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# How to Answer Common Interview Questions

INSIDER TIPS AND EXAMPLES TO HELP YOU SUCCEED

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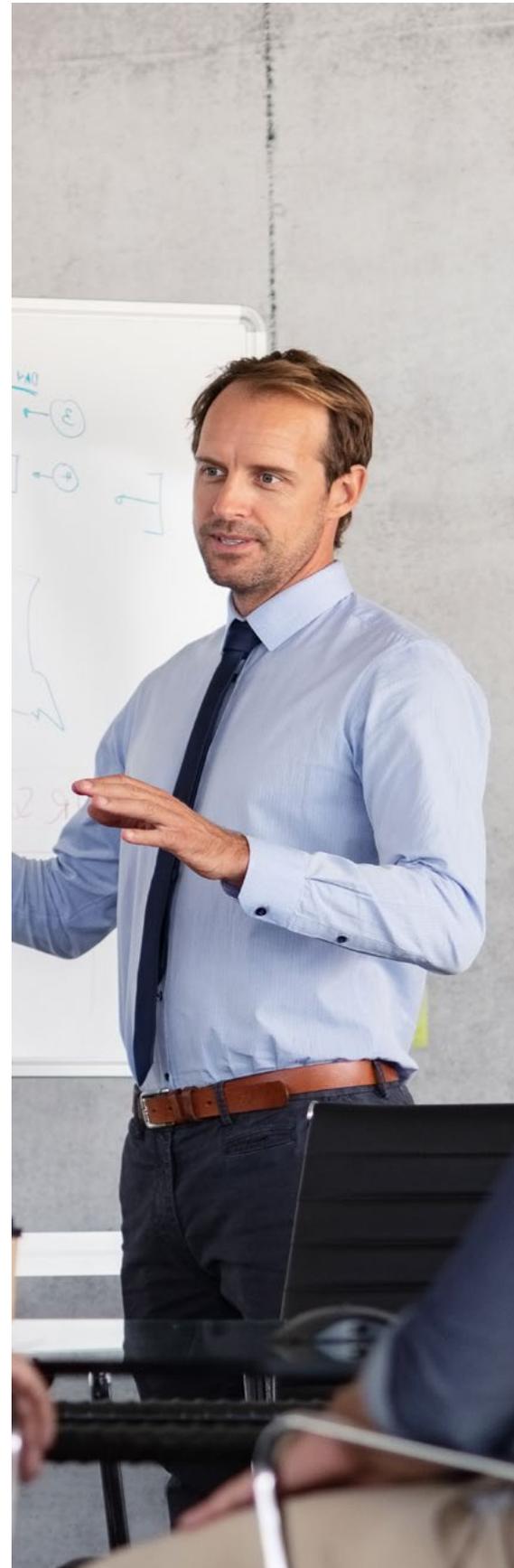
# About Johnson Service Group

*People. Reach. Hire.®*

For over 36 years, Johnson Service Group has been one of the nation's leading staffing and recruiting companies. We excel in providing human resource solutions, staffing, recruiting, contingency recruiting, and payrolling services. Our specialized team of recruiters focus on multiple industries including Aerospace, Aviation, Engineering & Technical, Information Technology, Labor & Manufacturing, Oil & Gas, Pharmaceutical & Life Science, Power & Utilities, Project Engineering, Software/Hardware Engineering, Pipeline Inspection, Professional Services, Construction Management, Financial, Healthcare, Mining & Heavy Industrial.

At JSG, we understand that your success is our success. When you partner with a JSG recruiter for your next career opportunity, you're putting your future in the hands of an expert. We dig deep to understand not only your professional skills, but also your passions, inspirations, and career goals.

Over the last six years, JSG has been named to three prestigious lists from Staffing Industry Analysts: Largest Staffing Firms in the U.S., Largest Engineering Staffing Firms in the U.S., and Largest Staffing Firms in Canada.



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# Introduction

Finding a new job opportunity and navigating the hiring process is never an easy undertaking for job seekers. With today's current economic climate, job seeking is a monumental feat. As we continue to recover from these uncertain times, millions of Americans are searching for new career opportunities. There is a ton of competition out there, and as a job seeker, you will have to bring your A-game.

One of the best ways to excel through the hiring process is to prepare yourself to answer common interview questions. There is a group of questions that most hiring managers and HR professionals will ask you. Some of these questions are straightforward, while others can be a challenge to formulate an answer.

Regardless of the question, it is essential to answer them successfully to ultimately receive a much-deserved offer letter.

To help you succeed through this process, Johnson Service Group has curated a list of the most common interview questions. We have a group of twenty-five questions explaining why interviewers ask them, what they are looking to understand, and examples on how to answer them successfully.

Together, we can successfully answer even the most challenging questions. So whether you are a young professional or a seasoned vet, here are some helpful tips to answer the most common job interview questions.





# What's Your Greatest Weakness?

## What They Want To Know

This is probably one of the most challenging interview questions to answer. It is difficult to pinpoint weaknesses and talk about them with complete strangers. And that's exactly why interviewers ask this question. Hiring managers want to know if you are self-aware of your flaws and see what steps you are taking to better yourself. Start with a fault and then discuss the steps you are taking to overcome it. The best thing you can do is remain positive and honest with your answer.

