

# How to Ace the 50 Most Common Interview Questions

Most people's biggest job-hunting fear is being put on the spot by oddball interview questions such as these (which are real):

"Describe the color yellow to someone who's blind." – *Spirit Airlines*

"If you were asked to unload a 747 full of jellybeans, what would you do?" – *Bose*

"Who would win in a fight between Spiderman and Batman?" – *Stanford University*

Offbeat questions are nearly impossible to prepare for, and they don't achieve the interviewer's objective—to test out-of-the-box thinking and the ability to perform under pressure. That's the bad news.

The good news is that companies are moving away from them. Recent research shows these questions do little more than boost the interviewer's confidence. Even companies famous for oddball questions are abandoning them. In the words of Laszlo Bock, Google's HR chief:

*"If you've heard that Google likes to pose brain-teaser questions to candidates—like why manhole covers are round—your information is out of date. There's no evidence that they suggest how people perform on the job."*

A [Glassdoor study](#) of tens of thousands of interviews found **the 50 questions you're most likely to be asked in your next interview:**

1. What are your strengths?
2. What are your weaknesses?
3. Why are you interested in working for us?
4. Where do you see yourself in 5 years? 10 years?
5. Why do you want to leave your current company?
6. What can you offer us that someone else can't?
7. Why was there a gap in your employment between these two dates?
8. What are three things your former manager would like you to improve on?
9. Are you willing to relocate?
10. Are you willing to travel?
11. Tell me about an accomplishment you are most proud of.
12. Tell me about a time you made a mistake.
13. What is your dream job?
14. How did you hear about this position?
15. What would you accomplish in the first 30/60/90 days on the job?
16. Discuss your resume.
17. Discuss your educational background.
18. Describe yourself.
19. Tell me how you handled a difficult situation.
20. Why should we hire you?
21. Why are you looking for a new job?
22. Would you work holidays/weekends?
23. How would you deal with an angry or irate customer?
24. What are your salary requirements?
25. Give a time when you went above and beyond the requirements for a project.
26. Who are our competitors?
27. What was your biggest failure?
28. What motivates you?
29. What's your availability?
30. Who's your mentor?
31. Tell me about a time when you disagreed with your boss.
32. How do you handle pressure?
33. What is the name of our CEO?
34. What are your career goals?
35. What gets you up in the morning?

36. What would your direct reports say about you?
37. What were your bosses' strengths/weaknesses?
38. If I called your boss right now and asked him what is an area that you could improve on, what would he say?
39. Are you a leader or a follower?
40. What was the last book you read for fun?
41. What are your co-worker pet peeves?
42. What are your hobbies?
43. What is your favorite website?
44. What makes you uncomfortable?
45. What are some of your leadership experiences?
46. How would you fire someone?
47. What do you like the most and least about working in this industry?
48. Would you work 40+ hours a week?
49. What questions haven't I asked you?
50. What questions do you have for me?

Though these questions may be less exciting to prepare for than "Spiderman vs. Batman," they are what you need to be ready for.

Most interviewees are only prepared for about 10 questions, so this list alone can give you a leg up. Study the list carefully and have answers ready—but not robotically rehearsed—so that you can speak comfortably, flexibly, and confidently about each of these topics.

If you want to make a great impression and stand out from the crowd, preparing for these 50 questions is not enough. Follow the 9 strategies below and weave the knowledge they impart into your responses. Then you'll truly ace your interview.

### **1. Identify Your "Hook"**

Most hiring managers interview a lot of people. So many that they generally have to go back to their notes to remember candidates—the exception being candidates with a strong hook. Sometimes these hooks are how people dress or their personality, but the best hook is a strong story that's work-related. When you can wow an interviewer with a memorable story that shows what a strong candidate you are, you'll rise to the top of the list.

### **2. Know the Essence of the Job You're Applying For**

Get to know the job intimately that you're applying for. Don't just read the job description—study it and picture yourself performing every task required of you. When you interview, framing your responses so that you reveal your significant knowledge about the job gives you a massive advantage.

