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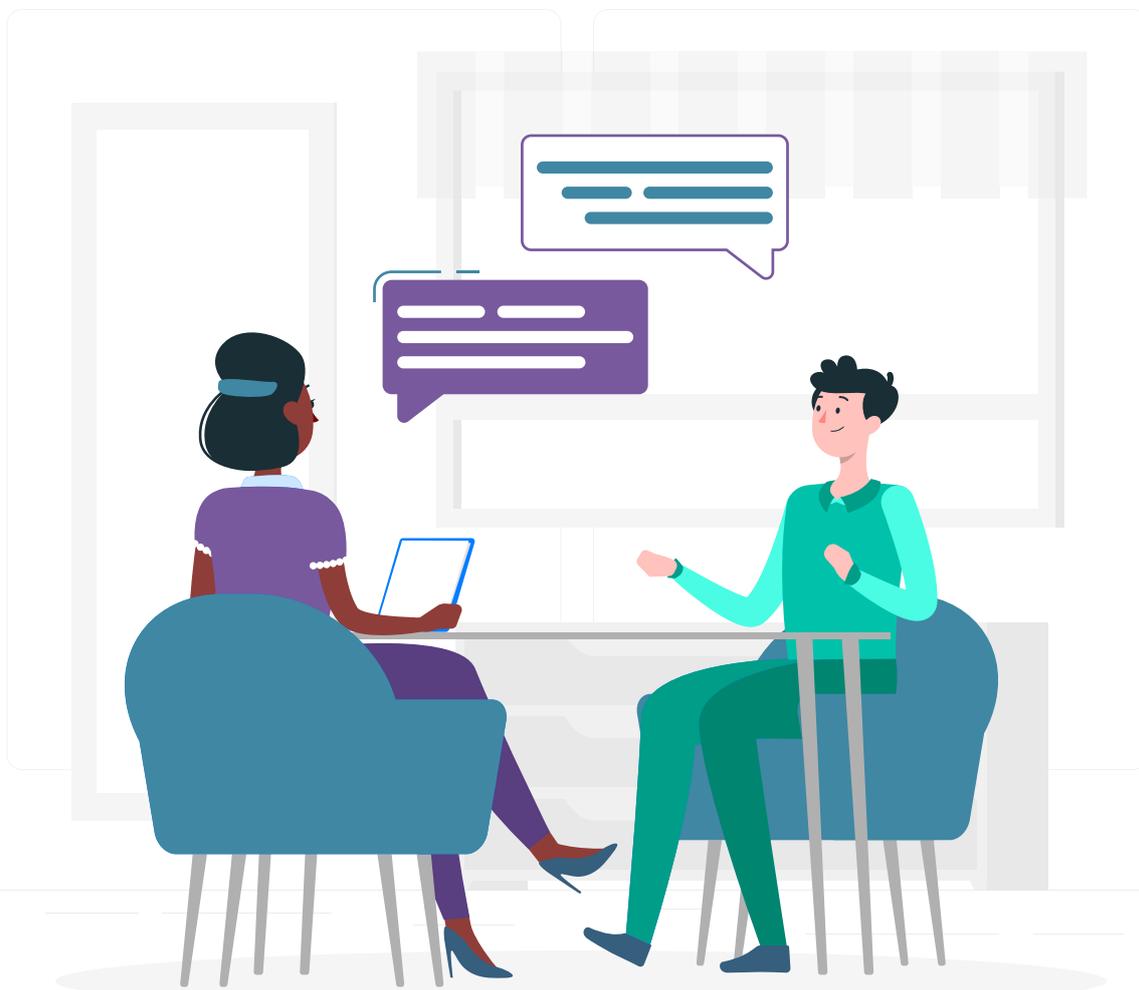
COMPLETE

GUIDE

TO YOUR NEXT JOB INTERVIEW

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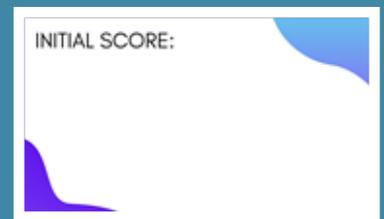
WELCOME & CONGRATULATIONS

By downloading this e-book, you have shown that you are ready to take the steps toward improving your job interview skills! We here at Mockmate are so excited to be a part of your journey to getting your next job!

Mockmate helps people like you. We have seen so many talented and motivated people fail the interview only because they haven't had enough interviewing experience. But the best part about that is interview skills are 100% improvable! With a bit of information and a hefty amount of practice, anyone can polish their interview and land their next job.

First head to Mockmate.com and practice a job interview with our AI-powered job interview simulator. Try at least 5 questions and record your overall score for the interview in the box to the right.

Do this without preparing at all. This is your starting point.



Then, dive into this ebook which explains exactly how best to answer a number of typical interview questions.

But to have a good interview, you don't have to memorize every line of this book. This is a guide to help you navigate some of those questions that you normally struggle with. Use the Table of Contents page to skip around to whichever topic you see most useful.

We recommend you start your journey by reading our 3 standard entries:



Start there and once you have a good understanding of those, you can build your own interview practice journey!

We are very excited to be able to offer this free e-book, and we are even more excited to help you get your dream job! Thanks for downloading and we wish you the best in your job hunt!

-The Mockmate Team

P.S. Did we help you get a job? Tell us about it! Send an email to hello@mockmate.com

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HOW TO PREPARE FOR A JOB INTERVIEW



Preparing for a job interview can be a stressful experience. Mockmate is here to help. Here are our top general tips to prepare for your next interview.



KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

Learn about the company. Be sure to read their website. It's basic but you still have to do it.

Nothing takes the energy out of a first conversation then when it becomes clear that the person doesn't understand the basics of the company. So be prepared at least to explain the company you want to work for, what they do, and maybe even why they do it.

Recent company social media, blogs, or speeches, can give an updated insight into the latest news.

Secondary sources like the Wikipedia page, news articles and podcasts that may mention them, can also provide insights.

Ask for the names of the people you'll be interviewing with and learn about them – check their LinkedIn pages, and contributions to the company so you can understand their perspective.



PREPARE FOR THE QUESTIONS

If this is your first interview, you might not have any idea what interview questions are considered so expected that they are even cliché. But, even if this isn't your first interview, maybe it's been a while since you've had a professional interview. Either way, you need to brush up on your own work history and prepare to anticipate certain questions.

Practice makes perfect. Review what you have on your resume and think about the best stories you want to tell. Mockmate is the perfect way to start practicing your answers out loud - it is a great listener!



DON'T MEMORIZE

An interview is a conversation. With practice, you'll get better at replying, but you shouldn't come across as scripted and uncomfortable (if you can help it!). You should be prepared but it shouldn't feel forced. Don't panic if you can't remember exactly what you want to say.



ASK YOUR OWN QUESTIONS

When it's your turn, you want to demonstrate that you know the audience and relate to the interviewer by asking an intelligent question at the right time (normally at the end of the interview). Before your interview, you should prepare a few sensible questions you'd like to learn.