**Pro tip:** do not try and disguise a strength as a weakness. Using a weakness such as "I am a perfectionist" is not going to cut it. Everyone has weaknesses, and you should not be afraid to hide them. Your prospective employer wants to see your humility and the steps you take to improve yourself as a professional.

## Example Answer

"One skill set that I am currently working hard to improve is my efficiency with HTML and CSS. I took a class in college and developed a basic understanding of coding. However, in my current position, it is helpful to be able to make basic coding updates to our company website, and I have been challenging myself to become more knowledgeable in this area. I am enrolled in an online course, and I am already learning new ways to apply this information in my current role."

## Final Comments

Discussing your greatest weakness can be overwhelming. This is an excellent example because a weakness was identified and discussed that they are already working on overcoming this weakness. Plus, their answer was positive, which is precisely how any interviewee should frame your response!



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# Tell Us A Little About Yourself

## What They Want To Know

This question is typically an icebreaker at the beginning of an interview. Your interviewers are allowing you to shake off those nerves and provide a quick elevator pitch on your candidacy. The goal is to give a brief background about yourself and demonstrate why you're a solid fit for this job. You should start by introducing yourself and tell them where you are currently working. This gives you the chance to briefly describe your current and past positions, as well as highlight the tasks that make you a strong candidate for this role.

If you're fresh out of school or about to graduate, start by sharing your major and school/university. To top it off, feel free to conclude your answer on a more personal level. Maybe include a fun fact about yourself or an exciting hobby that might make for an interesting conversation starter. This tidbit allows you to let some of your personality shine right at the beginning of the interview!

## Example Answer

My name is [insert name], and I am currently an Account Executive with [insert company name].

Over the last three years, I have developed the ability to identify new clients and provide them with a customized software solution to help them increase their productivity. As a salesperson, my greatest strength is understanding the needs of a prospective client and selling them a solution that fits both their budgetary requirements and business model. As someone who thrives in a competitive environment and enjoys helping companies become more profitable, I believe I can be a tremendous asset to your sales team. Outside of work, I enjoy spending time with my family and going hiking with Apollo, my German Shepard.

## Final Comments

In this example, they are providing a brief overview of their current position and are explaining how their background will allow them to be an excellent fit for the team. It also provides a brief glimpse of their personality (competitive, passionate, and loves the outdoors). Overall, this a great answer to this common interview question that you will likely face.





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# What's Your Greatest Strength?

## What They Want to Know

This question is one of the most dreadful interview questions that an interviewer can ask you. It's difficult to answer questions like these because, as a candidate, you never want to come off as conceited. However, you want to illustrate your skills and confidence to a new potential employer. To successfully answer "what's your greatest strength?", you want to highlight your technical and soft skills. Your answer is your opportunity to share skill sets and qualities that make you an excellent fit for the position and the company itself.

## Example Answer

"One of my greatest strengths is my strong writing skills. My journalism minor in school helped me discover a passion for writing. For the past three years, I have honed my communication skills and attention to detail by working on our university's editorial. This role has helped me learn how to write for different audiences and tweak my tone for different writing goals. As a technical writer, I will be able to write, edit, and publish technical documents for the product development and engineering teams with ease."

## Final Comments

Confidence? Check. Discuss a valuable skillset? Check. Relate it back to the job? Check. This example does an excellent job demonstrating the candidate's background and skills, as well as tying them back to the position. Through this example, you can tell that the candidate carefully reviewed the job description and tied their skills back to the job. The answer was short and direct, which makes it a great example to answering this challenging interview question.

Many candidates struggle to discuss their strengths in an interview. Here is a list of skills you can communicate in your answer:

- Communication skills
- Leadership skills
- Technical skills
- Tenacity
- Work ethic
- Empathy
- Creativity
- Flexibility and adaptability

These are excellent skills to start with in crafting your answer; just don't forget to tie them back to the position!



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# Why Are You Looking For A New Job?

## What They Want To Know

So, why are you looking for a new job? There are a multitude of reasons why you could be searching for a new position. Whatever answer you provide, it must be thoughtful to illustrate your intentions and demonstrate your interest in the position. Your response must be carefully crafted and positive. In other words, if you want to succeed in this interview, your answer must steer clear of the negative aspects of your previous or current job.

For example, if you are searching for a new job because you are unhappy, you don't get along well with your boss or are looking for a pay raise, these are not topics you want to bring up in your answer. Instead, focus on the job you are interviewing for and express your excitement for this new opportunity!

And when answering this question, the most vital detail is honesty. If you are dishonest with your answer, the truth will eventually surface, and your interviewers will not be happy.

## Example Answer

"I am looking for an opportunity to utilize my web development skills to create and maintain webpages. In my current position, I don't have the chance to work on any web development as we outsource all of our web design to a local developer. I recently completed an online course, and I really enjoyed learning how to build webpages from the ground-up. With this Digital Marketing position at [company name], I will have the opportunity to use this skill set and make webpages that help promote the company brand and services you provide."

## Final Comments

In this example, the answer was positive, expressed interest in the position at hand, and demonstrated your excitement for the role. It also illustrates that you are a good fit for the position. "Why are you looking for a new job" is a common interview question that will undoubtedly be brought up in your interview. Overall, this a concise and effective answer to this sometimes difficult question.