### **3. ...And Know What Makes You A Great Fit For It**

Know exactly what makes you fit into the position perfectly and speak to it during the interview. What makes you special? It could be that you're an idea machine, or a statistical fanatic. Whatever it is, know it and prepare to fit it into your responses.

For example, when an interviewer asks, "What are your strengths?" skip the clichés and go right into qualities about you that are unique to the job. You'll make it clear that you're the perfect fit.

### **4. Know the Company**

No matter how prepared you are to talk about yourself, not knowing the essentials of the company you're interviewing for conveys a lack of preparation and interest. You can't show an interviewer how you'll fit in the company until you know the company.

Before your interview, delve deeply into the company website to build a strong mental foundation. Make sure you know the basics; how the company makes money, the top executives, and what the company aims to accomplish in the near future (strategic objectives). Go online and read recent news articles about the company. Also check out their Twitter and Facebook pages.

### **5. Prepare a List of Follow-On Questions**

Prepare a list of follow-on interview questions and outline key points you will touch on if asked these questions. For example, if you say your biggest strength is time-management, you need to be ready for the interviewer to

ask something like, "What does this strength look like in action?" This preparation will make your responses more pointed, avoid awkward silences and uncertainty, and it will build your confidence prior to the interview.

### **6. Practice, Practice, Practice**

You, and everyone else interviewing for the job, already know many of the questions you'll be asked. The difference lies in preparation. Preparing unique and position-specific responses will give you the competitive edge over everyone else. You don't need to memorize answers, but instead know certain points of reference about yourself that you can apply to different questions.

Make sure to "mock interview" yourself. Video your responses until you're able to speak comfortably and flexibly—as opposed to rottenly regurgitating answers—about your prepared topics. Videoing yourself may feel awkward when you do it, but it will pay off during your interview.

### **7. Relax**

If you can't relax during your interview, then nothing you do to prepare will matter. Being yourself is essential to the selection process, and interviewers will feel it if you're too nervous. Showing fear or anxiety appears weak compared to a relaxed smile and genuine confidence. Numerous studies show that smiling not only increases your happiness and confidence, but it also puts the people you're interacting with at ease. This is mostly due to mirror neurons in the brain that naturally mimic other people's expressions and emotions.

Pulling this off requires emotional intelligence (EQ), a skill that employers are increasingly looking for in candidates. And it's no surprise, as 90% of top performers on the job are high in EQ. Working on your EQ can also help you to make more money, as people with high EQs earn \$29,000 more annually on average.

### **8. Stay Positive**

It may seem obvious that maintaining positivity is essential in an interview, but it can be very difficult to do when discussing some topics. It's tough to be positive when describing difficult bosses or coworkers from your past, or explaining why you were fired from your previous job, but that's exactly what employers want to see in you. Show them that you can maintain a positive attitude about a challenging environment, and they'll see the resilient and flexible individual they're looking for.

### **9. Be Honest**

Good interviewers have a way of getting to the crux of who you are. They may have an innate sense for reading people, or they might just be really good at asking the right questions. Regardless, it's essential to approach your interview with honesty.

If you interview dishonestly, you'll either not get the job when the interviewer sees right through you, or you'll end up in a job that's a poor fit. Don't focus on what you think the interviewer wants to hear. Instead focus on giving an honest and passionate breakdown of what you have to offer.

### **Bringing It All Together**

Let's face it, interviewing is still tough. It's hard to show who you really are and what you're capable of during a quick sit-down chat. These strategies will help you to eliminate nervousness and anything unexpected that might derail an otherwise great interview.

Are there questions that I've missed? What's the best way to make yourself stand out in an interview? Please share your thoughts in the comments section below as I learn just as much from you as you do from me.

### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR:**

Dr. Travis Bradberry is the award-winning co-author of the #1 bestselling book, [Emotional Intelligence 2.0](#)