

Interview Questions

Questions from Employers

Practice answers to typical interview questions to increase your confidence and potential for success. The following are typical questions an employer might ask you. Understanding the employer's goal in asking these questions will help you prepare effective responses.

Knowledge of Personal Qualities and Goals

Employer's Goal: To determine your drive, motivation, and goal orientation.

- Tell me about yourself.
- Why did you choose to study at Cornell? Why did you major in...?
- What are your goals for the next three (or five, or ten) years?
- What would you do if you saw someone cheating on an exam or assignment?
- What adjectives would others use to describe you?
- Describe a project or initiative that you consider particularly successful.
- Tell me about a time when you were involved in a conflict. How did you resolve it? What was the outcome?
- Give me an example of a leadership role you have held and what you accomplished.
- Discuss a big risk you took and tell me how it turned out.

Knowledge of the Organization

Employer's Goal: To determine what you have learned about the organization and the specific position.

- Why do you want to work for our organization?
- What do you think it takes to be successful here?
- Why are you interested in the position?
- In what ways do you think you can make a contribution to our organization?

Knowledge of Abilities and Achievements

Employer's Goal: To assess your fit and ability to succeed in the position.

- Give me an example of a time when you gained the support of others who had differing points of view.
- What achievement has been most satisfying and why?
- What is your work style in a fast-paced environment?
- Tell me about a particularly challenging problem that you have faced. How did you respond? What did you learn?
- Describe a time when you successfully balanced several competing priorities.
- What are your strengths? Weaknesses?
- Give me an example of a time when you were given an ambiguous assignment. How did you handle it?
- Describe a situation in which you had to take a risk. What did you learn from the experience?

Knowledge of Transferable Skills and Experience

Employer's Goal: To assess your understanding of the relationship between your past experiences and potential responsibilities.

- Tell me three significant things you learned from your experience at _____.
- What is the best job you ever held? Why?
- What did you enjoy most or like least about your experience at _____?
- How do you plan and organize a major project?
- What has been your experience with working on a team?
- In what extracurricular activities are you involved?

Questions to Employers

Employers expect candidates to ask questions at interviews. Prepare in advance and base your questions on research of the organization and career field. Avoid asking questions that you could answer through other means, such as reading employer literature. Throughout the interview process, your goal will be to assess your interest in the position and to demonstrate your enthusiasm.

During the Initial Interview

- What are the priorities over the next year?
- Where does this position (or department) fit into the organization and its objectives? Could you show me an organizational chart?
- What does it take to succeed here? Can you give me some examples?
- How is success measured in this position and in this organization?
- What kind of orientation or training is provided?
- Does this position function mainly alone or in a team setting? Tell me about the team.
- What is the greatest challenge currently facing this department or organization?
- What are the major strengths/weaknesses of this work group?
- How does the recent announcement by _____ organization affect your efforts in this area?
- How would you describe the organizational culture?
- What characteristics do the achievers in this organization share?
- What is this organization's management philosophy?
- Tell me about your own experience with this organization. What do you enjoy most/like least about working here?

During Subsequent Interviews

- What is the history of this position and what changes do you anticipate?
- How are geographical location assignments and transfers determined?
- What are expectations for travel, relocating, and working overtime?
- How much decision-making autonomy would I have? What is the growth potential for this position a few years from now?
- Do many employees take advantage of the _____ benefits program that the organization offers (e.g., tuition assistance program wellness program, etc., if you know they exist)?
- What kind of staff support will be available to me or to this department?

At Any Point During the Interview Process

- What is the next step in the interview process? What is your time frame?
- What can I do to demonstrate further my interest in this position?
- Can you describe some aspects of living in this community?