

COMMON INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

THINK ABOUT HOW YOU WOULD RESPOND TO THESE QUESTIONS

Read the questions below and plan a well thought-out response of your own, before your next interview.

Some interviews today begin with the interviewer explaining the entire job to the interviewee. They explain what is involved in the job and the day-to-day routine and what they expect their perspective employee to contribute. They might reference the company or department objective or how they plan to grow and develop or where they need assistance, improvement or strength. In other words, they introduce you the position and how it fits into the big picture with the company. Then the interviewer wants to hear from you. They begin to ask questions involving your past education and experience that would contribute to this position. This was already addressed on your resume or cover letter, under education or employment, but it will give you the opportunity to sell yourself again to highlight, identify and match your skills to them in more detail. Elaborate on your training and experience and what you can do to help them. It's your opportunity to sell yourself.

Here are some questions with a possible response.

1. Tell me about yourself?

This could be one of the first questions you are asked. The interviewer is attempting to set the tone of the interview by letting you speak freely and openly while trying to make you feel relaxed. Even though it seems like a simple question, you probably wonder where to start. As a suggestion, a good place to begin would be the city, province, or country where you were born, the school you graduated from before coming to college. Next, elaborate on the courses you especially excelled at or mention a relevant work experience. It's a good time to emphasize your best skills and how they relate to the job description. Don't get off base with your personal life and current problems and wished later you shouldn't have introduced them. Keep it positive and don't make reference to your weaknesses.

Response:

I was born in Windsor, Ontario and I graduated from West Lincoln Secondary School with Honours and 6 OAC Credits. I decided to take the Computer Networking Program at Mohawk College. I enrolled in the program and was excited to move to Hamilton to get involved with it. I now have exceptional Microsoft skills including PowerPoint and Excel, and I will be graduating in August and available to start work on September 1st.

2. Why did you decide to apply for this position? Or to our company?

The employer asks this question to see if you have thought about it. Have a good answer ready. Make sure you consider the travel to work time, will you move or commute, is it the job you want, do you have the right qualifications, and have you researched the company.

Response:

I like the environment of smaller companies because you can experience a variety of job duties from a close network of all employees. Or, I like large corporate environments because you can become involved in a specialized area and learn the job from experienced individuals. I have learned your company is a leader in the field of automotive parts production and that your quality control is the best in North America.

3. What do you know about our company?

Make sure you research the company and know what they do. Having some background knowledge about a company will show a potential employer how interested you are in working for their company and that you don't blindly rush into situations. You should know about the products and services they offer, who are their customers and even who are some of their competitors. Knowing information about their financial status is also important.

4. In what ways do you think you can make a contribution to our organization?

This is the perfect opportunity to explain what skills, knowledge or personality traits would make you a unique asset to the company. This is where you can differentiate yourself from other applicants that have similar qualifications to your own.

Response: I'm a team player with great communication skills and time management

skills and I have experience prioritizing a heavy workload in a busy environment. I thrive on keeping busy and learning new things.

5. Why should we hire you?

Here you could summarize and sell yourself as a complete package. Tell the employer how your education, skills, experience and knowledge combined with your personal characteristics come together to create the perfect employee that they are looking for.

Response: I thrive on continual learning and strongly believe this is an important factor for both the company and my personal growth. I have my diploma and the training required to perform the job. I am eager to apply my skills and gain experience with this great opportunity.

6. Why are you leaving your current position?

When answering this question you want to try and be as positive as possible about why you are leaving your job.

Some possible responses:

I was unsure of the company's future. I am looking for a change in the type of work that I do and the experience that I would like to get. I was not applying the training that I received at college. I did not feel personally challenged..

7. What do you think it takes to be successful in this job?

To be fully confident working on assigned tasks and duties, to be a good communicator with my co-workers, being focused and learning about the product, what can go wrong during the development and production process, and knowing that support is available when questions arise.

8. What is your goal? Where would you like to be in 5 years?

My goal is to become part of the supervisory staff within the next few years.