# What Is Your Spirit Animal?

## What They Want To Know

Hiring managers are really grabbing onto these off-the-wall, personality-type interview questions. Questions like, “What’s your spirit animal?” are intended to break the ice in a job interview and force interviewees to think on their feet. There is no wrong answer to this question, but your goal here is to share an answer that helps illustrate your personality, strengths as a candidate, and, hopefully, connect with the hiring manager. The critical thing to remember is to answer enthusiastically. Now is your time to let your personality shine a little bit. This is a question that will often be asked at the beginning of your interview, so your answer can really set the stage for the entire interview.

Remember: body language is essential with these interview questions. Throw on a smile, even if you need a few moments to think about an answer. Your body language is just as important with these questions as it exudes your confidence and personality. If you need a second or two formulate your response, don’t

be afraid to say something like, “wow, that’s a tricky one. I haven’t been asked this question in years!” And this will buy you a few moments to think of your response without it being awkwardly silent.

## Example Answer

“Wow, that’s a great question. If I had to pick one animal to be my spirit animal, I would probably pick a duck because I always look calm and cool on the outside, but below the surface, I’m working like crazy to get where I need to go.”

## Final Comments

Thus, this response is an excellent example of answering, “What’s your spirit animal?” It’s fun, witty, and straight to the point. Moreover, the interviewer gave a reason for their choice, and it does an excellent job demonstrating their work ethic. Overall, this is a fantastic response to this agonizing interview question.



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# Where Do You See Yourself in Five Years?

## What They Want To Know

“Where do you see yourself in five years?” is another painful interview question to answer. It is difficult to explain where you see your career in the next half-a-decade to a stranger. Hiring managers ask this question to develop a better understanding of whether you fit into their long-term plan. If you say you want to be doing something completely different from the role you are applying for within five years; you probably won’t make the cut. The best way to answer this question is to provide a general idea of what you want to accomplish, the types of roles you see yourself in, and the skills you hope to lockdown.

You don’t have to have the perfect picture painted when answering this question; your interviewers just want to know if you are thinking of your future and if it aligns with the company’s goals. In other words, they want to know if you can see yourself with the company in that time frame. Employers like longevity!

## Example Answer

“In the next five years, I want to become an industry expert in digital marketing. I want to

develop into a resource for my team and help educate newer marketing professionals on innovative concepts and tools. Also, I would like to improve my video editing skills to help produce engaging marketing videos for social media platforms. In the next few years, I would like to work up to earning a leadership role to help a company, like [insert company name], achieve their marketing and brand awareness goals.”

## Final Comments

This example checks all the boxes for successfully answering this question. It shows the candidate’s ambition, the drive to learn more about their industry, states a skillset they want to improve, and demonstrates their career drive. A hiring manager would be happy with this answer because it shows that the candidate is passionate about their industry and eager to learn more. It also expresses their desire to grow within the company. Where do you see yourself in five years is a tricky question to answer. However, if your answer shows your ambition to learn, grow, and longevity, you will be in good shape!



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# What's Your Greatest Achievement?

## What They Want To Know

This interview question is another tricky one to answer. If you are relatively young in your career, you may struggle to identify your greatest achievement. And if you're an established professional, you may have a slew of accomplishments to choose from. However, the best thing you can do is share an achievement that you're proud of that also demonstrates the value you bring to the table.

If you share an achievement that ties back to the job you are applying for, you'll get some bonus points. Your interviewers want to see a glimpse of your work ethic and your professional values.

### PRO TIP:

Use the STAR (Situation, Tasks, Actions, Results) method to formulate your answer to this question. The STAR method essentially helps you build a story of a problem, your role in addressing that problem, the actions you took to fix the problem, and the results of your hard work. This is a helpful method to keep your answer on track and present your achievement clearly to your interviewers.

## Example Answer

"In my current role, our engineering team was responsible for building a new prototype for a medical device we were designing. One of the engineers tasked at 3D printing the device accepted another job offer, and nobody else on the team had 3D printing experience. I have some experience with 3D printing and offered to prepare the device to be printed. I worked with our team to troubleshoot a few issues that came up during the initial process; however, I was able to finish the device's printing process two weeks ahead of schedule. The device is now on the market, and our company has sold thousands of units that help medical professionals save lives."

## Final Comments

This is an excellent example of answering what's your greatest achievement. It followed the STAR method to paint a concise picture of the problem, the interviewee's role, and the resolution. If this answer were for an engineering position that required 3D printing experience, this would be a perfect choice.





# Why Do You Want to Work Here?

## What They Want To Know

Fortunately, this is a pretty straightforward question. When hiring managers ask “why do you want to work here?” they genuinely want to know why you want to work at their company! However, it can be a missed opportunity if you don’t answer correctly.

You must do your research on the company in order to formulate a thoughtful answer. Go beyond a quick glance at their about page. Look into their social media, browse employees’ LinkedIn profiles, and search for relevant news stories. Make a list of things that speak to you. Maybe you’re excited about the growth opportunities after seeing how many people have been promoted internally. Or perhaps it clicked when you saw that they partner with the humane society for volunteer opportunities. Even if it’s as simple as you love the work they do, don’t feel the need to craft a fluffy answer. Just be sure to provide concrete examples that relate to your qualifications and experience.

## Example Answer

“For the next step in my career, I really want to work at a company that values its employees. That was what initially caught my eye about the job description for this position, actually! And as I did further research, I was impressed with your dedication to employee development and your team members’ average tenure. Not only is this position a great fit for my skill set, but the company also seems to be a great fit for my long-time career goals.”

