

16 Questions you might be asked during your next interview. Time to prepare!

- Tell me about yourself.

Be succinct, honest and engaging.

I call this the “SHE” formula. Resist the urge to give a detailed account of the last two decades of your career. The interviewer is looking for an answer that shows them you're qualified and can respond to an unstructured question.

Use the job description to prepare.

Reread what they want and highlight the most required skills that you have. Are they looking for someone who can solve problems or deal with tough customers? Pick a few and brainstorm how you can describe yourself while showcasing your strengths for what they're seeking.

Tie your story to their needs.

People love a good tale, so weave in some personality. For example, maybe you fell in love with the hospitality industry because your grandparents ran a bed and breakfast. Connect your story back to the job, keep it short, and be truthful.

- What is your greatest strength?

When responding to this question, you want to sound humble and not like you're arrogant or bragging. Here are some tips to help you give them a great answer.

Describe a relevant experience.

If you're applying for a sales job, tell a story about a time where you helped a customer solve a problem with your solution.

Give specific details.

Tell them about a time you closed a deal that helped you hit a percentage of your annual number. When you share those facts with them, it helps them visualise how effective you have been.

Show them you're a well-rounded person.

For example, share a story of when you used a “soft” skill, like effective communication with a coworker, and then one about you using a technical skill, which could be anything asked for in the job description.

- What is your greatest weakness?

This can feel like a tricky question, but it's a good opportunity to shine. Here are some tips on how to answer:

Be humble.

You want to communicate an authentic story that shows you're self-aware. It's okay that you don't come off as perfect, that's authentic, which is important for someone who will have to trust you in the role that they're hiring for.

Choose a trait that is not too relevant to the job.

For example, if you're applying for a project manager role, choose a weakness that is more related to creativity, which is something that doesn't disqualify you from the description of the things that would make someone successful in that role

Show how you manage it.

Have a fix-it strategy. For example, if you struggle with remembering product details so you track them in their phone or side notebook, that's okay, share that with them. That shows that you've got commitment to solving that problem and addressing it.

- Why should we hire you?

This is a nerve-racking question, so make sure you're set up for success. Here are some tips that can help you do well in answering it:

Ask yourself why you think you're qualified.

Prepare for the interview by picking three or four qualifications and experiences that help them understand why you're a fit for this job.

Tell them how you'd fit in.

Paint a picture of what you'd accomplish that gives you a leg up on the competition. Also, show them why you are a great match for this company by letting them see that you know about their mission, their vision, how they operate—and how you would fit into that really well.

Speak authentically.

How you say something is as important as what you say. So when you're sharing your successes and you're answering these questions, speak like the best version of yourself and make sure that you're doing it in a way that allows the interviewers to connect to you.

- Why do you want to work here?

You would be amazed by how few people get this question right. So you've got a big opportunity to shine.

Make it all about them.

Your best answer will be about what they need. It'll show that you've done your research and have thought through what you can contribute to that team.

Show them how you can help.

Weave your story into the context of what you can contribute. If you have strong accounting skills and are interviewing for a finance role at a humane society, you could suggest that this job would allow you to blend your professional skills with your passion for animals.

Speak from the heart.

Telling a genuine story can make a big difference. For example, I once worked with a client who was applying for a zoo event manager job and she had grown up next door to that zoo and had great memories of the peacocks flying over the fence and sitting on her dad's car. So her answer was that she wanted people to have fun memories of that zoo just like she did. Try to top that.

- Tell me about a time you showed leadership.

Respond to this kind of question with a compelling story that uses the "SAR" framework: situation, action, and results.

Describe the situation.

Talk about the initial events that occurred. What were the problems that you were experiencing? What needed to be solved and what resources did you have--or not have? This is a really key part of the story, so it should be about three to four sentences long.

Get into the action.

Speak about the key milestones that you went through. Tell them what you did to turn the situation around. Don't go into too much detail though. It should only be about two to three sentences, and try to use active verbs, things like "I implemented" or "I persuaded".

Show the results.

Let them know how well things turned out, how the problems were solved and what you may have learned along the way. Try to include a clincher at the end, like dollars saved or improved profitability. It drives home that you did a great thing.

- Tell me about a time you were successful on a team.

Respond to this kind of question with a compelling story that uses the "SAR" framework: situation, action, and results.

Describe the situation.

Talk about the initial events that occurred. What were the problems that you were experiencing? What needed to be solved and what resources did you have--or not have? This is a really key part of the story, so it should be about three to four sentences long.

Get into the action.

Speak about the key milestones that you went through. Tell them what you did to turn the situation around. Don't go into too much detail though. It should only be about two to three sentences, and try to use active verbs, things like "I implemented" or "I persuaded".

Show the results.