9. Where do you see yourself in 10 years?

My long-range goal is to become part of the management team within the next 10 years.

10. How would you describe your work habits?

Response: I would describe my work habits as focused, confident, analytical, and determined to complete jobs on time to the best of my ability. I am well organized, a self-starter, can multitask, and can work with minimal supervision.

11. How would you describe your personality? How would your friends describe you?

Response: I would describe my personality to be friendly, honest, and outgoing. My friends describe me as being loyal, honest, dependable, hard-working, easy to approach, always willing to provide support and help them whenever I can.

12. Which courses did you like best (or least) in school?

Response: I enjoyed CAD drawing because it gave me the knowledge and ability to perform the job that I love doing with confidence. The training was excellent and I learned a lot about many software tools that are currently used in industry. I didn't particularly enjoy journalism courses because it was geared more to the becoming a journalist for a newspaper, however it did provide good insight into report writing which is an important segment of my profession.

13. Why did you choose your program of study?

Response: I chose industrial engineering because it allowed me to build on my strengths in Mathematics and Microsoft Office applications. It also provided me with the opportunity to work in labs and use testing devices and gauges and to become more familiar with the equipment. I now have a better understanding of how various trade workers work together in unison on job sites.

14. Describe a situation where your work was criticized or praised.

Response: Once, my supervisor criticized me for taking too much time on a project but I didn't realize there was a short turn-around time for the completion date. The due date was not provided to me. I always double check my calculations, and I wanted to present a perfect project, so I was focusing on accuracy instead of timing. When I completed the project the supervisor was impressed with the final result. I was given praise for establishing a database of clients that documented names, addresses, phone numbers and email addresses in alphabetical order. This allowed the management team to easily visualize, in report format, the names of companies they were working with on a regular basis. I have an example here in my portfolio.

15. What do you consider to be your greatest achievement?

Response: My greatest achievement up to this point was giving guidance and support to a group of children at my Camp Counsellor job last summer. They asked me questions on how to do different things, and my advice on situations. They even shared their personal thoughts and general life questions with me. This gave me tremendous confidence and I thoroughly enjoyed having them look to me for support.

16. How do you think your previous job or education has qualified you for this position?

Response: Mohawk College prepared me very well for this position. It gave me the knowledge, skills and training to handle most situations in business today. The instructors were incredible with their wealth of knowledge, and they took the time to provide more detail, if we needed it. It allowed me the opportunity to get hands-on experience while working in my Co-op Work Placement, to practice and use a variety of tools that we talked about in class.

17. If you could start over what career would you choose?

Response: So far, I wouldn't change a thing. I find that I have found my niche in life and I enjoy the education and training that I am receiving. I look forward to applying what I have learned.

18. What do you think of your present boss?

Response: My boss at my part-time job is a great person. He encourages me to look for full time employment in my field of study and has given me an excellent recommendation letter which I have here for you today in my portfolio. (Remember not to use negative tones.)

19. What do you think of your present company where you work?

Response: I find that they are generally a good company. (Don't talk negatively about them) The supervisory staff are great and they provide guidance, instruction and support to all employees. We have weekly meetings to discuss openly what we are experiencing and it allows management to keep us in the loop.

20. Why have you changed jobs frequently?

Response: I changed jobs a few times because they were short contract positions but they gave me a well-rounded background in many different areas. I didn't feel confident with the experience I was getting, and it didn't challenge my skills, knowledge, and abilities.

21. Why are you not working in the area you trained for?

Response: There seems to be a shortage of full time positions available for (your field). My Employment Advisor at Mohawk College has explained to me that it's a matter of timing and that sometimes when you graduate, the right job is not available. I'm working as a (current job) to gain customer service experience, which builds my communication skills and is important for many jobs. I'm constantly looking for work in my field of study.

22. What are your best skills and abilities?

Response: My best skills and abilities are**list the skills and abilities that the employer wants to hear, what he has asked for in his job posting.**

23. What was the last training course you took, aside from your formal academic training?

Response: I took a First Aid course at the YMCA this past winter, which is something that has practical and long term usefulness.

