses? What do you want to do better?</p>
<p>What they want to know</p>	<p>They want to know if you know yourself well and if you are trying to get better at your weaknesses.</p>
 <p>How to answer</p>	<p>Talk about two weaknesses. Talk about what you're doing to get better at your weaknesses. Are you taking a course to get better? Are you using tools/apps to help you? Always talk about your plan to improve your weakness. Talk about an example from your past when you solved a problem despite your weakness. You should be honest, but don't talk about a weakness that would make you a bad fit for the job.</p>
 <p>Example</p>	<p>“ I like things to be done right. So I can focus a lot on details. When I worked as a cleaner at the hotel, I would set myself a timer to get a specific task done. When the timer went off, I knew it was time to move on.</p> <p>I love numbers, but spelling is a weakness of mine. I turn on the spell-check features in all my programs, and it helps a lot. I also do free spelling games that I find online.”</p>
<p>How would you answer this question?</p>	

<p>Question #6</p>	<p>How do others describe you? What would your previous manager say about you?</p>
<p>What they want to know</p>	<p>They want to know if they will like working with you. They want to know what it's like to work with you.</p>
<p> How to answer</p>	<p>You can say positive things that you have been told. Your answer and examples should include things that match the job posting. The interviewer may call your references after the interview, so use examples that your references will agree with.</p>
<p> Example</p>	<p>“ My last manager told me that I’m fast at learning new technology after I learned how to use a new program. I think my co-workers would say I’m a hard worker, good with detail, and always on time.”</p>
<p>How would you answer this question?</p>	

<p>Question #7</p>	<p>Do you like working alone or with others? Do you prefer working independently or with a team? How do you feel about working on a team?</p>
<p>What they want to know</p>	<p>They want to know you can work well by yourself if that's what the job needs. They want to know you can work well with other people if that's what the job needs.</p>
<p> How to answer</p>	<p>Let them know how your working style matches what is needed for the job. Interviewers want to hire people who work well on a team and get along with others. In some jobs, it's also important that people can work independently.</p>
<p> Example</p>	<p>“ I think it's important for teams to work together. When I worked at the grocery store, we started every morning with a quick team meeting to talk about what was happening that day. This was really helpful and I enjoyed spending time with my co-workers. After the meeting, I would take my to-do list and work on my own for the rest of the day. I'm comfortable and enjoy working alone. If a co-worker needs help, I'm always happy to do that.”</p>
<p>How would you answer this question?</p>	

<p>Question #8</p>	<p>What are your goals? How will this job help you reach your goals? Where do you see yourself in five years?</p>
<p>What they want to know</p>	<p>They want to hear that you want to keep learning, growing, and doing more. They want to know that you will work hard toward a goal, and that you are reliable and dependable.</p>
 <p>How to answer</p>	<p>Think about ways you can learn and grow in the business. What interests you? What new things do you want to learn and do?</p>
 <p>Example</p>	<p>“I'm really excited about this job with your salon because I like to help people look and feel good. I know that's something I'll have a chance to do here. I'm excited about helping keep the salon clean and organized. I'm looking forward to learning from the stylists about the products and techniques they use. In the future I'd love to help provide spa treatments.”</p>
<p>How would you answer this question?</p>	

<p>Question #9</p>	<p>What did you like most about your last job? What did you not like about your last job?</p>
<p>What they want to know</p>	<p>They want to know if you will like this new job. They want to know if you are a positive person.</p>
<p> How to answer</p>	<p>What you liked the most at your last job should relate to an important part of the new job you're applying for. What you liked least at your last job should not be a part of the new job or should be a very small part of the new job.</p> <p>You can talk about an opportunity that your last job didn't offer but that the new job does. It's important not to say negative things about your last job.</p>
<p> Example</p>	<p>“ I really enjoyed my last job and I learned a lot. My favourite part of my job was working in the warehouse. I enjoyed sorting and delivering the boxes, and I'm good at it. I think this will help me pack orders.</p> <p>In my last job, I didn't have many opportunities to interact with my co-workers. So I'm very excited that teamwork is a big part of this role.”</p>
<p>How would you answer this question?</p>	

<p>Question #10</p>	<p>Why should I hire you? Why do you think you're the best candidate for the job?</p>
<p>What they want to know</p>	<p>They want to hear that you're a great fit for the job. They want to hear that you can do the work and get good results. They also want to know that you will get along well with the team.</p>
<p> How to answer</p>	<p>Tell them how your skills and experience match the job posting. Tell them why you will be an excellent employee and do an excellent job. Tell them you want the job. It's good to be proud of the work you do, but you should be careful not to brag. Explain why you are good at your work and why it matters, but don't describe yourself as "better" than other people. Practise your interview answers, and if think you might sound like you're bragging, ask someone to listen and give you feedback.</p>
<p> Example</p>	<p>“Based on the job posting, I think I'm a very good match. Your delivery service is busy, and I'm really organized and energetic. I can help you make sure packages get delivered on time. That's something I have a lot of experience with. Plus, I enjoy working with other people, so I think I'll make a great member of the team.”</p>
<p>How would you answer this question?</p>	

Behavioural questions

The interviewer may ask behavioural questions like the ones you'll read about in this section. Behavioural questions ask you to give **examples**. They help the interviewer understand how you've handled situations in the past. If you handled a past situation well, you'll probably handle a future work situation well too.



These questions often start with:

- "Give me an example of..."
- "Share an example of..."
- "Tell me about a time when..."

Try to answer these questions in five to ten sentences.

