

Top Five Interview Questions

There are many questions every jobseeker should be ready for, no matter what the position. Many are very common, yet they're also the ones that pose the greatest challenge when you're sitting in the hot seat, especially if you haven't fully prepared a response.

I have outlined below the five most popular interview questions and given some guidelines on how to best answer them:

1) Tell me about yourself

This question is often used to put candidates at their ease, before the interview "proper" begins. Because the question is so unstructured, it can be quite challenging..... what do you include/leave out, do you focus on your professional or personal life? To answer this question well, you need to bear in mind the following:

- Keep the answer concise – it should last for no longer than two minutes
- From word go, get across your enthusiasm for the role
- Do not simply run through your whole CV – instead focus on 3 or 4 key areas that would be of most interest to the employer for this particular position
- Keep the focus on your professional life

2) Why did you apply to this position?

Many people when asked this question focus on the benefits they will get from joining the company. You need to turn the tables and explain how your background is closely aligned with the job spec and how you would add value to the employer.

3) What do you know about this company?

By showing a deep knowledge of the company, you will convince the employer that you do not just want any job, but want a role in *their* company. In a period of high unemployment, this is crucial. Research the company website, read around the company by doing a search of archived articles in the Irish Times/ Irish Independent/Financial Times or trade journals.

4) What are your strengths/weaknesses?

To answer this question effectively, you need to firstly analyse the job spec to understand the most important qualities sought by the employer. Then identify your own strengths and highlight those that most closely match the employer's needs. I would suggest highlighting three or four strengths and having a small example to back each one up.

Unlike strengths, you only need to choose one weakness! Whatever weakness you choose, be clear to let the employer know that you have focused on this developmental area and have now successfully overcome it. Employers want to know that you are self aware and always looking for ways to develop and do things better.

5) Do you have any questions you would like to ask us?

You need to have 2 to 3 questions up your sleeve. From an employer perspective, this shows real interest in the role. You could ask for clarification on information given earlier in the interview or you could ask questions on

structure of department you would be working in, reporting lines, IT systems etc. Do not ask question on salary or terms and conditions of employment.

Conclusion

If you want more detailed information on how to answer specific interview questions go to our website www.interviewtechniques.ie

About the Author

Laura McGrath is the owner of *Interview Techniques*, a leading provider of interview coaching services. She has spent the last 15 years in staffing and recruitment and is a regular contributor with *Recruit Ireland* and the *Sunday Business Post*.

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