

Common Interview Questions

The Endicott Survey, published by the Placement Center of Northwestern University, periodically updates its original list of questions most commonly asked of college graduates at interviews. Variations of that list have appeared in many publications.

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50 COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. What are your long-range and short-range goals and objectives when and why did you establish these goals, and how are you preparing yourself to achieve them?
2. What specific goals, other than those related to your occupation, do you have for yourself for the next 10 years?
3. What do you see yourself doing five years from now?
4. What do you really want to do in life?
5. What are your long-range career objectives?
6. How do you plan to achieve your career goals?
7. What are the most important rewards you expect in your career?
8. What do you expect to be earning in five years?
9. Why did you choose the career for which you are preparing?
10. Which is more important to you: the money or the type of job?
11. What do you consider to be your greatest strengths and weaknesses?
12. How would you describe yourself?
13. How do you think a friend or a professor who knows you well would describe you?
14. What motivates you to put forth your greatest strengths and weaknesses?
15. What qualifications do you have that make you think that you will be successful?
16. How do you determine or evaluate success?
17. What do you think it takes to be successful in a company like ours?
18. In what ways do you think you can make a contribution to our company?
19. What qualities should a successful manager possess?
20. Describe the relationship that should exist between a supervisor and subordinates.
21. What two or three accomplishments have given you the most satisfaction? Why?
22. Describe your most rewarding college experience.
23. Why did you select your college or university?
24. If you were hiring a graduate for this position, what qualities would you look for?
25. What led you to choose your major/field of study?
26. What academic subjects did you like best? Least?
27. Do you enjoy doing independent research?
28. If you could do so, would you plan your academic study differently?
29. What changes would you make in your college or university?
30. Do you think that your grades are a good indication of your academic achievement?
31. What have you learned from participation in extra-curricular activities?
32. In what kind of a work environment are you most comfortable?
33. Do you have plans for continued study? (Graduate students may be asked: Why did you decide to pursue an advanced degree?)
34. How do you work under pressure?
35. In what part-time or summer jobs have you been most interested? Why?
36. How would you describe the ideal job for you following graduation?
37. Why did you decide to seek a position with this company?
38. What do you know about our company?
39. What two or three things are most important to you in your job?
40. Are you seeking employment in a company of a certain size? Why?
41. What criteria are you using to evaluate the company for which you hope to work?
42. Do you have a geographical preference?
43. Will you relocate? Does relocation bother you?
44. Are you willing to travel?
45. Are you willing to spend at least 6 months as a trainee?
46. Why do you think you might like to live in the community in which our company is located?
47. What major problems have you encountered and how did you deal with them?
48. What have you learned from your mistakes?
49. How has your education prepared you for a career?
50. Why should I hire you?

BEHAVIOR BASED QUESTIONS

1. Tell me about a time when you had a deadline to meet but things did not go as planned.
2. Tell me about the largest sale you have made and how you were able to get it.
3. Give me an example of a typical school/work day and how you planned for it.
4. Describe a time when you had a disagreement with your boss/teacher/coworker/peer.
5. Tell me about a time you had to organize a project at school/work. How did it turn out?
6. Describe how you organized a typical school/work schedule.
7. Tell me about a time you disagreed with your professor/boss. How did you handle it?
8. Explain how you have used your skills on the job. What were the circumstances and what were the results?
9. Describe a situation when you had a conflict with a peer/coworker. What was it about and how was it resolved?
10. Explain how you have used your skills either at school or on the job. What were the circumstances and what were the results?
11. Tell me about a situation when your technical skills were needed to solve a problem.
12. Tell me how you resolved a problem caused by a lack of communication.
13. Tell me about a time when you had to prepare a written report.
14. Give me an example of a situation in which you made a commitment you could not keep.
15. Describe a project you worked on that was loaded with problems and obstacles.
16. Describe a time when you had to persuade a coworker to another point of view. Results?
17. Share a time when you were in a position to influence a decision. What happened?
18. Tell me about a situation when you had to adapt to a change you did not like.
19. Describe a time when your job or work assignments changed. What effect did that have?
20. Give me an example that demonstrates the extent of your motivation to get the job done.
21. Tell me about a time when you lacked the motivation to follow through on an assignment.
22. Describe a time when you lacked a skill needed to accomplish a job. What did you do?

WHAT STUDENTS SHOULD ASK EMPLOYERS

1. Tell me more about how my work would fit into the whole picture.
2. Describe the type of person who succeeds in your company.
3. What is it that you need this person to do, right now, to make a contribution?
4. Why was this position created/or why did the previous person leave?
5. What is the most urgent or difficult part of the job?
6. What freedom would I have in getting the job done?
7. What is the company's overall management style?
8. Can you tell me about your performance appraisal system?
9. What do you see as my greatest strengths and weaknesses in terms of this position?
10. When will you be making your decision to fill this job?
11. How do you train new management people?
12. In what ways is your product different from your competitors?
13. What new programs is your department planning for next year?
14. What do you want the person in this job to accomplish?
15. I don't understand how your..... Can you clarify that for me?
16. I am unclear about what you mean by.....
17. What other information about my background would you like to know?
18. How does what I have said so far fit with what the company's needs?
19. In what ways does the company anticipate seeking new markets?
20. I would like to hear more about the project you described. Can you share a bit more about it?

WHAT STUDENTS SHOULD NOT ASK EMPLOYERS

1. Tell me about your medical insurance.
2. What about other benefits?
3. When could I expect a promotion?
4. What happens after my probationary period?
5. What will the salary be?
6. Does the company pay for me to return to graduate school?

