

20 Questions to Ask at the Interview



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Introduction

Throughout your job interview, you are going to be asked a series of questions that you need to do everything in your power to answer correctly. You need to prepare great answers. You need to show the interviewer that you know your stuff. You need to practice answering questions using what you know about job interview questions and you need to deliver those answers with confidence and clarity.

Yet job interviews are not one way streets. Both you and the employer are looking for a good match. You want a reliable, decent paying job with growth opportunities. They want a hard working employee who will deliver top notch results. Part of making that match involves asking questions during your job interview. As much as they are looking for the right person, you are also looking for the right company.



“The marvelous thing about a good question is that it shapes our identity as much by the asking as it does by the answering”

David Whyte

Why Ask Questions at the Interview

Asking questions at your interview is vital to your success. Questions have a number of benefits that make it more likely you will win the job, and it will also set you apart from other candidates. Some of the many benefits of asking questions include:

- ⊙ **Learn About the Company** – No matter how desperate you are for a job, there are some companies you do not want to work for. Asking questions lets you learn if the employer is right for you.
- ⊙ **Shows Confidence** – Asking the interviewer a question is difficult. They are in a position of authority, and you are the one vying for the job. However, asking questions shows that you are a confident person, and employers like hiring confident people.
- ⊙ **Intelligence** – Great questions show of a degree of intelligence that your resume may not share. If you can impress the interviewers with a great question and get them to think about an answer, you are going to show these interviewers that you're an intelligent person.
- ⊙ **Thoughtfulness/Curiosity** – Most people apply to jobs at random. They look for jobs that will pay them. They don't care who, what or where as long as they can get the job and start earning an income. You don't want the employer to feel like they are one of those jobs. Asking questions shows an interest that other candidates are unlikely to show, especially if you ask good questions.

There is no denying that asking questions at a job interview is one of the best ways to stand out. However, there is one caveat – these questions MUST be good. Bad questions simply look like you are asking questions for the sake of asking questions, which can work against you. If you want to get hired, you need to ask great questions that will show employers you are someone worth considering for the position.

In this guide, we will review some of the best questions to ask at your job interview and why they are useful for winning the position.

20 Questions to Ask at the Interview

In general, the best questions at job interviews fall under three categories:

- ⦿ Those that cause the interviewer to think about the answer;
- ⦿ Those that show commitment to the company, and
- ⦿ Those that show the interviewer that you have a lot of knowledge and experience.

Your questions should ensure that at least one of those occurs.

“Judge a man by his questions rather than his answers”

Voltaire

1 How Would You Describe the Department's Dynamic?

This question best illustrates the reason that asking questions is important. Yes, you want to impress employers and get the job, but you also want to make sure that you don't get hired into a company with a toxic work environment. That makes these types of questions great for both you and the interviewer. The interviewer is forced to do their best to describe their work environment in a positive light (no interviewer is going to tell you their department is awful) and you get to listen to their answer and ensure that the workplace has a positive environment based on how the interviewer answers. You learn about the company and the employer has to put a lot of thought into their own.

2 Have You Ever Considered Switching to AA instead of BB?

A great question is one where you suggest alternate work methods. For example, if you are applying for a role within the Internet Marketing department, you might ask “Have you ever considered switching to the Bruce Clay Methodology?” This shows the employer that you not only understand their current methods but that you are knowledgeable of other methods. In IT, in Engineering, in Sales – there are always alternative methods, and if you can show the employer you are knowledgeable of them, you are sure to impress them.

3 Does Your Company Offer Any Formal or Informal Training Programs?

Good companies have training programs available for their staff to improve their knowledge about activities within the company. Good employees want to take advantage of every learning opportunity available. This question is a no brainer.

4 What Kind of growth Opportunities Are Available?

This question can also be rephrased as “What does your company do to encourage growth?” The more opportunities for growth within the company, the more you can potentially make. Employers want to hire people that are going to stick around, especially employees that are going to work hard enough to move up in the company. Questions about how to move up in the company are always appreciated by employers, and are a good way for you to learn what the company offers.

5 What is the Company's Current Organizational Structure?

Companies take their organization very seriously. There is often an employee that spends weeks generating a flow chart of the company's internal hierarchy in order to leave no doubt on who is responsible for the staff beneath them. The goal of this question is for you to learn whether or not the company has an organizational structure. If it does not, that can be a sign that the company is not very organized, and this could impact whether or not you should work for the company.

“Who questions much,
shall learn much and
retain much”

Francis Bacon

6 What is the Company's 5 Year Plan?

This is another question that forces the interviewer to think and allows you to learn more about where the company is headed. A company without a plan is one that is destined to fail in today's economy. The interviewer needs to think about this answer and supply you with a real plan for where the company is headed. You can also change this question to “What are the next products currently in development,” if you are going to work with a company that releases new technology. However, before you ask this question, make sure that this information is not already available online. If it is, you may be marked down for not doing enough research before the interview.

7 What is One Strength That You Would Like to See in the Person that Undertakes This Role?

This question can be asked in a number of different ways. “What is one of the weaknesses of the individual that used to work in this role?” or “What do you hope the next individual brings to the table that differs from its previous occupant?” Asking this question tells you two things. First, it shows you an area that you need to practice before you start with the company. Second, it will tell you how the company feels about its previous employees. If the company says some very negative things about the previous occupant, this can be a bad sign.

8 How Often Does the Company Lead Team Building Exercises?

It is always a good idea to show employers that you enjoy working with a team, and hope to become a part of that team. Questions that relate to team building are a great way to impress your interviewer. If the company does not offer any/many, you can expand by asking "Does the Department Lunch Together or Participate in Any Group Activities Beyond Work Hours?" These types of questions will show that you are ready to become a part of the work environment.