## Final Comments

As always, you want your answer to “why do you want to work here?” to be confident and direct. Remember, there is no right answer to this question! Simply share your genuine thoughts and interest in the company!



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# Tell Me About A Conflict You Faced At Work

## What They Want To Know

Everyone has faced a conflict in the workplace. However, that doesn't make it any easier to discuss in a job interview. It can be challenging to pick a conflict to discuss without feeling overwhelmed or frustrated. The key here is to make your answer more of a story and less analytical. Your interviewers want to see your human side and get a sense that you are capable of professionally handling conflict in the workplace.

In your answer, focus more on the resolution than the conflict. Many interviewees make the mistake of spending too much time talking about the conflict and getting caught up with the story's negative side. Instead, briefly explain the problematic situation and focus your time on what you did to overcome it. But most importantly, be honest with your answer and don't pretend to be the "perfect" candidate.

If you can, pick a relevant example relevant to the job or the company's industry. In other words, choose a conflict or situation related to the job. You can use the STAR method to outline your answer to this question to keep you on track and paint a clear picture of your conflict resolution skills.

## Example Answer

"My coworker was on vacation for the week, and our COO called me and asked if her presentation for a new product idea was completed. She was very stressed as she needed it by the following morning. I was not working on the presentation and didn't have the most recent copy. I called up my coworker on their cell phone and had her email the PowerPoint to me. Our COO and I had a brief call and went over the presentation with her to see what was missing. I was able to figure out what was left to add and completed the presentation before the end of the day. Our COO was very pleased with the presentation and called me afterwards and said it went very well! Now, my coworker and I share all of our working documents on the cloud so we can easily access each other's files if something like that ever happens again."

## Final Comments

The answer highlights the conflict itself but focuses on the steps the interviewee took to overcome it and come to a resolution. Additionally, it clearly uses the STAR method to lay out the problem, making it easy for the hiring manager to follow. It also demonstrates that the interviewee can thrive under pressure and work alongside senior leadership.





# What Is Your Ideal Work Environment?

## What They Want To Know

Hiring managers ask questions like this to identify three essential things:

- Are you a fit for the company's culture?
- How long will you stay with the company?
- Receive a glimpse of your personality

According to Jennifer Sukola, a Muse career coach, hiring managers are looking for, "How long you are going to stick around? That's the question." "Employees who mesh well with the company's environment will be happier and, in turn, stay in the job longer and contribute more." Ideally, your preferred working environment matches the company you are applying to. However, don't force a fake answer to give the interviewers what they want to hear. You must be honest in your response because if you think you want the job, it isn't fair to you or the employer by lying just to secure the job. Remember, you are interviewing the company just as much as they are interviewing you.

Nevertheless, that does not mean that you can't touch on things that match their culture and working environment. Also, most job descriptions do a decent job painting the picture of the working environment you

will be in. Make sure you take a quick look at their website and social media channels to gain insight into the company's working environment. If that environment fits you well, express that in your answer, and explain why it works for you.

## Example Answer

"My ideal working environment is where I have the opportunity to work collaboratively with a team. I am a people-person and enjoy working with others. I have fun being able to bounce ideas off colleagues and come up with great ideas and new experiments. Additionally, I find it rewarding to come to a solution with my team and create something beneficial for the company. I find that I work best in an environment that is positive, encouraging, and centered around teamwork."

## Final Comments

If you are an extrovert and enjoy working as a team, this is a fantastic answer. It clearly answers the question and offers a brief peek of the interviewee's personality. Just remember to be truthful and answer honestly. If you are lying, you are doing yourself an injustice as you will likely not be happy in this new role if it doesn't fit with your ideal working environment.



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# Tell Me About A Time You Made A Mistake

## What They Want To Know

Everyone has made a mistake or two throughout their career. But what sets the best candidates apart is being able to discuss your mistakes and express what you learned from the situation. Employers often ask this question because it's raw – it makes you self-reflect and even puts you on your toes (if you weren't already standing on them!). Interviewers want to learn if you are self-aware, can accept feedback or criticism, and care about doing your job better.

The most vital thing is, to be honest. The worst thing you can do is answer this interview question with something on the lines of “I honestly can't think of a time I have made a mistake at work.” Newsflash! You are human, and it's okay to make mistakes as long as you learn from them. And be sure to explain how you overcame the mistake. It will demonstrate your resilience and problem-solving abilities!

### Pro tip:

Don't blame other people in your answer. Not accepting any of the responsibility for the mistake you discuss is essentially like

answering “what's your greatest weakness?” with a strength – you don't want to do that.

## Example Answer

“One time, I dropped the ball on a deadline. I was in the middle of a big software migration, and my boss asked me if I had time to run a report for him. I was swamped that week and was engrossed in this migration project that I was working on for weeks. Time slipped away from me, and I forgot to run the report, and my boss was irritated and missed her deadline. But I learned from this situation that I need to have better communication with my team and not accept more work if I don't have the bandwidth to complete it.”

## Final Comments

This answer is an excellent example for answering this interview question. It addresses the mistake, explains the result, and illustrates the learning moment. The interviewee did not blame anyone else but themselves. Plus, the mistake wasn't earth-shattering. If you have a terrible mistake in your past, it may be wise to share one that is a little “softer.”





