

Common Interview Questions

Remember it's better to think about your responses before the interview than in the car or on the train home afterwards! So think about how you would answer some of these regularly asked questions and prepare your responses beforehand.

1 Tell me about yourself.

Tip: This question serves as an icebreaker and allow approximately 2-3 mins for your reply, no longer. Tailor your answer to suit the needs of the job, highlighting your relevant background, your accomplishments, why you want the job and what your future goals are.

2 Talk me through your CV.

Tip: Like the icebreaker question above, keep your response relevant and concise, avoiding a long monologue, quickly launching into your job history, keeping in mind that you want to highlight your top 3-5 experiences and not every last thing you did in each job, remembering not to give away too much detail that should be reserved for other questions later in the interview.

3 What do you know about our company?

Tip: As well as basic research like company websites, you should aim to research the company through other sources, i.e. industry sector trade journals, press releases, social media, blogs, articles etc. to find out how they are placed in the industry they are in.

4 Why do you want to work for us?

Tip: In addition to the above, you should demonstrate a clear understanding of the organisation's culture and values and ensure that they match yours by speaking to your Consultant or your personal network. Demonstrate your motivation by thoroughly reading their website, company LinkedIn page or financial end of year/half yearly reports as a starting point to understand any recent developments and future plans.

5 Why do you want to leave your current position?

Tip: Don't be negative towards your current employer, remain professional and if money is a factor in leaving, don't mention it this early in the recruitment process.

6 How would your colleagues and/or line manager describe you?

Tip: This question is designed to illustrate how you perceive yourself and how your behaviour impacts on others. Your answer should also demonstrate an objective view of your strengths by using feedback you have received from others which is also a more subtle way of selling your attributes.

Continued on the next page...

- 7 What are your strengths and weaknesses?**
Tip: Don't undersell your strengths, think about additional skills that might set you apart from other candidates. Stick to 3 or 4 relevant strengths, based on the Job Description and by speaking to your Consultant, that you can clearly demonstrate results for against each (if you can't prove it, don't mention it!). Ensure you highlight weaknesses as skills that you'd like to improve rather than something you can't or won't do.
- 8 Describe your greatest achievement/challenge.**
Tip: Focus on an achievement that is relevant to the position and is fairly recent. Provide details about task; the actions you took, the challenges that you overcame, the value you made to the department/organisation and what you learnt from it.
- 9 What are your career plans for the next five years?**
Tip: Without a trip to the fortune teller, it would be difficult to predict exactly what you will be doing in a number of years, so keep your answer general, avoiding specific timescales or job titles, focusing on realistic career opportunities that are related to the job and company you are being interviewed for.
- 10 How do you handle pressure/stressful situations?**
Tip: Answer in terms of how you handle stress at work rather than a list of your hobbies, going to the gym or skydiving etc.! Provide an example and structure your response using the STAR structure detailed separately.
- 11 What do you do outside of work?**
Tip: This question is often seen as an indicator of personality, motivation and skills, such as leadership or creativity, so think about the skills that are involved in some of your activities which clearly demonstrate your ability (other than merely "watching TV" or "socialising with friends").