Remember that interviews are two-way conversations so they are also your chance to learn if you want to work at the company.



PREPARE YOURSELF

Ideally, we'd all be judged based on what we say and not how we look. Until that future comes, you'll still need to prepare your clothes (wrinkle-free) and wear the appropriate shoes (not flip flops), brush your teeth (if you meet in person), and do whatever it is you would normally do when you are trying to make a good first impression (an interview can feel like a date!). When you put some effort into your appearance, you usually feel more confident.



MENTAL AND PHYSICAL

Do what you can to make sure you are mentally and physically ready for a moderately intense conversation.

That means: Get a good night of sleep. If drinking coffee makes you feel wired and overly chatty, then skip that morning cup. If you're irritable when hungry, eat before and consider packing a snack. If you feel better after meditating or going for a walk, then build that into your day-of schedule. Do what you can to bring your best self!

TYPES OF INTERVIEWS

Every interviewee (that's you! The person who wants a job) should be aware that there is no right or wrong technique to use in an interview. There are many approaches, different styles, and different advantages and disadvantages.

Preparing for an interview depends on the type of interview, as well as the position you are applying for, the industry, the company itself, the country, etc.

Here we have a short list of all the different types of interviews you might have when you're trying to find a job.

TELEPHONE INTERVIEWS



A telephone interview is all about making a first impression, which is an advantage to the interviewee. It moves faster than a meeting in-person, the conversation of a first telephone interview usually lasts for about half an hour. You can divide this time into three segments, the first five minutes for a warm-up, twenty minutes for the detailed conversation, and another five minutes for the conclusion.

PROS



Quicker than live interviews



Doesn't require a lot of effort

CONS



Usually a focused conversation but may have connectivity issues or background noise



Lacks a social component



VIDEO INTERVIEWS

A video interview is an upgrade from a telephone interview, & have become extraordinarily popular recently. Many companies use modern software like Zoom, Webex, Teams, or Skype. A visual component adds to the conversation. You can anticipate when the other person wants to speak (or when they are finished speaking) and you can convey your own emotions (confident & happy) better when people can see your face. The average length of video interviews is around thirty minutes. However, it can go as long as an hour in some cases. As a first interview, it is comparable to a telephone interview with similar pros and cons.

VIDEO INTERVIEWS

PROS

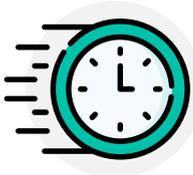


Improved over just a voice call, as you can see the other person and avoid interrupting

CONS



Possible technical issues or interruptions



Quicker than live interviews



A professional look is a must

THE ASSESSMENT DAY

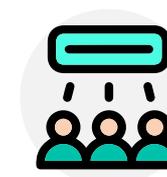
An assessment day typically happens when a company is interviewing a group of people at the same time. Even though seeing the competition for the same job can be more stressful for some people, it can be an opportunity for you to stand out. Typically, an assessment day will take between 4-6 hours, but can last up to the full day. Naturally, you will be categorized in a particular group that applies for a certain job position.

PROS



You can stand out over other interviewees

CONS



Some people are intimidated by group conversation or public speaking



Optimizes your time, consolidating multiple interviews into just one day



Requires a lot of effort, preparation, and time



GROUP INTERVIEWS

Even though group interviews are not as common as the others above, they can still be a part of a recruiting process. A group interview can have similar elements as an assessment day, but is typically a maximum of 2 hours.

PROS



You can stand out over other interviewees



Possible competition sparks

CONS



Lacks personal 1-1 communication you would get in a face-to-face interview



Some people don't like direct competition

FACE-TO-FACE INTERVIEWS



The most popular type of interview is a face-to-face interview. This is typically a conversation between you and one to three others at the company you're applying for. As an interviewee, you'll have the opportunity to make a personal connection with the interviewer. Most people prefer a face-to-face interview over other types, as it typically allows a job candidate the chance to present themselves in a more relaxed environment.

PROS



Personal and direct communication with the interviewer



More time to provide crucial information about work experience

CONS



Sometimes uncomfortable, and long



Some people are not comfortable with face-to-face interviews, feel under pressure



PANEL INTERVIEWS

Panel interviews are like face-to-face interviews but feature multiple employees interviewing the job candidate.

This type of interview can be unpleasant sometimes since you have a couple of people questioning you about your work experience and judging you by your behavior. The panel interview usually lasts for about forty-five minutes to an hour and a half. You might even be asked to prepare a presentation or assignment to present to the panel as a test.

PROS



You will have the opportunity to meet more than just one person

CONS



It can be overwhelming in some cases, facing multiple people all judging what you say



Doing it well means that you have more than one person in favor of hiring you



Lacks personal and intimate conversations, which can further connections

THE STAR METHOD FOR INTERVIEWING

THE STAR INTERVIEW METHOD

STAR is a structured approach to respond to behavioral interview questions that always occurs in this order. To better prepare to answer interview questions in this format, let's better understand what each part entails.



SITUATION

First you need to describe the situation. This doesn't mean that you need to explain your overall work experience, or go into too much detail. Stick to a brief 2-4 sentence description of the situation, providing enough details to help the interviewer get acquainted with the relevant facts as they apply to this answer.



TASK

The task is the core aspect of the story, it's the reason you've selected this story to share. Highlight your involvement in the situation.

The task describes the situation in further detail, the goal, and how you fit the situation. The task does not describe the actions you took - that comes next.



ACTION

After you've described your assignment and goals, you need to explain what you actually did. Avoid providing generic and overly general answers like "I did some research" or "I've worked really hard."

Try to provide references and details where possible. Describe the plan you had and then how the reality was different from that plan. Here you can highlight your ability to recognize how and why they may have differed.



RESULT

The result is the big finale, where you describe the outcomes and how you contributed to them.

Talk about what was accomplished, or what wasn't and how you learned from it. Depending on the question, describe your role and how it helped or stalled the situation. But try to finish the story with a strong conclusion on a positive note.

REMEMBER: STAR

The STAR method can be applied to all kinds of questions. It works because it helps you frame a story in a relatable way, providing just the right amount of detail. Before an interview, it's a good idea to spend a few hours preparing your responses to common questions. But don't memorize your answers and sound like a robot.

HOW TO ANSWER “ABOUT” QUESTIONS

WHY ARE RECRUITERS ASKING THIS?

An “about” question is simple: “Tell me about yourself”.

Recruiters might start a first interview with some basic “about” questions as an icebreaker or to transition from small talk into the core interview. It sounds generic and informal, but there is an art to responding.

This is your chance to share your “elevator pitch” or describe yourself, keep it short and sweet, and for you to direct the rest of the conversation toward familiar subjects.

If you answer this question well, the interviewer will begin to find out why you're the best candidate for this job. It's a great opportunity to demonstrate your professional soft skills (communication and relatability) and to present yourself as the best candidate.