24. Would you consider yourself to be a team player and can you give me an example?

Response: Yes definitely, I consider myself to be a team player. My friends always ask for my opinion when we are together in a group, they value my opinion. I also play hockey in an organized league on a weekly basis, so I know that my team depends on me to be there as a contributor.

25. What motivates you to give your best effort?

Response: I find that when I am given good guidelines and direction, I enjoy working on a project with minimal supervision. I can manage my time and develop new skills while intensely working on the project.

26. Can you give me an example where you worked with a group and what was your function?

Response: While attending Mohawk College, the class was split into 5 groups to prepare a plan on how to handle (a group project). My function was to collect information on (topic) and I used the library and internet to find out all that I could about it. My information was considered to be vital for our topic, and my group devoured the extensive research that I made available.

27. How do you work under pressure?

Response: I enjoy working under pressure and have had a lot of experience while attending college. The work load was intense and while working part-time I was still able to study for exams and pass with excellent marks. I am well organized and have excellent time management skills.

28. What kind of relationship do you think should exist between you and your supervisor?

Response: I think a good working relationship is the key to being successful both for you personally and the company that you represent. A good open relationship must exist where you can approach your supervisor at any time or he can approach you with problems and concerns for explanation and updates.

29. Do you work best alone, or with others?

Response: I have worked in both situations, alone and with a group. In a group I worked at (provide your own information and what you did to contribute). We met at regular intervals to discuss and solve problems. I worked with minimal supervision at (name of place where you worked and explain what you did). I managed my time, and set time schedules to have the various components completed on time.

30. Which is most important to you, career opportunity, money, or job satisfaction?

Response: I think that job satisfaction and working in your field of study is most important. I have discussed this with people older than me who are in the working world, and this is their recommendation. Learning more about what you enjoy doing would provide much longer job satisfaction.

31. How would you define success?

Response: I think success is working in your field of study and enjoying your job. If you enjoy going to work and enjoy doing your job every single day, this would be a tremendous advantage.

32. Tell me about your work experience?

Response: My work experience in my part time job has been rewarding in that it has given me hands-on skills in working with customers on a regular basis and providing quality customer service. It has given me skills in time management, organization and communication. My employer has confidence in me and gave me a key to open and close the store when I came in early and left late.

33. What did you do this past summer?

Response: This past summer, I took a life saving course at the local community centre. I learned the proper method of rescuing a person who was drowning, and I also learned CPR.

34. What have you done since graduation?

Response: Since graduation I have been looking for the perfect job to begin my career in my field of (field). I have continued to work part-time to gain customer service skills which are an important aspect of any job.

35. What do you really enjoy doing?

Response: I enjoy learning more about my field by reading current articles and as a matter of fact I subscribe to (field magazine).

36. What do you feel is your biggest weakness?

Response: My greatest weakness is speaking to large groups of people, but I am taking a Public Speaking course through the Dale Carnegie Program, to develop those skills. I hate to say no when friends ask me to do them a favour or make a special request, but by prioritizing my agenda, or establishing time lines, I find a way to accomplish my requirements, goals and objectives.

37. Have you ever done something that you weren't supposed to do?

Response: Doing something you are not supposed to do is foolish and not worth losing a job over.

38. How do you handle stress? Do you have a routine to relieve your stress?

I handle stress by going for long walks or removing myself from the stressful situation for a period of time, to get my mind clear and away from the problem. I enjoy walking in the evening and this is a routine that I try to maintain.

39. What do you do for relaxation?

For relaxation I enjoy reading. I read novels and information about biotechnology.

40. Have you ever had a disagreement with a co-worker? Could you explain the situation? How did you or would you resolve the situation? What was the outcome?

No, I have never had a disagreement with a co-worker. If this were to ever occur I would want to address the problem immediately with the individual, as soon as it happened. I wouldn't want to put off solving this problem because it might become worse. I would rather try to solve it immediately before management got involved. I would prefer to deal with the issue myself. I might ask the person to go for a coffee or to simply get away from the office area to discuss the problem where we would not be disturbed by telephones ringing or others listening in. If this didn't work, I would put a hand-written note on their desk and simply apologize for what had happened and hope that we can work out our differences.

