

**TWENTY GOOD ANSWERS TO HELP YOU MASTER
EVEN THE MOST GRUELING EMPLOYMENT INTERVIEW**

Most people make two devastating mistakes when they are being questioned in an interview. First, they fail to **listen to the question**. They proceed to annoy the interviewer either by answering a question that wasn't asked, or by giving out a lot of superfluous information. Second, and more important, they attempt to answer questions with virtually **no preparation**. The glibbest person on earth, even the most skilled debater, cannot answer questions off the cuff without damaging the chances for success. **What follows are twenty questions that various surveys have indicated are asked most often, regardless of the job classification. Study them carefully, develop strong responses, and your candidacy will receive prime consideration.**

1. Why do you want to work here?

Because you have done your homework on the company, you know exactly why you want to work there. Just organize your reasons into several short, hard-hitting sentences like "Central Bank continues to post double-digit increases in the categories most important to a strong, profitable banking company. Your management has maintained excellent asset quality ratios. Return on average assets has been above 1.20% for the last five years." Emphasize that you are very interested in working for the company and that your decision to consider this interview is based upon sound reasons

2. Why should I hire you?

An interviewer does not want a lengthy regurgitation of your resume nor does he/she want a barrage of facts and figures. They are interested in testing your poise and confidence. Give a short, generalized summary like "I have the qualifications to do the job that needs to be done and my track record proves it".

3. What interests you most about this position?

Give a truthful-but-brief answer like "The challenge" or "The future", "The environment" or "The competitiveness". This response will force the interviewer to ask you to explain, giving you yet another opportunity to demonstrate your profound knowledge of the company.

4. Would you like to have your boss's job?

By all means, "Yes!". Ambitious, hungry people are always preferred over those who would settle for a safe routine. If you sense that this answer may threaten your interviewer's security, you might add "when I am judged qualified" or "should an opening develop in several years".

5. Are you willing to go where the company sends you?

This is probably being asked because they intend to ship you off. If you answer "No", you will not be hired. If you answer "Yes", understand that once you are a trusted employee, you may not be able to exert any leverage to avoid those less desirable out-of-town assignments.

6. What kinds of decisions are most difficult for you?

Be human and admit that not everything comes easily. But be careful about what you do admit. "I find it difficult to decide which of two good employees must be let go." or "It is difficult for me to tell a client when he's running his business badly." are examples of acceptable responses.

7. How do you feel about your progress to date?

Never apologize for yourself. "I think I've done well, but I need new challenges and opportunities." This is a good time to drop hero stories. "No one in my company has advanced as fast as I have. I think you'll agree that I've accomplished quite a bit in the last five years."

8. How long will you stay with the company?

A reasonable response would be, "As long as I continue to learn and grow in my field".

9. Have you done the best work you are capable of doing?

This is best answered with some degree of self-effacement. "I would be lying if I told you I was perfect, but I have always tackled assignments with all my energy and talents."

10. What would you like to be doing five years from now?

To answer this question, make sure you know exactly what can or cannot be accomplished by the ideal candidate in your shoes. Too many job-hunters butcher this question because they have not done their homework and have no idea where their career will lead them. If you see yourself at another company, or in another department of the company you are interviewing with, then tread lightly. You can't afford to tell your interviewer that you think you'll be more successful than they. This question is very popular in interviewing because it gathers a lot of useful information: (1) about your maturity, foresight and realistic outlook; (2) degree of preparation in career planning; (3) knowledge of yourself, the potential of profession and the company; (4) commitment to the profession.

11. What training/qualifications do you have for a job like this?

Deliver a short, fact-filled summary of your two or three most important qualifications. "I have a background in bank accounting." "I've demonstrated proven selling skills." "I'm capable of handling several projects simultaneously."

12. Why do you want to change jobs?

This is one of the first questions interviewers ask. Be sure you are ready to answer it satisfactorily. If you are currently in a dead-end position, locked out of advancement opportunities, explain this. The interviewer will understand. If your job has become routine and void of learning experiences, say so. If you feel your present employer is losing ground to competition through no fault of yours, the interviewer will also accept that. If you say that your salary is too low, you'll become suspect. If you say that you hate your boss, you might also end up hating the interviewer. If you say you are bored, they'll view you as just another job-hopper. Careful.

13. Why were you out of work for so long?

If there is a time gap in your resume, be prepared to explain what you were doing during that time. If you don't satisfy the interviewer's curiosity, you won't get hired. Try to explain very positively what you learned or accomplished during the hiatus and the interviewer will warm to your candidacy. For example, "I took several courses to strengthen my skills in...", or "I used this time to re-examine my goals and reached this conclusion. . .". The interviewer must have a positive explanation!

14. Why have you changed jobs so frequently?

This question is crucial. In fact, an unsatisfactory answer to this one is among the top reasons why candidates fail to get the jobs they want. Convince the interviewer that your job-hopping days are over. If you feel it was a mistake leaving previous jobs so soon, say so, and at the same time remind the interviewer that your performance was never in question. Honesty is appreciated. If something in your personal or business life has recently changed and would affect your future stability, come right out with the facts.

15. Have you ever hired or fired anyone?

You are being asked this question for two very important reasons. First, to determine whether you are capable of performing these duties. Second, to determine if your previous experience was at a high enough level to include hiring/firing responsibilities. If you have no experience, you must convince the interviewer that you can perform in these areas.

16. How have you helped sales/profits/cost reductions?

Have your hero stories ready and be willing to prove that you have made significant contributions in one or more of these basic areas. Keep your explanations short and try to include specific dollar amounts.

17. Why aren't you earning more at your age?

This is a current favorite, which can frighten the wits out of an unsuspecting candidate. One of the following responses should cover your situation: "I have been willing to sacrifice short-term earnings in order to gain valuable experience." Or "I have received (been promised) company stock (or other benefits) in lieu of a salary increase." Or "I was reluctant to gain a reputation as a job hopper, preferring instead to build my career on solid, long-term achievement". These work.

18. How many people have you supervised?

Similar to the "hired/fired" question. The interviewer is trying to determine the depth of your experience. Do not exaggerate!

19. What are the reasons for your success?

It is best to keep this answer very general, permitting the interviewer to probe more deeply. Offer a short list of positive character traits that describe YOU. "I like to work hard." "I get along with all kinds of people and I know how to listen." Or "I pay close attention to details, I know how to watch costs and I can keep difficult customers smiling".

20. What kind of experience do you have for this job?

Summarize four or five key areas of experience, which you know you can bring to your new job. Demonstrate how each one will help the interviewer's company solve their problems. For example, "My experience in new product introductions will be very helpful to your entire marketing effort", or "My commercial lending background will strengthen your capability in dealing with large clients".