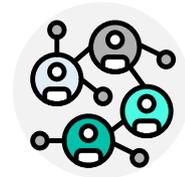
CHECKLIST FOR A GREAT ANSWER



Keep it short,
professional,
and positive



Do not over-share,
leave it open for
follow-up questions



Connect yourself
with the job and
the company

EXAMPLE

“Tell me about yourself”

“Sure! So I love writing and watching commercials. After I completed my masters, I joined a small agency. My first role was in copywriting and for the last 2 years I've been coaching new hires. I enjoy my job, but I'd like to pivot into more creative advertising to draw on my passion for video. In the last 5 years I wrote 3 30-second commercial spots, which I'd love to do more of, which is why I'm interested in this particular agency.”

OTHER SIMILAR QUESTIONS



Describe yourself
/ How would you
describe yourself?



Describe
your work
style.



Can you walk
us through your
resume?



Why did you choose this
(career, type of work)?



Do you have a personal
mission statement?



HOW TO ANSWER “ACADEMIC” QUESTIONS

WHY ARE RECRUITERS ASKING THIS?

An academic question is one based on your education, like:
“Explain your educational background.”

Recruiters might be interested to know what you studied if it is unclear on your CV. But most importantly, they might be interested in knowing why you chose your major and how it can be relevant to the job you’re discussing.

Academic questions are more likely to be asked if your education is not in line with the job description. This can be an opportunity for you to show uniqueness and help you stand apart from other candidates with traditional roles. It is a great time to show how your education has shaped the way you see the world and approach problems.

CHECKLIST FOR A GREAT ANSWER



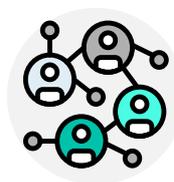
Keep it short



Have a clear
story line



Explain why you
chose your major/
educational focus



Connect what you
learned at school
with the job

EXAMPLE

I have a bachelor's in philosophy and a master's in marketing. I first decided to study philosophy at university because I was always curious about the meaning of Truth. I also think philosophy is amazing to understand arguments, logic, and structure problems. Philosophy was great to understand how the mind works, I decided to do marketing after my bachelor to apply this knowledge in a commercial setting.

OTHER SIMILAR QUESTIONS



Why did you choose your major?



What is the highest level of education you have received?



List any other education or training relevant to the (position title) position



HOW TO ANSWER “ACCOMPLISHMENT” QUESTIONS

WHY ARE RECRUITERS ASKING THIS?

Asking “What’s your greatest achievement” is a way to learn about your hard skills and work ethic, and the story you select can position you as a match for the company. Your choice shows what you consider important, and how you define success. What you describe explains your approach to doing a job and getting work done.

An “accomplishment” story is your time to shine. It’s still worth preparing so you can choose an answer that makes sense for the company and for the role you’d like.

A great way to answer questions on your professional achievements is using the STAR method: situation, task, action, results.

CHECKLIST FOR A GREAT ANSWER



STAR answer
(Situation –
Task – Action
–Result)



2 to 3
minutes
long



Lessons learned
coincide with job
description



Avoid using
“we” – focus
on you!



Quantifiable
and measurable
conclusion

EXAMPLE

When I was working at Save the Children, an NGO that works to alleviate poverty, we had some trouble reconciling the data coming from our African offices. It was starting to cause problems, so I decided to create a learning program for our accountants and IT workers. It went super well, and it was great to train our 50 employees with useful knowledge. It ended up saving the company 10% on their training budget, and the academy is still running to this day.

OTHER SIMILAR QUESTIONS



What has been the most rewarding experience of your career thus far?



What is your greatest personal achievement?



Which accomplishments in your present position are you proud of and why?



What do you consider the most important contribution your department has made to this organization?



HOW TO ANSWER “AVAILABILITY” QUESTIONS

WHY ARE RECRUITERS ASKING THIS?

Often recruiters have internal deadlines and procedures, so asking “When can you start” is a way of checking that your availability aligns with the company’s timeline.

There is not a perfect answer, and generally you should be honest with your availability. This is an opportunity for you to set expectations, to find a start date that works for both you and your future employer, so you can start your new job on the right track.

But of course, there is still a strategy. There are various answers to this question depending on your situation, but here are 4 of the most common types of replies to “when can you start?”:



You're available
now



You need to give
notice at your
current job



You need to leave
your current job and
you need a break
or vacation before
starting a new job



You need
to move or
relocate

HERE'S HOW TO REPLY TO EACH SITUATION:



YOU'RE AVAILABLE NOW

Even if you are available now, you should respond in a professional manner. Maybe you have been job searching for a long time, and you really are available now. Being flexible and accommodating is always a good idea but being over-eager could come across as desperate.



YOU NEED TO GIVE NOTICE AT YOUR CURRENT JOB

Maybe you are currently employed and need to give notice before leaving. Giving 2-weeks' notice is a minimum professional standard, but many European countries have far longer notice periods. Stating the truth without giving too many details is the best option.



YOU NEED TO LEAVE YOUR CURRENT JOB AND YOU NEED A BREAK OR VACATION BEFORE STARTING A NEW JOB

Or, maybe you have been working hard at a job you can't wait to leave, and you really need a break between starting fresh. Joining a new company takes a lot of energy, so time off is usually a good idea. Needing time to prepare is just a part of life. But, be more careful in this kind of reply, stay professional and don't overshare (for example, no need to say you'll be taking an extravagant vacation or getting drunk with friends).



YOU NEED TO MOVE OR RELOCATE

Relocating for a job is a deeper commitment. It may involve moving with a partner, kids or pets, which all have their own timelines. The recruiter should be aware of any relocation, because the company may be able to help you with it – by providing you with a package to support the move financially. Make sure to do your research on this though, because smaller companies may view relocation as an obstacle, so in that situation you should avoid dwelling on it.



Length – depends on your situation, but don't overshare too many details



Clear and succinct – the recruiter will write it down



Be honest and professional

EXAMPLE

**WHEN YOU WANT TO START IMMEDIATELY:**

"I am really interested in this role and I think it's a good fit for my skills and experience. I'm available to start next Monday."

**WHEN YOU NEED TO GIVE NOTICE:**

"I would be happy to join this company. I want to ensure a smooth transition for my current employer, so I need to give 3 weeks' notice before leaving. I would be happy to join your team on or after [estimated date]."

**WHEN YOU NEED A BREAK BETWEEN JOBS:**

"I'm looking forward to joining this team. I do have some previously scheduled plans and commitments to attend to after leaving my current job and before starting this role. Ideally, my start date would be [weeks or days] after receiving the offer."

Or, "I'm looking forward to joining this team. I do have some previously scheduled commitments; my ideal start date is [weeks or days] after receiving the offer. I'd be happy to work with you to find a date that works for both of us."

**WHEN YOU HAVE TO RELOCATE:**

"I'm excited to join this team. What's your timeline for the start date? [pause] Because this role requires relocation for me, I will need [weeks or months] to prepare my move after receiving the offer. I'd be happy to work with you to find a start date that works for both of us."

OTHER SIMILAR QUESTIONS



What's your availability like?



When can you start?

HOW TO ANSWER “COMPANY” QUESTIONS

WHY ARE RECRUITERS ASKING THIS?