Let them know how well things turned out, how the problems were solved and what you may have learned along the way. Try to include a clincher at the end, like dollars saved or improved profitability. It drives home that you did a great thing.

- What would your co-workers say about you?

This question gives you an opportunity to share how amazing you are—without feeling like you're showboating. Here are three quick tips on how to answer it:

Find features that fit.

Re-read the job description and look for answers that go well with it. For example, if they need a strong problem solver, maybe you can share that your office nickname is "The Fixer" because you're so good at solving tough challenges.

Share some of your reviews.

Before the interview, go through your LinkedIn recommendations and performance reviews and see if there are some gold nuggets you might want to show them. And if it's on LinkedIn, mention it to the interviewers so they can read the whole recommendation if they want more detail.

Back it up with evidence.

If you think your colleagues would say that you're super creative, resist the urge to say "People like that I can think outside of the box". Instead, share a tangible example of your creativity that ties to the job description.

- Why do you want to leave your current role?

Hiring managers will often ask this question, and it's a test. Are you running away from something, or are you running towards something? The advice when you get this question is simple:

Stay positive.

Employers want to see that you have a good attitude in general. Resist the temptation to say bad things about your current job, employer, or boss.

Focus on where you'd like to go.

You should come off as someone who is looking forward, not backward. Portray your interests more in the light of what you want to get out of your next role.

Bring it back to them.

Show them that you've done your homework about their company, and relate what you tell them back to the specific job you're interviewing for.

- Describe your most challenge project.

Respond to this kind of question with a compelling story that uses the "SAR" framework: situation, action, and results.

Describe the situation.

Talk about the initial events that occurred. What were the problems that you were experiencing? What needed to be solved and what resources did you have--or not have? This is a really key part of the story, so it should be about three to four sentences long.

Get into the action.

Speak about the key milestones that you went through. Tell them what you did to turn the situation around. Don't go into too much detail though. It should only be about two to three sentences, and try to use active verbs, things like "I implemented" or "I persuaded".

Show the results.

Let them know how well things turned out, how the problems were solved and what you may have learned along the way. Try to include a clincher at the end, like dollars saved or improved profitability. It drives home that you did a great thing.

- Tell me something that you've accomplished that you are proud of.

Respond to this kind of question with a compelling story that uses the "SAR" framework: situation, action, and results.

Describe the situation.

Talk about the initial events that occurred. What were the problems that you were experiencing? What needed to be solved and what resources did you have--or not have? This is a really key part of the story, so it should be about three to four sentences long.

Get into the action.

Speak about the key milestones that you went through. Tell them what you did to turn the situation around. Don't go into too much detail though. It should only be about two to three sentences, and try to use active verbs, things like "I implemented" or "I persuaded".

Show the results.

Let them know how well things turned out, how the problems were solved and what you may have learned along the way. Try to include a clincher at the end, like dollars saved or improved profitability. It drives home that you did a great thing.

- Can you explain your employment gap?

Most people are nervous about how a gap will be perceived—even if there's a good explanation, But if they've invited you in for an interview, then the gap hasn't ruled you out. Here are some tips on how to discuss it:

Be honest.

The truth will set you free. Try to put the situation into the best light and don't lie; it's bound to come back and haunt you. So if your job was eliminated through a merger, just say so.

Speak with confidence.

For example, if you had taken some time away from working, avoid acting like you're embarrassed, apologetic or ashamed. The interviewer is going to pick up on that. Instead, pause and you see how they respond. The more calm, succinct and confident you are, the more at ease the interviewer will be with your answer—and with you.

Show the benefits of your time off.

Bring up the good that came out of that time whether you were laid off, stepped away to be with family, or even got fired. It's a great way to reframe the situation and an opportunity to showcase some useful skills that you gained during that time.

- What are your salary expectations?

This is a question you'll get all too often, so here are a few tips to help you master the answer:

Give them a salary range.

Let them know there's room to negotiate (instead of starting with a specific number). Avoid going too low though, because that's going to work against your interests. And don't go too high either, or you may freeze yourself out of the opportunity.

Do some neutral research.

Give them a reasonable place to start from. You can use a resource like the LinkedIn Salary Tool to find out what other companies are paying people in this role and share with them what you learned about this salary range. Then they'll have to base their compensation at least on those numbers because you've let them know what other similar organizations are giving to employees who do that job.

Bring up signing bonuses.

Doing this can create a win-win situation for both parties. At the end of a negotiation, asking for extra money up top is often a way to bridge the gap between what you want and what you're being offered.

- What do you like to do outside of work?

With this question, employers are looking to get a feel for your likability and cultural fit. So what should you say—and not say? Here are a few tips.

Pick one of your favorites.