They may ask this	What they want to hear
<p>Give an example of a time when you had a conflict with a co-worker. How did you deal with it?</p> <p>Tell me about a time you disagreed with your manager.</p> <p>Tell me about a time you had to deal with a difficult customer.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They want to learn how you deal with disagreement or misunderstandings. • They want to know that you can deal with these situations directly. • They want to see that you are focused on solving disagreements and misunderstandings. • They want to see that you are open to learning from difficult situations.
<p>Share an example of how you work well with others.</p> <p>Tell me about how you worked with a team to finish a project.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They want to hear that you work well with others. • They want to know that you have good communication skills (listening and sharing information). • They want to hear how you cooperate with other people to solve problems and get things done.

They may ask this	What they want to hear
<p>Tell me about a time you had to learn something new.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They want to hear that you like learning new things. • They want to see how you approach learning something new (what tools or strategies you use). • They want to know that you will work hard to learn new things, even if they seem difficult.
<p>Tell me about a mistake you made at work.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They want to know how you deal with failure. • They want to see that you can accept feedback and learn from mistakes. • They want to know that you can take responsibility without blaming other people. • They want to see that you care about doing a good job.

STAR method

Behavioural questions are difficult to answer for everyone if they haven't prepared. You need to prepare for these questions. To prepare for behavioural interview questions in a job situation:

1. Think of lots of different **examples** from your past. It's helpful if these examples are from work experiences, but you can also use examples from school or volunteering.
2. You'll use these examples to tell the interviewer the story of your example.
3. To tell your story, use the **STAR method**. The STAR method helps you focus your story on the important information that the interviewer needs to know.



Here are the letters in **STAR** and how to use them when answering questions.



 Situation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Briefly describe the situation and who was involved. • What was the challenge, or the project, or the event?
 Task	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What needed to be done? • Explain what was expected, and your responsibilities.
 Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What did you do? • What action did you take? • Explain what you did in the situation.
 Result	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What happened? • What was the result? • Provide the outcome and what you learned. • Did you gain skills from the experience?

Here is an example of a behavioural question (“Tell me about a time...”) and how it can be answered using the STAR method.

Sample question	Tell me about a time when you had a conflict with a co-worker. How did you deal with it?
 <p>Situation</p>	<p>“A co-worker and I were asked to reorganize the file storage system at the office. We’re both very organized people, but we disagreed about the best way to approach the new system.”</p>
 <p>Task</p>	<p>“We needed to sort and organize over 200 files in just two weeks. I was responsible for making sure the project was done on time and that files were quick and easy to find.”</p>
 <p>Action</p>	<p>“I invited my co-worker to sit down and talk about our ideas for the new file storage system. We made a list of all the options. Then we talked about the positives and negatives for each option. I listened carefully to my co-worker’s ideas so I could understand her point of view.”</p>
 <p>Result</p>	<p>“Because of that talk we came up with a filing system that combines both our ideas. Her colour coding makes finding important files easy. My idea to arrange files by date helps us find what we’re looking for faster. Together we got the project done ahead of schedule and I learned that having honest conversations with each other helps avoid conflict and come up with better solutions!”</p>

Your turn

Practise using the **STAR** method. How would you answer these behavioural questions?

Sample question	Tell me about a time when you had a conflict with a co-worker (or difficult customer). How did you deal with it?
 Situation	
 Task	
 Action	
 Result	

Sample question	Tell me about a time when you worked with a team to finish a project.
 Situation	
 Task	
 Action	
 Result	

Sample question	Tell me about a time when you had to learn something new.
 <p data-bbox="237 590 396 625">Situation</p>	
 <p data-bbox="274 951 355 987">Task</p>	
 <p data-bbox="258 1318 375 1354">Action</p>	
 <p data-bbox="261 1686 371 1722">Result</p>	

Sample question	Tell me about a mistake you made at work.
 <p data-bbox="240 537 393 575">Situation</p>	
 <p data-bbox="274 903 352 940">Task</p>	
 <p data-bbox="258 1266 375 1304">Action</p>	
 <p data-bbox="261 1629 371 1667">Result</p>	

Next steps

1. How would you answer these commonly asked interview questions?
Prepare your answers.
2. Practise saying your answers.
3. Ask a support person (job coach), a friend, or a family member to help you practise your answers by doing pretend interviews.
 - Pretend you are having a real job interview with them. What will you wear? How will you look your best? How will you prepare to answer their questions?
 - Have them ask you questions. Practise answering their questions.
 - Ask them for feedback on your answers. What went well? What can you do differently?

Links

For more information on getting ready for a video job interview, click this link:



[Get Ready for Your Video Job Interview](#)

For more information on getting ready for an in-person job interview, click this link:



[Get Ready for Your In-Person Job Interview](#)

Happy interviewing!

Sources

The information in this document came from the websites and articles in this list. These are called **sources**.

1. Baumgardner, C. & Chirdon, W. (n.d.). Virtual Interview Guide: Tips for Making the Best Impression During Your Interview. Penn State.
https://publicpolicy.psu.edu/documents/spp_virtual_interviews_guide.pdf
2. Birshstein, G. (2010, September 9). Interview Questions: Legal Vs. Illegal. Canada HR Centre. <http://www.canadahrcentre.com/base/interview-questions/>
3. Bissonnette, B. (2013). The Complete Guide to Getting a Job for People with Asperger's Syndrome: Find the Right Career and Get Hired. Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
4. Career and Professional Development, Virginia Tech (n.d.). Mock Interview Guide. Virginia Tech.
https://career.vt.edu/content/dam/career_vt_edu/assets/docs/interviewing/MockInterviewGuide.pdf
5. Hire For Talent. (n.d.). Tool # 5: Conducting Successful Interviews. Hire for Talent.
<https://hirefortalent.ca/main/toolkit/interviews>