“Why do you want to work for this company?” is one of the hardest questions to answer, and at the same time, one you should be most prepared for! After all, you sent the application and decided to accept the interview. Now, you just need to remember what attracted you to this job.

This question is your opportunity to demonstrate that you did your homework and prepared for the interview by learning about the company. It's also an opportunity for you to be unique. In this answer you should not talk too much about yourself, but instead focus on the company. You should be able to describe which aspects of the company are appealing to you in a specific way while avoiding general statements (like, “it's the best company to work for”). Also, complimenting the company or its leadership is never a bad move.

You can also reply in a way that is strategic so you can return back to this answer when you talk about yourself later – for instance, when you do get to talk about yourself in later questions, you can refer to what you described you liked about the company, and how it fits with you.



Less than 1
minute



Unique, original,
and specific



Focuses more on
them, not you

EXAMPLE

[Company name] is consistently listed as one of the top places to work in Europe. I've read several employee testimonials that cover personal development growth through education, training, and mentorship. From my research in my Master's degree, I know that employees engaged at work are more productive and have better quality outputs, which is evident in your latest campaign on social media. I would love to join your marketing team, to build on your great work, and grow within the company by learning new skills.

OTHER SIMILAR QUESTIONS



What do you know about our company?



Who are our competitors?



What is the name of our CEO?



Describe your perfect company



What do you know about our industry?



HOW TO ANSWER “CONFLICT” QUESTIONS

WHY ARE RECRUITERS ASKING THIS?

No one is perfect and day-to-day people do get into some conflicts. But, there is a difference between ranting about a conflict at work to your friends over drinks and sharing a conflict story in an interview. Preparing your answer will help you present your work-related conflicts in a professional manner.

Recruiters ask conflict questions because they are curious to know how you deal with difficult situations at work. Use the STAR model to answer, and explain how the conflict originated, but focus mostly on how it was resolved. Of course you want to highlight your talent in conflict resolution throughout the process.

It's okay to be uncomfortable, but don't avoid answering the question. And, if there are several follow-up questions, which can be the style of some companies, always remain calm. Remember, it's not personal, and conflicts happen to everyone.

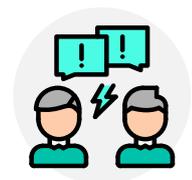
CHECKLIST FOR A GREAT ANSWER



2 to 3 minutes
long



STAR answer (Situation
- Task - Action -Result)



Use a professional conflict,
not a personal one



Showcases a value to
resolve conflict



Ideally a happy ending,
but not necessary

EXAMPLE

When I was organizing a conference for a large bank, my job was to recruit corporations to sponsor the event. My boss was not really happy with the familiar tone I used to speak to the representatives we were targeting. But according to me it was the best way to convince them to join. In the end, I ignored my boss' recommendations and was successful in multiplying the sponsorship amount by three. My supervisor was happy with the results, but the trust was broken, because he felt I was too casual and deliberately ignored him.

OTHER SIMILAR QUESTIONS



Tell me about a time when you disagreed with your boss



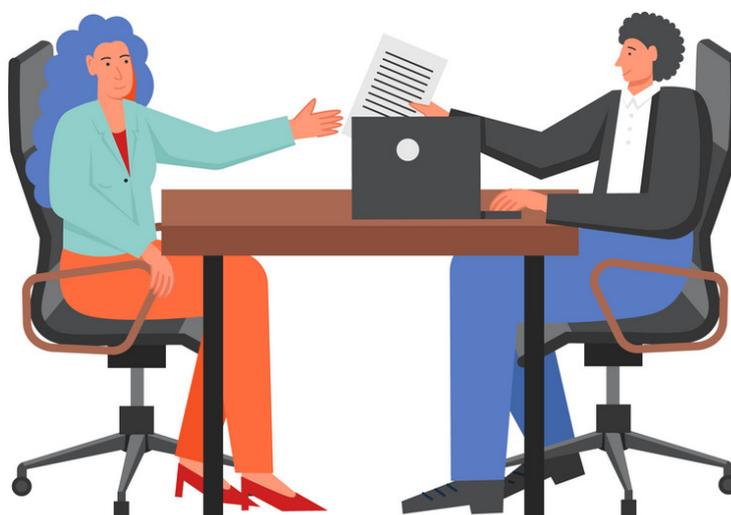
Tell me how you handled a difficult situation.



How have you dealt with an angry or upset customer?



Talk about a time when a co-worker was not doing their share on a project. How did you handle it?



HOW TO ANSWER “DEDICATION” QUESTIONS

WHY ARE RECRUITERS ASKING THIS?

Everyone has had difficult moments at work and at home. Handling disagreements or challenging situations is just a part of life. Recruiters may press you on “dedication” questions which are all a normal part of a behavioral interview. Behavioral questions feature your real experiences and provide insights into how you might handle similar situations in the future.

So when you're challenged on “how dedicated you are to your job”, how should you respond? Follow the STAR method – situation, task, action, result – be professional and avoid stories which may be perceived as petty. Avoid giving too many details, being too negative, or focusing too much on other people's opinions.

Prepare your answer in advance using Mockmate so it goes smoothly.

CHECKLIST FOR A GREAT ANSWER



Select a
professional
situation



STAR method



Less than 3
minutes, keep it
brief



Be realistic,
no one is a
superhero

EXAMPLE

In my role as account manager, I was responsible for managing relationships with 5 large clients. One time, a client was upset and asked my boss about my work on an email marketing campaign. My boss held a meeting to discuss with me, shared the feedback from the client, and criticized my work on the campaign. I disagreed, because I thought I had done everything according to our procedures and protocols, and I spent a lot of time researching data to drive the approach. I explained why I executed the campaign the way I did, and advocated for myself.

It was hard to be approached this way by my boss, so I took a second to think and slow down. I remained calm and explained my reasoning. My approach also helped my boss to understand and de-escalated the situation. Although my boss understood, he still didn't agree completely. As someone that holds themselves to high standards, this was hard for me to hear, especially since I had taken a lot of care and time with that campaign. After listening to what my boss had to say, I became aware of some improvements I needed to make, particularly to ensure the continuity of the client relationship.

I apologized to the client, and made plans to correct the campaign in line with their expectations. I learned that even though I did the research and followed our internal procedures, I need to also communicate directly and openly with my boss internally, and with the client. In the end, I found that the most important thing was ensuring the happiness of the client, and the key to achieving this was putting my ego to the side in order to accomplish the goal.

OTHER SIMILAR QUESTIONS



Tell me about a time when you disagreed with your boss



Tell me how you handled a difficult situation.



How have you dealt with an angry or upset customer?



Talk about a time when a co-worker was not doing their share on a project. How did you handle it?

HOW TO ANSWER “ETHICS” QUESTIONS

WHY ARE RECRUITERS ASKING THIS?

Recruiters ask “ethics” questions to understand your morals and integrity. One example could be “Is it acceptable to lie in business?” or “Does your resume have any exaggerations or lies in it?”.

If an interviewer asks you this question, don’t take it personally and don’t be alarmed. Answer truthfully.