9 How Does the Company Reward or Acknowledge Employees Who Go Above and Beyond?

No one wants to work for a company that ignores success. Employees are not likely to work very hard if their accomplishments get ignored while their failures pronounced. See if the company offers any incentive for outstanding individuals. Perhaps they offer some type of revenue share. In addition, this question gives the impression that you plan to be one of those outstanding employees, and this can only serve to help your cause.

10 What Does Your Company Offer That Makes it A Better Solution Than X?

Every company in the world has competitors. It is the company's ability to compete with those competitors that helps it stay afloat. Questions like this show the employer that you did a fair amount of research and have knowledge in not only the company you are interviewing with, but also competitors of that company and the products they offer. The

answer will also require the interviewer thinks about the competitors and the best way to phrase the question without giving away any inside secrets. Their answer will also help you learn whether the company is expected to continue to succeed. A company that does not have a plan to best its competitors is unlikely to stay afloat in today's economy.

11 What Methods Does Your Company Use to Measure Individual Successes?

This is another question that will require a great deal of thought on the part of the interviewer. Often applicants themselves are asked how they measure success. Yet in reality it is the employer that is ultimately the decision maker in whether or not the employee has effectively done his or her job. The interviewer's answer will also give you a head start in ensuring that you are looked upon favorably by the company.

12 What is the Company's Preferred Method of Debating Different Workplace Ideas?

People disagree. It is the nature of business. It is in the company's best interest to have these disagreements as they lead to more productive ideas. Yet disagreements are still disagreements, and extended argument over these differences can cause friction within the workplace. The interviewer should need to think about the answer to this question and will likely supply you with the method they personally use for dealing with disagreements within staff.

13 What Will My First Week Be Like With the Company?

This question shows that you are ready to start work right away. The answer will help you determine how to prepare for starting the job. Most likely you will hear a lot of fluff about introducing yourself to your coworkers, but hopefully your interviewer will introduce you to some of the duties and responsibilities you will need to take on right away when you start work.

14 What is the Company's Current Turnover Rate?

Companies that lose a lot of employees due to quitting or firing tend to not be the best places to work. This question is effective because the employer is forced to come up with an answer that makes it sound as though employees love staying within the organization. You can also follow up this question with "What is your company's plan to reduce this turnover?"

15 Would it Be Possible to Schedule an Early Performance Review?

Performance reviews are painful. The employer will point out your good qualities only to follow it up with a criticism that you may easily disagree with. Yet they are also useful, because they will help you learn what your place is within the company and where you can improve in order to grow inside it. Scheduling an early performance review is useful to you, and it shows the employer that you are committed to staying long term and being the best employee you can be.

16 What Do You Know Now About the Company That You Wish You Knew When You Started?

This question is interesting. It is most likely to get a canned response, such as “I wish I knew how great the company’s culture was...” However, your interviewer will likely first come up only with negative aspects of the company before they realize they need to come up with something positive. This is going to force the interviewer to do a great deal of thinking, which will help you get hired.

17 Would it Be Possible to Speak to the Previous Individual That Held This Position?

This question allows you to learn a great deal about the company and the position. First, you can find out if the position is new. New positions allow you the opportunity to truly make a name for yourself, but come with the added risk of being a position that originally was not deemed necessary by the company. You will need to start out even more impressive to ensure you do not get laid off. If the position is not new, you can find out if the previous employee quit or was promoted. If the individual was promoted, perhaps you can schedule time to talk to them about their experiences and learn what you need to do to impress the company.

18 How Easy is it to Schedule Meetings with Supervisors?

Some companies have strict organizational structures and require you to work almost completely independently. Other companies are more relaxed and disorganized, giving you ample opportunity to discuss whatever with whomever as needed. This question gives you the opportunity to learn more about the way the company works.

19 Do You Have Any Areas of Doubt That I Can Address?

If you think you rocked the interview, you can leave this question out. If you believe that the interviewer has some doubts about your candidacy, this question will allow you to ease those doubts by explaining what makes you great for the job. This question should be asked at the end of the interview so that the last thing the interviewer hears is you recapping what makes you ideal for the position.

20 What Are the Next Steps in the Hiring Process?

It is always a good idea to end any interview knowing what is next in the process. You do not want to sit at home waiting for a phone call that may never come. You want to know if there is going to be a second interview, when it will be scheduled, when you should expect to hear about the position and so on. Ask this question at the end of your interview so that you know what you need to do next and the interviewer knows that they need to stick to the schedule they lay out for you.





Final Thoughts

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All hiring managers agree that they are more likely to hire candidates that ask great questions. Great questions show commitment. They show intelligence. They show curiosity. They show an active mind that is ready to learn and wants to understand whether or not the company they are interviewing for is right for them.

However, you cannot simply ask any question. You need to make sure that the questions you ask display those qualities: Intelligence, Knowledge, Curiosity and Commitment. The above questions display those qualities, and will help you learn more about the company in the process. Asking great questions is a vital part of job interview success, and the above questions should serve to help you land the position.

Take Away Checklist

One final thing - it is a good idea to go through the checklist below and see what you can remember. If you can remember the details without going back through this document, good job! You are already a step ahead of other candidates.

- ⦿ Prepare at least 5 questions for your interview.
- ⦿ Make sure your questions fall under one of the following categories:
 - They show you have knowledge related to the job.
 - They show you have interest in staying and growing within the company.
 - They cause the interviewer to think.
- ⦿ Don't forget that you want to ensure that the workplace is a good fit for you, not just the other way around.



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