# How Do You Deal With Stress?

## What They Want To Know

Every job creates stressful situations. Interviewers often ask, “How do you deal with stress?” to understand if you can keep your cool when things get a little intense. Everybody gets stressed out – it’s a natural feeling that we all feel from time to time, and there are different levels of stress. However, interviewers want to know how you navigate these challenging or intense situations in the workplace.

So, to answer this interview question, briefly describe how you handle stress at work.

Everyone handles stress differently, but the key here is to show your interviewers that you have a professional and appropriate way to blow off some steam. If you can provide a brief example in your answer, that’s even better.

Pro tip: do not answer with something like “I don’t really get stressed” or “stress doesn’t bother me.” That’s not true. Every job can be stressful, including the one you are interviewing to get.

## Example Answer

“When I get stressed out at work, I like to get up from my desk and take a brief five- or ten-minute walk. Walking helps me burn off a little steam and allows me to separate myself from the situation for a few minutes. I usually come back from my walk feeling refreshed and ready to continue working! For example, I was building a report to present to our leadership team. I had a tight turnaround time and had a few other projects I had to complete that week. I felt overwhelmed, so I decided to take a brief walk around the building and get some fresh air. After my walk, I came back to my desk recharged, and able to complete the report.”

## Final Comments

This answer is an excellent example of expressing how to deal with stress. It’s short and sweet but does an excellent job of illustrating what the interviewee does to overcome stressful situations. This is just one of many different ways you can demonstrate how you handle stressful situations in the workplace. As long as you can show a healthy way to cope with stress and provide an example, you’ll pass the question with flying colors.



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# What's One Thing You Think We Can Improve?

## What They Want To Know

This is a tricky interview question to navigate. You want to provide a thoughtful answer without insulting the company (or even one of the interviewers). Sometimes, your interviewer will ask you to offer constructive feedback about a particular product or service. Others will make the question more vague, which gives you a bit of flexibility with your answer.

Regardless of your answer, you don't want to head right into your criticism. Instead, start with something positive; it helps set the stage and make your judgment seem not so harsh. Then, introduce your constructive feedback and provide a background for your thoughts. In other words, you can't just criticize something and call it good. You must offer an area of improvement, explain why you think it needs improvement, and provide a solution to overcome this situation. Try to offer some stats, facts, or pull something from your professional experience to add credibility to your answer.

This situation is where doing your homework on the company will come in handy. If you don't do your due diligence on the company,

you will struggle to come up with an excellent answer to this interview question.

## Example Answer

"I really enjoy the content you share on your company's Instagram account. The graphics are eye-catching, and your captions are engaging. However, have you thought about sharing more content about your team? You post tons of great information about your services, but sharing stories about your staff and other internal messaging is very on-trend right now. We periodically post internal stories or employee spotlights on my current employer's social media, and they get great engagement. I think if you added that content to your social media tool belt, you would increase your engagement and gain new followers"

## Final Comments

This response works for this question because it starts positive and then offers a suggestion for improvement. It's not overly critical, and the interviewer uses their personal, professional experience to justify their recommendation. Plus, they ask a question in their response about if they considered this suggestion before, which could open the door for a nice dialogue. Overall, this is an excellent response to this question.





# Why Should We Hire You?

## What They Want To Know

A lot of interviewers trip themselves up over the question, “Why should we hire you?” Your interviewers are essentially asking you, “Why should we hire you over the other candidates? What makes you the best candidate?”

Interviewers typically ask this question at the end of a job interview. This question is your final sales pitch. It’s your time to shine and summarize for your audience why you would be a great fit for this position and the company. Use this as an opportunity to address your experience, background, and skills and why they make you an excellent fit.

Bonus points: if you can quantify your answer in any way, that is the icing on the cake.

Using numbers to illustrate your success or accomplishments is an excellent way to show your value and stand out above the competition. Also, be sure to tie your answer back into the job description to ensure your interviewers that you are a great fit for this role.

## Example Answer

“I have a passion for helping others and pride myself on using my customer service and recruiting background to match talented candidates with excellent employers. My interview-to-offer ratio of 86% over the last three years illustrates my consistency and track record for success. Additionally, last year I earned our annual ‘Recruiter of the Year’ award, which demonstrates my expertise in the recruiting world. I think my personal career goals align with your company’s mission of simply putting people to work, and I believe I am a great fit for this Recruiting Manager position.”

## Final Comments

Answering the question, “Why should we hire you” can be challenging. However, this example works well because it touches on the candidate’s background, their skills, and quantifies their accomplishments. The answer addressed the company’s mission statement and expressed their passion for helping others, which can help show why they are a culture fit. Overall, this example answers the questions well (and with confidence!).



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# What Do You Like to Do Outside of Work?

## What They Want To Know

While you may have touched on this when asked, “tell us a little about yourself,” there’s a good chance your interviewer will want to know more. When a hiring manager asks, “what do you like to do outside of work?” they want to get a glimpse of your personality. They are curious about you who you are and if you’ll be a good fit for the rest of the team.

This is an opportunity to let your personality shine. Our advice is to be honest – with a caveat – keep it professional. There is no need to go above and beyond in vulnerability here. Avoid delving into politics, illegal activities, or anything else that could potentially be a red flag. A good rule of thumb here is if you find yourself wondering if it’s appropriate, it’s not. Instead, share your life-enriching passions. If you have a hobby that parallels your career, that’s great! If not, simply share something you enjoy. Here are just a few “life-enriching” hobbies that are appropriate to mention during an interview:

- Hiking
- Spending time with family & friends
- Listening to podcasts

- Reading
- Sports
- Cooking
- Volunteering

No matter what you choose – be sure it’s something you are actually passionate about! Chances are, your interviewer will ask follow up questions. So, you don’t want to look like a deer caught in the headlights, unable to discuss your hobbies in-depth.