41. If you worked on a group project and one of the team members didn't contribute their share, how would you deal with that situation?

I would eliminate that person from the project and divided up that roll with the other members of the group. Everyone contributing should work together as a team to share the entire work load equally. If one person doesn't handle their share of the workload, it reflects badly on the entire team. Eliminate the problem and solve it with competent people.

42. Can you tell me a time when you had a problem with a customer and how did you deal with it?

With aggressive, impatient customers, I let them talk and express their feelings and explain exactly what they feel the problem is. Let them vent their frustration. I usually point out to them the key issue or most important element or repeat entirely what they had just said, in order for both of us to understand the problem. I start off by saying we apologize for the problem and go on to express the company policy or handle the problem myself according to company guidelines. Customers should be treated with respect because they are your business.

43. How do you motivate others?

I believe to motivate others you must gain their respect, trust, honesty, and confidence. You must provide guidance, and always be available to answer questions and offer your assistance. Be honest and caring towards them and respect them as well. I also believe you should praise them occasionally for their work efforts.

44. What would you do to go the extra mile for the team?

Make sure everyone on the team communicates freely with each other and be available whenever you are needed. Be ready to accept phone calls or emails whenever you are needed, be willing to do research and work weekends and overtime, and take any training that is required.

45. What makes a good supervisor or manager?

Trust, honesty, confidence, patience, open door policy, listening compassionately, and above all, be able to communicate effectively.

46. What is an example of a challenge you have faced while working on an important project?

Provide some details on how you worked through the challenge. Establish that the project was meaningful. How did you react in the situation?

47. How would you rank our company with the others you have met with?

I would rank your company as #1. I have made a thorough investigation of a few companies through website searches and find that your Goal, Vision, and Mission Statements are the strongest, clearest and most achievable. I really very good about meeting with you today because it has strengthened my original opinion. I look forward to being accepted as a member of your team of professionals.

48. If you had a bumper sticker, what would it say?

If I had a bumper sticker it would read: I'd rather be playing golf. I enjoy being outdoors and playing a round of golf with my friends.

49. If you were a tree in a forest, what type of tree would you be?

I would be a tall oak tree because I feel strong, I want to protect the other smaller trees, I want to be the tallest tree in the forest, I want to shelter small animals, and I am the most colourful in the forest, or, I would be an evergreen tree because I am green and alive all year around.

50. Is there anything that you want to ask us?

Make sure that what you ask is something that you could not find out yourself through their website, the Scott's Directory, or a telephone call to the office.

Examples of Bad Responses

"I'd rather stay home and watch movies all day but I have bills to pay like everyone else" "I know everything about your company"

"I need a job to pay for my loan!"

ADDITIONAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Goal or Objective Questions

- What rewards are you looking for in your career?
- What is most important to you in a job?
- Describe the most important thing you learned in your last job?
- What does “success” mean to you?
- What does “failure” mean to you?
- What qualities should a successful supervisor possess?

Character Questions

- Who do you admire and why?
- What have you learned from your past employment experience?
- In addition to your technical skills, what can you personally contribute to our team?

Strengths and Abilities Questions

- Why should we hire you?
- What are your strongest abilities?
- What do you think are the most important skills to be successful at this job?
- What courses have you taken that would be useful in this job?
- Having read the job posting, how do your skills relate to our needs?
- Relate your (whatever)___skills on a scale from 1 to 10, 10 being the highest?

Questions on Using and Developing Skills while on the job

- Tell me about a time when you successfully used prioritizing skills?
- Can you explain a time when you used time management skills?
- Were your extracurricular activities worth the time and effort you put into them?
- Tell us about an achievement you are proud of?
- What do you do to keep active and fit?
- What do you do for relaxation?

Research & Preparation Questions

- What did you do to prepare for this interview?
- What do you know about our company?