

Answering Common Interview Questions

1. "Tell me about yourself?"

- Do not panic, this is an open opportunity to sell yourself.
- Employers want to hear about what you can do for the company/organization.
- Talk about your experience, skills, qualifications, personal qualities and accomplishments that make you the best fit for the job.
- DO NOT include personal information related to your childhood, family or hobbies (unless it relates to the job responsibilities).

Example:

*"Hello, my name is **Tammy Cline** and I am interested in a position as a **Cashier**.*

*I have **over 2 years' experience operating cash registers, assisting customers, balancing cash drawers, opening and closing stores.***

*My background also includes **stocking merchandise, maintaining inventory, utilizing computer skills and effectively working with all types of people.***

*As an employee, I have **excellent customer service skills, I am a great team player, energetic, reliable and can work with very little supervision.** I am excited for the opportunity of working with your company!"*

Try it → "Tell us about yourself...?"

Start with your name:

- **Hello, my name is** _____.
- Then, the position title:
 - **I am interested in a position as a/an** _____.
- If you have experience or education that relates to the position, state it:
 - **I have** _____ (months/years) **experience/education in** _____, _____, _____.
- Review the company's job description and your resume to include hard skills and soft skills:
 - **Some of the skills I bring with me are** _____, _____, _____.
 - **As an employee, I am** _____, _____, _____.
- End with a closing statement to let the interviewer/s know you have finished answering the question. For instance:
 - **"I know my skills and experience would be a great fit for your company."**
 - **"I am excited for the opportunity of potentially working with your company."**
 - **Create your own:** _____.

2. “Share an example of a time when you faced a difficult problem at work. How did you solve this problem?”

STAR Technique

The STAR technique is a useful strategy for responding to interview questions that require an anecdote. It is an excellent way to organize your thoughts. There are four steps to answering using this technique:

- **Situation** - Describe the situation in which the event took place.
- **Task** - Describe the task you were asked to complete. If there was a particular problem or issue you were trying to solve, describe that here.
- **Action** - Explain what action you took to complete the task or solve the problem.
- **Results** - Explain the result of your actions. For example, if your actions resulted in completing a task, resolving a conflict, improving your company’s sales record, etc., explain this. Try to focus on how your actions resulted in a success for the company.

STAR Examples:

- **Situation:** “I was working as a Retail Manager at a department store during prom season. A customer purchased a dress online and had it delivered to the store. One of my associates accidentally put the dress out on the floor, where another customer immediately purchased it.
- **Task:** I knew I needed to make this right for the customer to meet my own service level standards and to uphold the reputation of the company.
- **Action:** Before calling the customer to let her know about the mistake, I located the same dress at another one of our stores located nearby. I ordered it to be pressed and delivered to her home the morning of the prom, along with a gift card to thank her for her understanding.
- **Result:** The customer was so thankful, she wrote us a five-star review on several review sites!”

Try it → “Share an example of a time when you faced a difficult problem at work. How did you solve this problem?”

Situation	
Task	
Action	
Result	

3. "What are your weaknesses and/or strengths?"

- Employers want to see if you are self-aware, honest and able to learn from mistakes.
- You should know/be aware of your strengths and weaknesses.
- The strength should be a skill or core value that relates to the job responsibilities.
- The weakness should highlight what you are doing to overcome it.
- Remember: Every trait can be good or bad, but how you spin it will make all the difference!

Weakness Examples:

- *"I find it hard to **delegate** work to others. I usually like to do all the work myself so I can make sure it is done according to requirements. But now, I am learning to ask for help when I need it."*
- *"I find it **hard to say no** to people. I make sure now that if I have a lot of work to do, I finish all my work first and then assist other co-workers that need help."*
- *"I'm a **perfectionist**. I sometimes double or even triple check my work, but now I am learning to have more confidence in myself and just check my work once and move on."*
- **Public Speaking:** *"Although I really like people, I get nervous when I speak in front of large groups. I am working on improving by taking a public speaking class. Now, when I make the quarterly presentation, I will be much more confident in doing so."*

Strength Examples:

- **Hardworking:** *"I come in to work early and I come in whenever I am needed. I give 110% every day at work and my work reflects who I am. I make sure my tasks get done. If I finish early, I ask my co-workers if they need any help."*
- **Responsible:** *"I am not afraid to take responsibility – if an extra task is added to my workload, I am not afraid to roll up my sleeves and get the job done. I stay positive and I am great with time-management, all of which help me with completing my work in a timely manner."*
- **Honest:** *"I'm honest. For example, at my last job as a Cashier, whenever someone accidentally gave me more money than needed, I made sure to let them know. Then, I would give their money back. Sometimes, customers also wanted to tip me. I would never accept tips and I would politely let them know I was unable to accept their tips, but thanked them for considering doing so."*

Try it → "What is one of your strengths and weaknesses?"