Go ahead and share something about your hobbies, volunteer work, or the places you enjoy traveling to. Maybe you're taking classes to help you accelerate your skills. In general, you just want to tell them something that's true and will paint you as an interesting, healthy, or good human being.

Keep it short.

For example, if you're a bird watcher in your free time, skip the 22-minute account of every species you've ever documented. Share enthusiastically so your passion shines through, but don't ramble on endlessly. Doing so might give the people to whom you're trying to make a good impression the feeling that you're nervous or that brevity just isn't your strong suit.

Stick to appropriate topics.

Avoid anything that might be pulverizing or offends somebody who's not a part of a particular group like politics or religion. Choose something uncontroversial or beneficial, and take advantage of the opportunity to show them that you're the complete package.

- Tell me about a time you had to manage conflicting priorities.

Respond to this kind of question with a compelling story that uses the "SAR" framework: situation, action, and results.

Describe the situation.

Talk about the initial events that occurred. What were the problems that you were experiencing? What needed to be solved and what resources did you have--or not have? This is a really key part of the story, so it should be about three to four sentences long.

Get into the action.

Speak about the key milestones that you went through. Tell them what you did to turn the situation around. Don't go into too much detail though. It should only be about two to three sentences, and try to use active verbs, things like "I implemented" or "I persuaded".

Show the results.

Let them know how well things turned out, how the problems were solved and what you may have learned along the way. Try to include a clincher at the end, like dollars saved or improved profitability. It drives home that you did a great thing.

- Where do you see yourself in five years?

The key to answering this question is to focus on what you can give to the employers or the role. Here are three tips:

Break the time into chunks.

Let them know what you might do in each two-to-three year period. This helps the interviewer to visualize and see what you're describing. Take them through what you plan to do in the first few years and how you plan to take it up a notch in the years after that.

Talk about how your goals will help them.

Paint a vivid picture about the value that you plan to deliver within each of those two-to-three year chunks that you described.

Avoid talking about job titles.

Resist the urge to tell them about what you want your position to be in two, three, or five years because that can come off as overly presumptuous.

- Describe your leadership style.

This is a question you'll hear a lot and answering with authenticity is key. Here are three tips I have to help you get started:

Be clear about your leadership style.

Don't be vague or ambivalent. If you're a team builder, say so. If you're tough, but fair, own it. Be very concise and clear on how you define your leadership so that they know very well what you're all about.

Give a detailed example that highlights it.

Talk about a situation, a problem or an obstacle, and then walk through what did you do and what was the result. What did it mean to your organization, company, and the customer? And be sure to include how you brought your team along, because this isn't all about you.

Show situations where you've adapted.

Life's not going to be simple. People want to see how you've grown and changed given the situation. Just like you look for that in the people you're going to hire, the same thing with the hiring manager who's looking to hire you.

- Tell me about a time you failed or made a mistake.

Respond to this kind of question with a compelling story that uses the "SAR" framework: situation, action, and results.

Describe the situation.

Talk about the initial events that occurred. What were the problems that you were experiencing? What needed to be solved and what resources did you have--or not have? This is a really key part of the story, so it should be about three to four sentences long.

Get into the action.

Speak about the key milestones that you went through. Tell them what you did to turn the situation around. Don't go into too much detail though. It should only be about two to three sentences, and try to use active verbs, things like "I implemented" or "I persuaded".

Show the results.

Let them know how well things turned out, how the problems were solved and what you may have learned along the way. Try to include a clincher at the end, like dollars saved or improved profitability. It drives home that you did a great thing.

- Tell me about a time you worked with a difficult person.

Respond to this kind of question with a compelling story that uses the "SAR" framework: situation, action, and results.

Describe the situation.

Talk about the initial events that occurred. What were the problems that you were experiencing? What needed to be solved and what resources did you have--or not have? This is a really key part of the story, so it should be about three to four sentences long.

Get into the action.

Speak about the key milestones that you went through. Tell them what you did to turn the situation around. Don't go into too much detail though. It should only be about two to three sentences, and try to use active verbs, things like "I implemented" or "I persuaded".

Show the results.

Let them know how well things turned out, how the problems were solved and what you may have learned along the way. Try to include a clincher at the end, like dollars saved or improved profitability. It drives home that you did a great thing.

- Tell me about a time you had to persuade someone.

Respond to this kind of question with a compelling story that uses the "SAR" framework: situation, action, and results.

Describe the situation.

Talk about the initial events that occurred. What were the problems that you were experiencing? What needed to be solved and what resources did you have--or not have? This is a really key part of the story, so it should be about three to four sentences long.

Get into the action.

Speak about the key milestones that you went through. Tell them what you did to turn the situation around. Don't go into too much detail though. It should only be about two to three sentences, and try to use active verbs, things like "I implemented" or "I persuaded".

Show the results.