## Example Answer

“I love listening to Podcasts. Every day I like to get outside and go for a walk with my dog Thor and tune into a great Podcast. I have always loved This American Life because I feel like I learn something new with each episode. Lately, I’ve also been putting my detective hat on and listening to a couple of true crime podcasts. It’s a great way to check out for a bit.”

## Final Comments

This is a strong answer because it is honest, professional, and personal. Remember, this question is an opportunity to share your personality, after all! If you don’t have any hobbies that you’d want to mention during an interview – now is an excellent opportunity to pick one up.





# What Do You Like Least About Your Job?

## What They Want To Know

This interview question is tricky. While it is a negatively-oriented question, they aren't necessarily trying to trap you. When a hiring manager asks this question, they are looking to analyze how you answer! They want to know that you won't constantly avoid your least favorite tasks or pass them off to other members of the team.

No matter if you have the greatest job in the world, there will always be parts you don't like. Thus, saying, "I love every part of my job," is not an option! Candidates can approach this question in two different ways: focusing on the complaints or focusing on overcoming the parts you like least about your job. We definitely recommend you do the latter. Start your answer by honestly acknowledging something you dislike about your job. Then, pivot into how you deal with it. This will show the hiring manager how you handle small obstacles or less than ideal aspects of your role.

## Example Answer

"While I love so many parts of my job, my least favorite task is completing expense reports. As a Manager, however, it's something that needs to be completed weekly. I've found the best way to tackle it is to build it into my schedule. Every Friday, I set a calendar reminder for 9 AM, and I power through my expense reports. That way, I can get them out of the way first thing in the morning and move on to the parts of my job that I love!"

## Final Comments

This example is a well-structured answer. It acknowledges the parts you don't like, explains how you handle it, and ends on a positive note. Additionally, it demonstrates your efficiency and organization because you build it into your schedule. It never hurts to incorporate more positives into your interview answers!



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# How To Answer Brain Teasers

## What They Want To Know

Originally asked when interviewing for a tech job, brain teaser interview questions are becoming more popular in all industries. What is a brain teaser interview question, you ask? Here are a few common examples:

- “How many golf balls can you fit into a school bus?”
- “How many windows are in New York City?”
- “Why are manhole covers round?”

It’s easy to feel a sudden panic when your interviewer asks you one of these oblique questions. However, don’t worry about having the correct answer. The hiring manager is more concerned with your thought process and how you derived your solution than the actual answer itself. So, if you are looking for a brief walkthrough on how to tackle one of these tricky questions, here are a few steps you can take.

## Ask For Clarification

Asking clarifying questions helps demonstrate both your curiosity and saves you a great deal of stress. Let’s use the golf balls inside a school

bus question as an example. To clarify, you can ask something like, “when you say school bus, do you mean a full-size school bus or one of those shorter busses?” Asking clarification questions such as this buys you a little time to think and helps you refine your answer.

## Take Your Time

Most people will want to rush right into their response, but take your time. Take a few moments to formulate your answer and think it out. After all, the hiring manager wants to see your thought process, not have you take a wild guess. If you brought a notebook and pen (which you should always do), feel free to jot down some notes and write out your thought process. This can help you prepare your answer, especially if math is involved. So, sticking with the example above, you can calculate the school bus’ volume by assuming the length, width, and height of the bus. Then, you can assume the volume of a golf ball and do a little math to determine your solution. Now, you are ready to present your answer!

## Present The Answer To Your Brain Teaser In Detail

Now that you have your answer prepared, it’s time to outline your response to your interviewers.



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# How To Answer Brain Teasers (cont.)

You can't just spew out your solution and call it good. Therefore, you must explain how you developed your answer. Present any presumptions you made when forming your response.

**For this scenario, you can say:**

"When calculating the school bus volume, I am going to assume that the bus is 22-feet long, 6-feet wide, and 9-feet tall. That makes the volume of the bus 1,188 cubic feet." Then your next assumption can be the volume of a golf ball and explain how you determined that.

A golf ball's volume is  $\sim 2.5$  cubic inches ( $\frac{4}{3} \times \pi \times 0.85^3$  inches). Finally, you are ready to present your final answer. "Now that we have the volume of a bus and a golf ball, we can calculate how many golf balls are in a cubic foot (1,728 cubic inches / 2.5 cubic inches), which is  $\sim 691$  balls. Now all you have to do is multiply 691 balls by the volume of the bus (1,188 cubic feet), and your answer is 820,908 balls."

This answer may not necessarily be correct, but it's an excellent example of how to tackle a brain teaser interview question.





# Can You Explain Your Employment Gap?

## What They Want To Know

It's very common for workers to have a gap in employment for one reason or another. Maybe you took some time off to care for family, or travel, or were simply waiting for the right opportunity to come along. Regardless, it's often one of the first things a hiring manager will notice on your resume. So, you need to have an answer at the ready.

First of all, understand that a gap in your resume is not necessarily a bad thing. The hiring manager simply wants to understand your motivations behind not being in the workforce for a while. There are dozens of acceptable answers, so just go with what remains true to your story. Avoid the obvious negatives like "I just felt like not working and watching Netflix full-time." Share the truth and then delve into why you want to come back.

