Common interview questions

Organisations hold interviews to find out if candidates:

- can do the job – do they have the relevant skills and experience?
- will do the job – are they motivated?
- will fit in with the culture and the team.

Interviews vary from job to job. They are a key part of the recruitment process and it is crucial to be well prepared.

Your invitation to interview will usually give you an idea of what you can expect. It may give you details about the interviewers, the format, and whether there will be any tests.

If you are unsure about what to expect, you can contact the recruiter for more information or ask the Careers and Employability Centre for advice.

This resource covers some common interview questions. Use it to think about questions you may be asked, and to plan and prepare your answers.
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Your motivations

- Why do you want to work for us?
- What do you know about our organisation?
- What interests you about this career?

Your skills and competencies

- Describe a time when things were difficult and you were working under pressure. You could refer to a challenging task or assignment.
- Give an example of a time when you used your initiative.
- Tell me about an ethical dilemma you faced.
- Can you give me an example of when you had to solve a problem?
- Describe a time when you had to explain something complex in simple terms.
- Give me an example of a time you worked in a team. What was your role?
- Describe a time when you had to make a difficult decision. How did you go about this?

Your strengths

- What are you good at?
- What comes easily to you?
- What do you learn quickly?
- What did you find easiest to learn at school or university?
- What subjects do you most enjoy studying?
- What gives you energy?
- Describe a successful day you have had.
- When did you achieve something you were really proud of?
- Do you prefer to start tasks or to finish them?
- Do you find you have enough hours in the day to complete all the things you want to do?
Scenario question

You are supporting a colleague with a project. The deadline is in two hours and it is very important that you meet this deadline. At short notice, your manager has just asked you to attend a very important meeting in their place. This is a great opportunity for you but will mean you will miss the deadline. What do you do?

Your knowledge of the sector

- In your opinion, what challenges is this industry facing now?
- Who are our main competitors?

Your career aspirations

- How do you see your career developing?
- Where do you see yourself in five years?

Concluding the interview

- Do you have any questions for us?

More resources

Take a virtual mock interview and use video training, mock interview questions and an answer builder to prepare.

Big Interview: https://sussex.biginterview.com/

Graduates First: https://www.graduatesfirst.com/university-career-services/sussex/

Read our information on preparing for interviews, including using the STAR technique: www.sussex.ac.uk/careers/interviews