Let them know how well things turned out, how the problems were solved and what you may have learned along the way. Try to include a clincher at the end, like dollars saved or improved profitability. It drives home that you did a great thing.

- Tell me about a time you disagreed with someone.

Respond to this kind of question with a compelling story that uses the "SAR" framework: situation, action, and results.

Describe the situation.

Talk about the initial events that occurred. What were the problems that you were experiencing? What needed to be solved and what resources did you have--or not have? This is a really key part of the story, so it should be about three to four sentences long.

Get into the action.

Speak about the key milestones that you went through. Tell them what you did to turn the situation around. Don't go into too much detail though. It should only be about two to three sentences, and try to use active verbs, things like "I implemented" or "I persuaded".

Show the results.

Let them know how well things turned out, how the problems were solved and what you may have learned along the way. Try to include a clincher at the end, like dollars saved or improved profitability. It drives home that you did a great thing.

- Tell me about a time you created a goal and achieved it.

Respond to this kind of question with a compelling story that uses the "SAR" framework: situation, action, and results.

Describe the situation.

Talk about the initial events that occurred. What were the problems that you were experiencing? What needed to be solved and what resources did you have--or not have? This is a really key part of the story, so it should be about three to four sentences long.

Get into the action.

Speak about the key milestones that you went through. Tell them what you did to turn the situation around. Don't go into too much detail though. It should only be about two to three sentences, and try to use active verbs, things like "I implemented" or "I persuaded".

Show the results.

Let them know how well things turned out, how the problems were solved and what you may have learned along the way. Try to include a clincher at the end, like dollars saved or improved profitability. It drives home that you did a great thing.

- Tell me about a time you surpassed people's expectations.

Respond to this kind of question with a compelling story that uses the "SAR" framework: situation, action, and results.

Describe the situation.

Talk about the initial events that occurred. What were the problems that you were experiencing? What needed to be solved and what resources did you have--or not have? This is a really key part of the story, so it should be about three to four sentences long.

Get into the action.

Speak about the key milestones that you went through. Tell them what you did to turn the situation around. Don't go into too much detail though. It should only be about two to three sentences, and try to use active verbs, things like "I implemented" or "I persuaded".

Show the results.

Let them know how well things turned out, how the problems were solved and what you may have learned along the way. Try to include a clincher at the end, like dollars saved or improved profitability. It drives home that you did a great thing.

- Tell me about a time you had to handle pressure.

Respond to this kind of question with a compelling story that uses the "SAR" framework: situation, action, and results.

Describe the situation.

Talk about the initial events that occurred. What were the problems that you were experiencing? What needed to be solved and what resources did you have--or not have? This is a really key part of the story, so it should be about three to four sentences long.

Get into the action.

Speak about the key milestones that you went through. Tell them what you did to turn the situation around. Don't go into too much detail though. It should only be about two to three sentences, and try to use active verbs, things like "I implemented" or "I persuaded".

Show the results.

Let them know how well things turned out, how the problems were solved and what you may have learned along the way. Try to include a clincher at the end, like dollars saved or improved profitability. It drives home that you did a great thing.

- Tell me about a time you had to learn something quickly.

Respond to this kind of question with a compelling story that uses the "SAR" framework: situation, action, and results.

Describe the situation.

Talk about the initial events that occurred. What were the problems that you were experiencing? What needed to be solved and what resources did you have--or not have? This is a really key part of the story, so it should be about three to four sentences long.

Get into the action.

Speak about the key milestones that you went through. Tell them what you did to turn the situation around. Don't go into too much detail though. It should only be about two to three sentences, and try to use active verbs, things like "I implemented" or "I persuaded".

Show the results.

Let them know how well things turned out, how the problems were solved and what you may have learned along the way. Try to include a clincher at the end, like dollars saved or improved profitability. It drives home that you did a great thing.

- Do you have any questions for me?

The way you respond to this question shows employers if you're engaged, intelligent and interested. Here are some tips on how to answer:

Show them you're paying attention.

It's important to let them know you've been listening. You may want to take notes as the interview unfolds and then loop back to something you'd like to delve further into like an aspect of the job, the team, or the challenges that lie ahead.

Let them know you're excited.

While being qualified for the job is essential, showing passion for their products, brand or industry takes it to the next level. So maybe you can ask a question about one of your favorite products they make or see how they're responding to an industry trend.

Get them talking about their careers.

People love talking about themselves and appreciate when you notice the interesting things they're doing. For example, you can ask them how they got from Job X to Job Y, or how their work as a musician helped them in their current career. People hire people that they like and who seem genuinely interested in the role.

Tips

- Come prepared with 3-5 thoughtful questions.
- Ask questions that show you're engaged, intelligent and interested.
- Avoid no-brainer questions or ones related to salary / benefits.