Another type of “ethics” question could be about companies you’ve worked for. For example, if you were employed at Facebook and responsible for the Cambridge Analytica account, or working at Volkswagen on emissions during “dieselgate”, you likely have a story to tell. In telling this story, you should follow the STAR method – situation, task, action, result. If you have these kinds of stand-out experiences you should prepare to be asked about them in an interview.

CHECKLIST FOR A GREAT ANSWER



Select a professional
situation



Be honest



STAR
method



Less than 2 minutes,
keep it brief



If you’re uncomfortable,
make a light joke

EXAMPLE

"I don't believe it's okay to lie in business. Any short-term wins will be undercut by long-term losses. I prefer to treat people at work the way I'd like to be treated."

Or

"Well I say I like to exercise but in reality, I might not get to the gym as often as I like. But I believe integrity at work is important, and try my best to uphold my ideals"

OTHER SIMILAR QUESTIONS



Have you ever been in a business situation that was ethically questionable? What did you do?



Would you ever lie for a company?



HOW TO ANSWER “FAILURE” QUESTIONS

WHY ARE RECRUITERS ASKING THIS?

It's okay to fail. It happens to everyone, and having “failure” experiences are an important and necessary part of learning.

When recruiters ask “failure” questions it can be surprising or uncomfortable. When selecting a story where things didn't go as well as you wanted, avoid sharing really huge mistakes, and also avoid unrealistically simple answers. No one is perfect, and if you say you are, it's not believable. If an interviewer asks you about your failures or mistakes, pick a real situation that you can speak honestly about. It doesn't need to be the worst mistake of your career, it's probably best to pick a story you feel somewhat comfortable to share.

Start by defining what you consider failure to be (which varies from person to person) which can help you frame the answer as you like. Explain what you learned and how you try to avoid these kinds of issues in the future.

CHECKLIST FOR A GREAT ANSWER



Prepare a story in advance (focusing on negative traits can be uncomfortable and takes practice)



Highlight your role in the failure even if it was a team or group result – the story is about you



Use the STAR method



Don't give too many details or try to convince the interviewer

EXAMPLE

My biggest professional failure was in my previous role as a project manager at XYZ Consulting. Our team failed to land a \$4 million new project from one of our existing long-term clients. It should have been easy, but we didn't have enough time to prepare the bid well enough. We considered that because we knew everyone at the client's office we would automatically be awarded the contract. Our pitch went well but we didn't dedicate the time to think about the proposal in detail and it showed. The client received other bids that really had a 360-approach. Losing this business was disappointing, particularly for me as I felt responsible for the bid we prepared, and I love getting new business. So, to make sure this wouldn't happen again, I volunteered to do an internal post-mortem evaluation to learn from this experience. The lessons learned are still leading the company's bid preparation process to this day.

OTHER SIMILAR QUESTIONS



Tell me about a time you failed. How did you deal with the situation?



What was your biggest mistake?



Tell me about a major setback you've had. How did you deal with it?



We all make mistakes we wish we could take back. Tell me about a time you wish you'd handled a situation differently with a colleague.



Give me an example of a time when you did not meet a client's expectation. What happened, and how did you attempt to rectify the situation?

HOW TO ANSWER “FUTURE” QUESTIONS

WHY ARE RECRUITERS ASKING THIS?

“So, where do you see yourself in 5 years?” or “What’s your dream job?”

Recruiters ask future-oriented questions to understand your expectations for your career, your ambitions, and if this position is a match.

It might be uncomfortable, but you should be humble and honest. Think about the position you’re interviewing for and how it is a match with your professional goals, without being over-ambitions (i.e. “I want to be the CEO!”)

The reason people ask this question is to learn what skills you want to use, what your interests are, and what you value. You don’t need to focus on job titles or force yourself to match the role you’re applying for exactly.

And what if this position is not what you really want for your career, but you need a job? Then frame it honestly but leave it open-ended. After all, we never know what the future may hold.

CHECKLIST FOR A GREAT ANSWER



Select a professional situation



Be honest



STAR method



Less than 2 minutes, keep it brief



If you’re uncomfortable, make a light joke

EXAMPLE

"I am excited about this position at XYZ Corp, because in 5 years I want to be viewed as someone with deep expertise in the e-commerce sector. I know that's something I'd have an opportunity to build on here as an account manager. I'm also excited to take on more managerial responsibilities in the next few years and even lead certain campaigns. I've had some wonderful managers and initial results, so I aspire to continue to develop these skills in myself so I can be given more responsibility moving forward."

OTHER SIMILAR QUESTIONS



Where do you see yourself in five years? Ten years?



What is your dream job?



What are your career goals?



How long do you expect to work for this company?



Why are you changing careers?



HOW TO ANSWER “GAP” QUESTIONS



WHY ARE RECRUITERS ASKING THIS?

Taking a career timeout may be a choice, or it may not. Layoffs and firings happen even in the best economy. Maybe you needed time off for your mental health. Maybe you didn't like your job and decided to travel. Or maybe you had a baby or a sick family member that required you to step back for a few years. Today, companies are filled with people who for one reason or another did not have continual employment.

In any situation, when you're ready to get back into the market, you'll likely be faced with a question about how you spent your time. Here's how to answer the "explain the gap in your resume" question.

First, you want to be prepared for these questions, especially if it is a sensitive subject for you. Responding with confidence and honesty is best, and both will help in uncomfortable situations where you want to avoid in-depth follow up questions.

CHECKLIST FOR A GREAT ANSWER



Prepare! Especially if it makes you feel uncomfortable



Act confidently



Keep it brief, don't over-share

EXAMPLE

"In 2010 after a change in management, my position was made redundant. Due to the economic crisis at the time, I found it challenging to continue working in journalism, and instead decided to freelance until a suitable position came along."

Or

"For personal reasons I left my job at StressCorp which required me to be on-call 24/7. I had a family emergency and I cared for an aged family member during a difficult time. Now, I'm eager to get back into working life. I've stayed relevant in this field by religiously reading Marketing Monthly, and through my professional networking in Hubspot online marketing forums where I enjoy giving advice."

OTHER SIMILAR QUESTIONS



Why was there a gap in your employment between [insert date] and [insert date]?



Can you explain these gaps in your resume?



HOW TO ANSWER “HOBBIES” QUESTIONS



WHY ARE RECRUITERS ASKING THIS?

“What do you like to do for fun?”

When you're asked this question, it may be because the interviewer wants to know you as a person better, to understand your passions and your personality.

Usually a cover letter and resume are formal, so this kind of question can be an opportunity to find commonality, or to test your cultural fit.

If you've researched the person you're interviewing with, and you see they've Tweeted often about football, then go ahead and your love for the Champions League. Or, you can just be true to yourself and talk about your hobbies regardless of ensuring a perfect match.

Should the interviewer veer toward unprofessional behavior in the context of this question, (“Like, oh we should grab a drink sometime to talk about that.”) you can and should remain professional (e.g. “I would be happy to discuss with you and the rest of the team, in a professional setting.”)