## Example Answer

"Due to the Coronavirus, I was laid off from my job at ABC Company. Instead of jumping into any job I could find, I took some time to invest

in my personal development. I signed up for online courses in coding to add to my skillset and expand my personal portfolio. I also made significant considerations for what I wanted the next step in my career to look like. When I came across this job, it really fit everything I was looking for."

## Final Comments

What we like most about this answer is that it is straightforward. It explains how the gap in your employment was actually beneficial to your career. Furthermore, it shows how you wanted the next step in your career to be the right one, and hopefully, it's this one! Whatever your answer is, just remember to be honest when explaining a gap in your employment!



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# What Are Your Salary Expectations?

## What They Want To Know

It is highly likely that a hiring manager or HR professional will ask you for your salary expectations during an interview. This question may seem like a trap, but most of the time, employers are looking for two things:

- Do you fit in their salary range?
- Are you willing to budge on your salary?

One of the biggest mistakes interviewees make is stating their salary expectations but ending their answer with something like “but I am flexible” or “however, I am willing to negotiate.” If you announce that you are willing to budge, the employer will most likely try to negotiate with you, resulting in a smaller salary for you. On the other hand, you cannot provide a salary range that is way out of this world in hopes that if they negotiate with you, you will still come out on top.

The best way to tackle this is by understanding your worth. Do a little research before your interview to form a range that matches the position and your background. There are tons of resources for reviewing salary ranges such

as Indeed, LinkedIn, Glassdoor, and Payscale. These sites allow you to input your job title, years of experience, education, and location and they will provide a pay range that you should be making. You can use this information as well as your current salary to form your salary range expectations.

## Example Answer

“My salary expectations for this role are \$75,000 and \$80,000. That is the average salary engineering professionals with over five years’ experience with AutoCAD and designing commercial plumbing layouts are earning. Plus, I have my Six Sigma Greenbelt certification, which has helped me become more efficient and reduce waste.”

## Final Comments

This answer is an excellent example of answering what are your salary expectations. The answer is short, straightforward, and exudes confidence. The answer also illustrates that you know your worth and reiterates the value and experience you bring to the table. Moreover, it doesn’t open the interviewee up for a negotiation battle by stating you are flexible.



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## What Are Your Salary Expectations (cont.)?

Overall, this is how you navigate this tricky interview question. However, you wouldn't even have to deal with this question if you are working with a recruiter with JSG. When we represent you, we make your salary expectations clear to the hiring manager and help you through any possible negotiations.



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# Is There Anything Else You'd Like Us To Know?

## What They Want To Know

An open-ended interview question like this can be intimidating, especially towards the end, when you want to leave off on a strong note. Hiring managers genuinely want to know if there's anything they missed with their questions! It's best to think of it as one final opportunity to sell yourself and give your closing pitch.

To prepare for answering this question, write out the most important selling points you possess in relation to the job you're interviewing for. These can range from skills, personality traits, certifications, projects you worked on, even mentorships you've collected. When giving your answer, you only want to mention things directly related to the position. Bonus points if you can connect it back to something previously discussed during the interview. If you sincerely feel like all of those have been covered, give a brief overview of your collective qualifications and reiterate your interest in the job.

## Example Answer

"Actually, I did want to circle back to the

revitalization project you mentioned on the horizon. In my last position, I had the opportunity to consult on a similar revitalization initiative. It was an incredible opportunity, and I learned a lot about the ins and outs of that type of project. As a result, I really look forward to working on more revitalization ventures in the future."

Alternative Answer: "I think we've covered just about everything, but I would really like to reemphasize my interest in this position. My past experience in managing large manufacturing teams for various companies would provide a lot of value to this position, and I believe I could offer unique insights to process improvement with my lean six sigma certification."

## Final Comments

Both of these answers provide one last overview of the candidate's qualifications, adding value to their candidacy for the position. They are infused with calm confidence and will leave your interviewer with a positive lasting impression. Most importantly, you used the opportunity to sell yourself. The only wrong way to answer this question is, "Nope; I think I'm good!"





# Do You Have Any Questions For Us?

## What They Want To Know

Congratulations – you made it through the entire interview. Then suddenly, the hiring manager hits you with this question. Your mind is racing, trying to think of the right question that will sound intelligent and insightful. Don't fret – your interviewer really isn't trying to trick you by looking for some obscure, off-the-wall question. They simply want to ensure that you have all of the information you need to make an informed decision.

No matter how comprehensive the interview is, you must have a question at the ready. Avoid interview faux-pas' such as asking about salary or time off. Instead, focus on questions that will enrich your understanding of the position or company. We typically advise asking something related to your success in the role or the interviewer's experience at the company.

## Example Answer

"Yes. I know you've been working for Radius Consulting for five years, and I would love to hear about what you like most about working here."

**Or:** "Should I be hired for this position, what could I accomplish in the first 30 days to ensure a successful and sustainable future with the company?"

## Final Comments

Both of these answers show that you did your research and that you are invested in being successful in this role. Keep your questions short and simple, and most importantly, listen to the answers! As a bonus, your interviewer's answers will most likely provide great content to circle back to in your thank you note!



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# Are You Interviewing With Other Companies?