- REMEMBER: Putting it into a story will make it easier to share. You can either put into a story or define it!
 - My strength is _____ and an example of this is _____. (tell a job-related story):

- REMEMBER: This is not your greatest strength, but also not something so bad that you cannot explain it.
- Employers ask this question to test your character and how you handle/overcome situations.
- Make sure your weakness will not affect your performance (not a core job responsibility).
 - I have realized that I _____. It/I _____. (tell a job-related story about your weakness). I do not want it to affect my quality of work so I _____. (what you are actively doing to fix it or what you have already accomplished in fixing it):

4. "Do you have any questions for me?" "Do you have any questions for us or anything you would like to add?"

- Be prepared to **ASK** questions at every interview.
- Ask questions that show you are "career" oriented and willing to do whatever it takes to be successful in your new position.
- Do not ask about money or employee benefits!
- **Questions:**
 - Can you describe a typical day for this position?
 - What accounts for success in this job?
 - If hired, would I be filling a newly created position or replacing someone?
 - Which responsibilities are most important for this job?

 - How would I be trained or introduced to the job?
 - What are the department's goals for the year?
 - How would I get feedback on my job performance, if hired?
 - If hired, would I report directly to you or to someone else?
 - I want this job, would you consider hiring me on a 30-day trial period?
 - When can I expect to hear from you?

 - Start with saying: **"Yes, thank you, I do have a few questions..."**
 - Question 1:

- Question 2:

- **Remind** them why they should hire you: Summarize your strong points.
- Use the same information from “Tell me about yourself?”
 - Start with: ***“Again, I just want to remind you...”***

- **Closing:** Use a sentence letting them know you are the right person for the job!
- Do not forget to shake their hand at the end. (Closing Statement)
- Personalize this part, if you are passionate about childcare, say it! If you love customer service, share what you love about it!

- **Thank** them for the interview:

Additional Interview Questions for Review

1. "Why would you like to work for our company or organization?" or "How did you hear about our company?"
 - ✓ Everyone wants to feel like they are the chosen one and employers are no exception. Use the homework you have done about the company and mention one or two things that you agree with or are interested in. Tell them why this company caught your eye... if someone referred you, mention that you had heard good things about the company.
2. "We have many qualified applicants...Why do you think we should hire you for this position?"
 - ✓ Remind them that you are in no position to judge the other candidates, but you think you are the BEST person for the job because..... (fill in the blanks with your skills and assets). This is similar to "Tell me a little about yourself?" because it is an open-ended question where you can talk about anything, so sell, sell, sell!!!
3. "When your work is criticized, how do you react?"
 - ✓ Make sure you are calm when answering this question. Let them know that you are always open to suggestions. If you have had a bad experience, just say that you always try your best and would be open to suggestions that anyone has on how to improve your work.
4. "How do you handle stress or stressful situations?"
 - ✓ You should have your own personal coping mechanism to deal with stress. If you do not, get one right away! You have to be able to be flexible and calm. You might want to describe a situation where you calmed another person down too, if you have had such an experience.
5. "Do you prefer to work alone or in a group?" or "What kind of people do you like to work with?"
 - ✓ If you know that the position requires that you work in a group with people, mention that you can work well with many types of people. If it is a solitary job, mention that you can work well without a lot of supervision. You may also say, "Both. I enjoy working as part of a team and I can work independently to get my share of the work done."
6. "What is the most difficult decision you have had to make?" or "Give me an example of a problem you faced and how you solved it."
 - ✓ Think work situations only. When we think of problems we tend to think in terms of personal problems, but unless you have NO formal work history, including volunteer work, do not mention your personal life. Instead, you can think of a problem you solved and generalize it to fit in a work situation. If you have work history, use a problem that you solved or helped solve. The employer wants to see how you define problems, identify options, decide on a solution, handle obstacles and solve the problem!
7. "Did you ever have a disagreement with a boss? Why? Why not?"
 - ✓ Answer, "yes" and you are a troublemaker, "no" and you are a wimp. Find the middle ground: "Sure we disagreed at times, we shared our points of views and sometimes good ideas came from our discussions, we worked well together. For example..."
8. "What do you plan to be doing for work 5 years from today?"
 - ✓ Figure the promotions you should get if you work hard for this company over the next 5 years. Tell the manager you plan to be working for him/her in that position.