CHECKLIST FOR A GREAT ANSWER



Be real, let your personality show



Stay professional
(even if they don't)



Be human, people can't
work without fun!

EXAMPLE

"Well, I enjoy reading non-fiction, particularly mystery novels like Jack Reacher. On the weekends I play football with a local club team. I saw this company posted photos of a charity football tournament last month. Is that something that you do often?"

OTHER SIMILAR QUESTIONS



What are your hobbies?



What do you do in your spare time?



What are some of your hobbies?



HOW TO ANSWER “LEADERSHIP” QUESTIONS



WHY ARE RECRUITERS ASKING THIS?

Recruiters want to know if you have the potential of becoming a leader in the company. They want to assess how you manage groups of people and if you will inspire the rest of the company with charisma and team spirit.

This is usually a behavioral type of question and requires the STAR answer method.

The answer needs to be inspirational but does not really need to be from a professional point of view. It can be sports or some other example where you lead a team.

CHECKLIST FOR A GREAT ANSWER



Avoid using “We”



2 to 3 minutes long



STAR method



Can be a personal story



Be charismatic
and inspirational



Has a happy ending

EXAMPLE

My most recent experience leading was when I planned a business conference in Barcelona. I was told last minute that we needed to set up a fair where we could invite all new potential prospects. It was a really great feeling to get in contact with all my favorite companies. It required me to be convincing but also very organized. It was not an easy task to shepherd 50 important clients around the city, but it was a huge success.

OTHER SIMILAR QUESTIONS



What are some of your leadership experiences?



Do you prefer to work alone or on a team?



Describe a time you chose to not help a teammate.



What is your management style?



HOW TO ANSWER “LOCATION” QUESTIONS



WHY ARE RECRUITERS ASKING THIS?

Location can be flexible, depending on your situation. You may be faced with a 2+ hour commute for the perfect job. Or you may be in London and prefer to live in Dubai. Or maybe the role you're interviewing for requires 80% travel. Understanding why this question is asked is key. Mostly, it is to exclude candidates.

If you want to relocate, you'll need to emphasize your flexibility. Feel free to elaborate, but never provide too many details especially early in the process. If you think the role is flexible and you'd rather not relocate, then be vague in your reply to keep your options open as long as you can, until you learn more about the role.

It is possible to explain that you're not willing to relocate without taking yourself out of consideration, but it requires additional verbal gymnastics.

In the case of extensive or frequent travel, you may want to avoid giving too many details of your personal life until you learn more about the position (such as the salary) which might offset any added costs of child or pet care.

Approach "location" questions with care, especially early on in the process.

CHECKLIST FOR A GREAT ANSWER



Keep your options open until you feel comfortable replying (for instance, having children shouldn't exclude you, unless you want it to)



Don't lie outright. If you're not interested in relocating and never will be, it will be hard to negotiate if you had previously stated you would relocate.

EXAMPLE

"I understand that many sales roles require 75% travel as I have experience in this field. I'll be interested to learn more about support from the home office to help streamline these sales trips."

OTHER SIMILAR QUESTIONS



Are you willing to relocate?



Are you willing to travel?



HOW TO ANSWER “MISCELLANEOUS” QUESTIONS



WHY ARE RECRUITERS ASKING THIS?

“What should I know that isn't on your CV?”

“Is there anything else we should know?”

This and other miscellaneous-style questions are typically open-ended and can be somewhat disarming. They're usually asked to understand your personality and character, not your specific work experiences.

As an interviewee, you can use these questions to highlight things that will help sell you the position.

If nothing comes to mind, you can always just summarise in two sentences why you think you're a good fit for the position. Or, talk about a positive story you haven't shared in responding to the other questions.

CHECKLIST FOR A GREAT ANSWER



Don't repeat a story
you've already shared



Short & sweet, not a
long winded story

EXAMPLE

"I coach my nephew's basketball team, where I learn interesting approaches to management. It also means I'm trained in CPR, with annual refresher courses. I really enjoy working with the kids, helping them to improve, and I think that I learn as much from them, as they do from me."

OTHER SIMILAR QUESTIONS



What is your favorite website?



What makes you uncomfortable?



What questions haven't I asked you?



Are you a morning person?



What is your favorite movie of all time and why?



HOW TO ANSWER “MOTIVATIONAL” QUESTIONS



WHY ARE RECRUITERS ASKING THIS?

“What motivates you?” sounds like a pretty intense question! Here’s how to answer in an interview. This question aims to understand your own personal interests and values. It is completely possible to present yourself as a well-rounded person with a life outside the workplace, although you might want to draw on professional motivations more than family or money (unless the role is sales).

The answers to this depends on the person, and the role you are interviewing for. If you’re applying for a commission-driven sales role, then being motivated by money shouldn’t be viewed as a negative. Or if you’re interviewing for a non-profit, you probably want to have similar values as the organization you are applying for.

This question is a way for recruiters to see if your motivations align with the company culture. Start by reading the company website to understand their own values and style. You can also search the company on LinkedIn and find an employee that you have a mutual connection with. You may be able to strike up a conversation with them to get a firsthand view of the inner workings of the company.

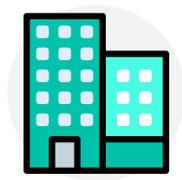
CHECKLIST FOR A GREAT ANSWER



2 to 3 minutes
long



To the point



Match your values
with the company’s



Not too
personal

EXAMPLE

I'm driven to work for a company that positively impacts the world by using technology. My first role was in a water-purifying startup. This company was leveraging their innovative technology to supply rural communities in Africa with clean water. To date, that company has delivered drinkable water to 1 million people. After this, I created my own company to help gardeners have better control over their water usage with the use of an app. Lastly, I created my own consulting firm and assisted pharma conglomerates in Asia to help them transform themselves using the power of the cloud. All of my experiences have shown me how technology can be used both in small and large companies to create efficiencies and help advance the human experience.

OTHER SIMILAR QUESTIONS



What are you passionate about?



What gets you up in the morning?



What motivates you?



What do you consider are your personal values?



How do you handle pressure?



What gets you up in the morning?

HOW TO ANSWER “OVERDID FOR A CLIENT” QUESTIONS

WHY ARE RECRUITERS ASKING THIS?

Recruiters want to understand your passion and motivation for the role you are applying for, how you solve problems, and a situation where you positively represented your company.

This question allows you to describe your interests, your story, and how you relate to people and understand their needs.

This is also a great opportunity to highlight your self-awareness. By showing that you understood the situation and were able to perform above the expected level demonstrates both your skill level and mental clarity.