## What They Want To Know

There are a few reasons that hiring managers want to ask this question. The main one being that they want to know who they are in competition with! Additionally, it provides insights into the types of roles that interest you. Do you really want to work in this industry, or is it more about the job duties? The best way to answer if you are interviewing with other companies is with honesty.

If you are interviewing elsewhere, briefly mention that you are in the interview process with other companies. If you are not interviewing with other companies, let the hiring manager know why this position piques your interest. Either way, always bring it back to the role you're currently interviewing for.

## Example Answer

If you're interviewing elsewhere: "I am currently in the interview process with a couple of different companies. All of the positions I'm interviewing for are quality assurance roles. That being said, I am interested in working for this company in particular, and I believe that my skills would be a great fit for this role."

If you are not interviewing anywhere else: "I have applied for several positions; however, this is my first interview. I'm excited about this position specifically because it would be a great fit for my skill set and experience in the Civil Engineering realm."

## Final Comments

Both of these answers briefly touch on your involvement in other application processes. However, they bring it back to the position you're currently interviewing for. Better yet, it reinforces your qualifications and reassures the hiring manager that you would be a great fit. Honesty is the best policy, and it allows you an additional opportunity to sell yourself.





# What Are Your Pet Peeves?

## What They Want To Know

This question can feel like a trap. And we're not going to sugar-coat it... it kind of is! A hiring manager asks about your pet peeves for a couple of reasons. First of all, they want to know that you're human! We all have things that bother us. Second, they want to make sure that you will fit in with the team. Do you take things too seriously? Will you hold minor annoyances against your coworkers?

When answering, be honest but don't totally unload all of the things that irritate you. To avoid a minefield with this question, keep the focus on yourself. Choose a pet peeve that is something you can control and redirect. Then, explain why it bothers you and how you overcome it.

## Example Answer

"One of my biggest pet peeves is getting behind on a project. If something unexpected comes up, or there's a delay I can't control, it can really bother me. Over the years, I've learned that this is a trigger for me. So, to avoid this, I always try to stay ahead on my projects. By creating a structured schedule, I can account for any unknowns and not get caught up in frustrating delays."

## Final Comments

This answer is perfect because it is truthful, tame, and offers a solution. Avoid going on and on about pet peeves that bother you as it will signal to the hiring manager that you are high maintenance. It's best to answer it quickly and move on!



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# How Do You Like to Be Managed?

## What They Want To Know

This question tends to put candidates on the defense thinking about how they like to be managed. A hiring manager asks this to understand if you will mesh with their team and leadership style. Many managers deploy multiple management tactics depending on the makeup of their team. Thus, it's helpful to anticipate how you would fit in.

This is a question that pays to prepare for ahead of time. Think back to times in your career when you were satisfied with your leaders. What did you like most about how you were managed? Additionally, see if you can glean any information about the management culture of the company you are interviewing with. Often, the company's website or social media will offer insights into the company culture. And in the end, tie it back to your anticipation for this role in particular.

## Example Answer

"Throughout my career, I've found that I work best with a Manager that values clear and open communication. I am most successful when I truly understand my role on the team and what

is expected from me. On the other hand, I love being able to go to my manager with new ideas and questions. I am able to work independently when the communication channel is there.

This is why, when I was looking at the "About" page on your website, I was excited to see that communication is one of your core values. Reading that reinforced the notion that this company would be an excellent fit for me."

## Final Comments

In general, you want to keep the focus on the positives. Avoid bringing up management styles you don't like or mentioning previous managers you didn't jive with. We like the above answer to "how do you like to be managed?" because it brings it back to your qualifications!





# What Motivates You?

## What They Want To Know

It doesn't get much more straightforward than this interview question. When a hiring manager asks, "what motivates you?" they genuinely want to know what gets you up in the morning and excited for the day. Now, this doesn't necessarily mean you should blurt out the first thing that comes to mind!

You do not need to delve into all of the personal and existential reasons you are motivated each day. Instead, focus on what excites you about your job. What will you look forward to most in this position you're interviewing for? When the chips are down, and things are tough, how will you be motivated to pull out of it and succeed?

## Example Answer

"As a Project Manager, I love to see everything come together in a successful project. I am so passionate about finalizing all the details of a project, checking off every "to-do" on the list. In fact, my family frequently refers to me as

the "Project Manager of our Home" because I carry the same principles into my personal life! No task can be left undelegated; no part of the plan is left undone. For me, there is nothing that compares to the satisfaction of spearheading a successful project. So, when times are challenging, I just remember to keep that end goal in sight."

## Final Comments

This answer is perfect because it goes beyond the surface. The candidate not only explained what motivates them but also painted a complete picture for the interviewer. Finally, it cements their status as a great candidate for the interview because it shows that the candidate's goals will be aligned with the company's goals



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# READY FOR A CAREER CHANGE?

So, these are twenty-five of the most common interview questions. Now, the only thing left to do is practice your answers. The more you prepare for your interview, the better you will perform. Rehearse your answers to the interview questions we discussed above, and you will be on your way to success! If you are ready to take the plunge this year, JSG can help you get back to work. We have hundreds of jobs across North America with clients in need of hardworking job seekers like you.

We have recently updated our Talent Network to offer a better candidate experience. It's now even easier to find jobs in your market, look for jobs in specific categories, and sign up for customized

job alerts that fit your skillsets and background.

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# Let's work together

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We work hard, we work together, and we work for you.

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