



SAMPLE TRADITIONAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND TIPS FOR ANSWERING THESE QUESTIONS

Tell me about yourself.

This is a classic, open-ended question. Often, employers ask this question at the beginning of the interview. In answering the question, be certain to focus on your work or career-related experiences, not personal information. More specifically, your response should focus on your academic and co-curricular credentials and relevant work or internship experience. Your answer should be approximately 2 minutes in length.

Ineffective: *My name is John Doe. I grew up in Worcester, MA and graduated from St. John's Prep. Currently, I am a junior at Babson College majoring in Accounting. I am looking for a job as an accountant. I am interested in working for your firm because of its location in New York City.*

Effective: *In May, I will earn my Bachelor of Science in Business Management. My accounting coursework has provided a valuable foundation for understanding accounting standards and principles. While maintaining a strong academic record, I have participated in numerous internships and assumed numerous leadership roles on campus. More specifically, my internships with Bank of America and PricewaterhouseCoopers, and roles as treasurer of the Student Government Association and Chief Financial Officer of a student-run business, have provided valuable opportunities to hone my technical and analytical skills and to work in teams.*

Walk me through your resume.

This question provides an opportunity for you to articulate your most significant experiences and accomplishments. In answering this question, you should articulate how your academic and co-curricular choices have informed your career interests and how your experiences have prepared you to be successful in the position for which you are applying.

Ineffective: *I have worked as an intern at St. Paul Travelers Insurance Company, a student worker in the IT office at Babson, and as a sales associate for the GAP. I am a member of the Babson Dance Ensemble and the tennis team.*

Effective: *My interest in the field of marketing emerged during my freshman year when I had the opportunity to work in the Marketing Department for a 30-member student run business. I became an active member of several student organizations and served as the Public Relations Officer for the Class Steering Committee. Anticipating that writing was a valuable skill in the field of marketing, I joined the student newspaper. A combination of these experiences helped me to gain an internship as a marketing intern for the Staples Corporation. At Staples, I assisted the Vice President of Marketing with various projects, including market research and promotional campaigns. I gained valuable experience as an intern which can be beneficial to me in the position to which I have applied.*

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SAMPLE TRADITIONAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS (CONT.)

What are your strengths/weaknesses?

Your answer should focus on work-related strengths/weaknesses. Be prepared to articulate 2 – 3 strengths and examples of how you have demonstrated these qualities. You should highlight skills that relate to the position you are applying for.

Ineffective: *Um. Well, I am a hard worker. And I think I have good listening skills.*

Effective: *Some of my strengths include strong oral and written communication skills, attention to detail, and ability to work well in a team and independently. I would like to give you an example. [Now, give an example].*

When commenting on a weakness, try to put a positive spin on it.

Ineffective: *Sometimes, I have difficulty managing my time.*

Effective: *I am a detail-oriented person, but sometimes I spend too much time focusing on the detail that I find it difficult to move on to the next project. Ways that I work to overcome this are . . . [provide examples of how you improve this shortcoming].*

Note: This question may also be asked in the following ways: “What is your greatest accomplishment?” or “How have you handled failure in the past?”

How would your colleagues or supervisor describe you?*

With this question, the employer is trying to learn more about you. By asking you to describe how others perceive you, the employer may be “testing” you about your level of honesty and also comparing how his/her impressions of you are similar to/different from that of those who know you. You might seek this information from friends and family in preparation for this question.

Ineffective: *I guess they would say that I am a hard worker who is successful.*

Effective: *My supervisor and colleagues have described me as a dependable worker. My supervisor has appreciated that I prioritize tasks and manage my responsibilities so that she can rely on me. Additionally, I have been told that I have a sixth sense for markets and I learn new information and procedures quickly. These skills account for my being asked to stay on as a part-time employee during the academic year.*

How would you describe an ideal working environment?*

Each firm has its own culture. In answering this question, be certain to tailor the answer to the firm/job. If you describe a type of work environment that is different from that of the company culture, this may suggest that you have not done your research effectively.

Ineffective: *While I enjoy working in teams, my preference is to work in a job in which multiple jobs require independent work. I feel comfortable working with little or no supervision.*

Effective: *I excel in a fast-paced environment in which there are multiple projects and opportunities to work with multiple colleagues to meet project deadlines. I believe that I can learn from each person on my team. In particular, the small size of this company appeals to me and I believe provides an opportunity for me to grow professionally.*

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SAMPLE TRADITIONAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS (CONT.)

What about this job attracts you? What is unattractive?*

With this question, the employer seeks to evaluate your knowledge of the company and the position. As you formulate your answer, be certain to integrate any research you have done on the company and/or the position. Be specific!

Ineffective: *I like that it is in the field I am targeting. I don't like the commute that it will require.*

Effective: *As I evaluate my skills and goals, this job maximizes on both. I will be able to merge my knowledge of law and markets while strategizing for the sound financial future of clients. Since this is a small company, I imagine that there will be opportunity for increased responsibilities and challenges. I share the values of the company. I am not eager to do much data processing, but overall the position is very attractive.*

How long do you see yourself with us?*

Employers ask this question to get a sense of your level of commitment to the firm. Basically, he/she wants to know that if the firm invests time, resources, and money to hire and train you, you will be there for a period of time.

Ineffective: *I don't want to make any hasty commitments, and I like to keep my options open. Maybe I will be here for one year, maybe for five. It depends.*

Effective: *I see myself here as long as we both think that I am contributing to the vitality of the company while still growing professionally.*

Why should we hire you?

When responding to this answer, highlight your strengths, skills, relevant experience, and potential contributions. Be certain to point out positive attributes that relate to the job for which you are applying.

Ineffective: *I think that I can do a good job.*

Effective: *There are several reasons why I am a strong candidate for this position. First, I have previous experience as a Finance Intern. Second, because of my strong research, analytical, and writing skills, I can effectively prepare comprehensive financial reports. In addition, I have completed the Bloomberg Certification program –this enhances my strong technical background.*

What are your salary expectations?

Do some research specific to the field and industry for which you are interviewing. When conducting your research be sure to consider geographic location. Salaries for the same position can vary geographically based upon cost of living indices. The CCD Web site (<http://www.babson.edu/ccd/ug>) has some helpful resources. Give a range, not an exact salary figure.

*Source: <http://www.jobsearchengines.co.uk/job-interview/job-interview-questions.html#one>