OTHER SIMILAR QUESTIONS



Demonstrate
problem-solving
skills



Tell a story with details and
tailor it to the role you're
interviewing for



Show experience
with stakeholder
management

EXAMPLE

"In my previous company, there were protocols that prevented one customer support representative from referring customers to another representative of the same seniority. This meant that if I couldn't solve an issue I would have to transfer the customer to another department or to my superior, and customers hate nothing more than being passed around and explaining their problem to multiple people. To avoid transferring calls I would take some simple, but thorough steps to solve their issue. First, I would collect as much information from the customer as possible. Problems are most effectively solved using as much of the available information as possible. Second, I would follow the normal protocol for what I believed to be the issue. If this didn't seem to work, I would retrace my steps and ensure that I was communicating effectively with the customer in order to completely understand their problem. If I ran into a situation where I didn't think I could help them, I would keep them on the line while I went and asked someone for the information that I needed. This prevented my managers from getting trivial calls as well as created a personal connection with the customers. I wanted to make sure that they didn't feel like just another support call, but a valued member of our clientbase.

OTHER SIMILAR QUESTIONS



Tell me about a time when you went above and beyond the requirements for a project



What does customer service mean to you?



Tell me about a time when you had to stretch yourself to get to an extraordinary result

HOW TO ANSWER “PRIORITIZATION” QUESTIONS

WHY ARE RECRUITERS ASKING THIS?

Time management is important for everyone. In an interview, it's the time for the company to get to know if you can meet the demands of the job. Your ability to prioritize your work is important for most jobs, and interviewers want to ensure that you can get the tasks done in the right order.

When you answer, using the STAR method, it's important to pick a story where you can demonstrate your communication skills, understand the big picture, and be efficient. You might also describe a time when your approach helped you in an unexpected or challenging situation.

OTHER SIMILAR QUESTIONS



Select a compelling story, where you can showcase your skills



Describe in detail the methods you use (to-do list? technology?)



STAR method

EXAMPLE

but also allows me to visualize my daily priorities. This is especially useful when unexpected issues arise and I need to re-evaluate what is the most important task to accomplish. Throughout my experience I have found that leaving a little bit of "wiggle room" throughout that day allows me to pivot my priorities when necessary.

One example of this occurred about one month ago. I had a full day scheduled with follow up calls to our current clients. Around 11am as I was in the thick of my tasks, my manager came to me with urgency. She needed help preparing a presentation for a huge potential client later that day. I realized I could move my follow up calls to the following day, as the presentation was extremely important and time sensitive.

Because I understood my tasks for the day, I put myself in a position where I was able to decipher what was most important. I was able shift my priorities to help my manager accomplish a more pressing matter without sacrificing other time sensitive tasks. In the end I felt very proud, especially because my manager was able to secure the big client!

OTHER SIMILAR QUESTIONS



Tell me about a time you had to be very strategic in order to meet all your top priorities.



Tell me about a time you set a goal for yourself. How did you go about ensuring that you would meet your objective?



How do you manage your time?



How do you keep yourself organized?

HOW TO ANSWER “PROBLEM SOLVING” QUESTIONS

WHY ARE RECRUITERS ASKING THIS?

Problem solving interview questions test your skills of analysis, information gathering, and logical decision making. They usually take the form of “Tell me about a difficult problem you had to solve. How did you solve it?”

Companies want to know how you will handle (normal) problems that happen at work.

To answer this kind of question, tell a specific story where you solved a problem, listing the information step-by-step and describing your critical thinking.

OTHER SIMILAR QUESTIONS



Explain your
thinking



Use the STAR
Method



Focus on results and
end on a good note!

EXAMPLE

"When I was working as a retail manager, I had a customer who came in to pick up a dress that she had ordered online. But when I went to collect her order, I found that the dress had accidentally been put back on the sales floor and purchased by another customer. I called another of our store locations and asked them to hold the same dress in the customer's size. I had it shipped to her home within 2 days for free. A week later, I found out that the customer had called our corporate headquarters to mention how much she appreciated the gesture. In the moment all I was concerned about was making sure the customer would return to our store. We are all human and mistakes happen, but it was important to me that I rectify the situation. In the end I realized that in my efforts to serve the customer well, it positively affected my standing with HQ."

OTHER SIMILAR QUESTIONS



Describe a time where you had to make an important decision quickly. What did you decide? What were the results?



Have you ever had a project that had to change drastically while it was in progress? Why? How did you do it?



Talk about a difficult problem you've had to solve. How did you solve it?



Tell me about a problem you solved in a creative way.

HOW TO ANSWER “SALARY EXPECTATION” QUESTIONS

WHY ARE RECRUITERS ASKING THIS?

In an interview it might seem like a casual request, but it's one of the most important questions to be prepared for!

Talking about compensation can get stressful, so first you should do your research to understand a typical salary for the role, company, and market. If you decide to give a number, provide a range and be flexible. Salary is usually negotiable.

So, we advise delaying providing an amount, and requesting the company to provide an amount first. (“Well, I've done my research, but I could use some insight from you. What salary range does this position and seniority usually offer in this city?”)

Salary depends on a lot of variables, including the location and the person. In some places it's illegal to ask about salary history (California) so find a way to tactfully reply if asked in this circumstance. Once the offer is made, you can (and really should) consider asking for more. According to MIT, there's a racial bias in salary offers, and according to staffing firm Randstad, 60% of women have never negotiated their salary. Don't leave money on the table!

OTHER SIMILAR QUESTIONS



Do your research to be prepared



Try to avoid giving a specific amount if possible



Don't be afraid to be too high (but be flexible)



Once the offer is given you can (and should!) always negotiate

EXAMPLE

"I'd like to hear what salary range you have for this position. I'm open to discuss so we can find something that works for both of us."

OR

"Based on my previous salary, my knowledge of the industry, and my experience in this market, I would imagine a range of \$65,000 to 75,000, depending on the package and benefits available."

OTHER SIMILAR QUESTIONS



What are your salary requirements?



Can you discuss your salary history?



What are your salary requirements?

HOW TO ANSWER “TELL ME ABOUT YOURSELF” QUESTIONS

WHY ARE RECRUITERS ASKING THIS?

This question takes some form of “So, what makes you special?” or “Walk me through your resume”. This is usually the first question asked by recruiters during any round of interviews. This needs to be well prepared, because it will be the interviewer’s first impression of your personality and skills. Your answer should last around 2 to 3 minutes - enough time to tell a complete story, but not too long that the interviewer starts to tune out. The idea is not to repeat everything that is on your CV, but rather tell the story of how you ended up sitting in the chair across from the interviewer. Make sure you explain why you moved from one job to another (or didn't), and the learnings that came with those decisions. Ideally, those learnings coincide with the qualifications detailed in the job description, and also show that your career has followed a clear path.

OTHER SIMILAR QUESTIONS



2 to 3 minutes long



Clear story line



Lessons learned coincide
with job description



Do not repeat
your CV directly



Explain why you
are applying now

EXAMPLE

My first job was at a company in complex cables manufacturing. I was part of the team managing its largest accounts in the construction industry. Although I learned a lot on the production side during this time, I was never in love with the manufacturing industry. When my wife got a great job opportunity in Barcelona, we decided that we both needed a change. We decided to make the move to Spain where I found a job as account manager for a software company. The biggest challenge for me was to switch from a very physical product to a purely digital one. It was not easy at the start, but I loved the product and the impact it had on our customers. After my successful experience securing more than 500 new clients at my former firm, I'm now looking for a new challenge by working in a larger tech enterprise.

OTHER SIMILAR QUESTIONS



Tell me about your work experience?



Guide me through your resume



How would you describe yourself?



What were your responsibilities in your previous jobs?



HOW TO ANSWER “STRENGTHS” QUESTIONS

WHY ARE RECRUITERS ASKING THIS?

“What are your strengths?” is a classic interview question, and you should be prepared to answer.

In your answer you get to focus on what you like doing, what you're good at and what makes you feel good. Tell a story and be memorable - don't just list adjectives like a thesaurus.

This is a fairly open-ended question and depending when it is asked, you might have different answers. If you've already covered a few basic behavioral questions, and this question comes last, then it's your chance to deliver a final pitch of why you're the best candidate for this job.

There's no generic reply for this question, and there shouldn't be! Use this question to talk about how great you are. And if that thought makes you uncomfortable, prepare the answer in advance and rehearse a few times.

OTHER SIMILAR QUESTIONS



Tell a story with
STAR Method



Don't be generic or
unoriginal



Uncomfortable talking
about how great you
are? Prepare it well!

EXAMPLE

Although I studied financial accounting, I really like to write, which isn't obvious based on my CV. I'd like to tell you about that now because I believe it makes me a more well-rounded candidate. I'm often the team member assigned to writing the context for the slide deck, after perfecting the Excel model. I seem to be able to succinctly and concretely summarize what's most important for the client. Last month, I even created a 50-slide deck with a model in one evening, when a colleague got sick. We were able to keep the meeting with the client and deliver the presentation without any issues. I even have a personal travel blog if you're looking for your next vacation destination.

OTHER SIMILAR QUESTIONS



What are your strengths?



What would your direct reports say about you?



What are some positive things your last boss would say about you?



How do people describe you?

HOW TO ANSWER “WEAKNESSES” QUESTIONS

WHY ARE RECRUITERS ASKING THIS?

No one is perfect. If you're not aware of things you need to improve, then you don't seem self-aware or honest. Everyone has strengths and weaknesses. But you can strike a balance in responding to this type of question.

Don't try to be overly clever and dodge the question by listing something that you think the interviewer might be impressed with. They have heard just about every answer in the book. Try to be honest about one of your flaws without making it sound like it will prevent you from doing your work. This way, if you end up getting the job, they will expect the weakness that you mentioned in the interview and most likely be a bit more forgiving.

Additionally, it is also a good idea to mention that you are working on improving your weaknesses. This not only emphasizes your self-awareness, but it discreetly highlights your ability to see problems and take action to solve them.

In any instance be sure to tell a story and try to quantify your answer where possible. One person's view of "too long" or "too much" is another person's "too little" and "too short"!

OTHER SIMILAR QUESTIONS



Tell a relatable story



Explain your approach to fix it



2 to 3 minutes long



STAR Method

EXAMPLE

"In my first role as a manager of a sales team, I was responsible for a team of 3 people who were all around my same age. In addition to this role, I was continuing to manage my own accounts. Doing both seemed stressful, and I had previously received feedback that I could improve my time management. I was happy to be promoted to manager, but unsure of how to establish the relationship among my former colleagues and manage my own time so I wasn't working excessive hours (usually 60+ hours per week). I decided to set 2 check-in meetings with my team each week. With a fixed appointment, I didn't feel like a micromanager, and my team could also anticipate these times to bring forward issues. Ultimately it is a more efficient use of everyone's time and helped me to transition into the role as manager."

OTHER SIMILAR QUESTIONS



What are your weaknesses?



What are three things your former manager would like you to improve on?



What is your least favorite thing about yourself?



Why shouldn't we hire you?

HOW TO ANSWER “WHY DO YOU WANT TO WORK FOR US?”

WHY ARE RECRUITERS ASKING THIS?

This is one of the most common questions, and to some people the most important question. “Why us?” Recruiters ask this, because it’s a shortcut summary of your motivations. If you’ve mentioned this in your cover letter, great - you’ve already done the legwork. It would be a good idea to reference that story or talk about the same topics. This question can take many forms, and you should tailor your answer to the style of questioning. However, you can keep the same basic elements in your reply. Remember that an interview is a lot like a first date, so make sure to explain what makes you and the company a great fit. Talk about yourself, not just the company, and how you see the two of you doing great things together.

It may be uncomfortable, but this kind of question is great to present a short pitch for you getting the job. Make sure your answer isn’t too generic - everyone wants to work for the top companies (because they’re the top companies). But do your research and try to find an angle that speaks to you and then explain why.

OTHER SIMILAR QUESTIONS



Be unique and specific, to be memorable



Pitch yourself



Don't be afraid of a personal story



Be charismatic and inspirational

EXAMPLE

EY is my top choice for my first role because first I want to work in consulting. Why I want to work specifically for EY, has to do with values and "building a better working world." For the last 2 years I've volunteered with Dress for Success, a nonprofit which helps empower women at work. I've followed EY's approach to gender equality and I appreciate how you can bring your whole self to work. I'd like to build my career in an inclusive environment, while developing my skills and advancing my expertise in financial consulting, and EY is someplace I see myself accomplishing that.

OTHER SIMILAR QUESTIONS



Why are you interested in working for [insert company name here]?



What would you look to accomplish in the first 30 days/60 days/90 days on the job?



Why should we hire you?



Why do you want this job?



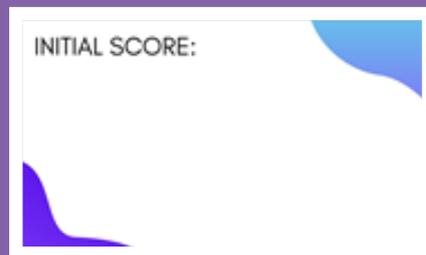
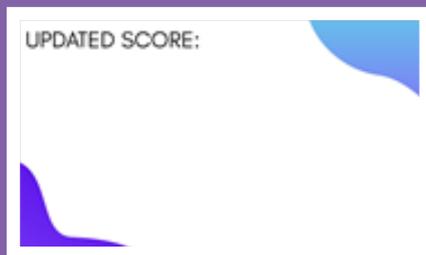
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You should reward yourself! You've been working hard to improve your skills so you can hopefully advance your career. That is an admirable task to undertake, and it is important to acknowledge that.

Now it's time to put all your new knowledge to use and test yourself, with our free AI job interview simulator Mockmate.com

Go back to the first page, where you tested out Mockmate. Have you improved?



The journey is just beginning. Go out into the world and give those newly sharpened skills a test. Start by applying for jobs, maybe even jobs you are overqualified for, to get an interview that you can use as a real-life test. Then, after a couple of dress rehearsals, it will be time to chase that dream job! Of course, nothing in life is guaranteed, but putting in the preparation work will increase your chances of having a successful interview.

We hope this guide has been helpful, and if there is anything else you hope to see from Mockmate, let us know!

We wish you all the best in your job hunt and keep up the good work!

To your success!

-The Mockmate Team

MOCKMATE