

## Interview Questions Prep

Interview questions are designed to test your ability to cope under pressure and deliver considered responses, reflecting the key requirements of the role.

This is your opportunity to demonstrate your acumen and desire, knowledge and experience – so make sure you are prepared!

Below are some examples of some positive answers to tricky questions.

### 1. What is your biggest weakness?

Nobody is perfect and honesty is always the best policy, but diplomacy is also important. Be aware of your audience and provide an answer that is professional and reflective. The interviewer wants to see that you are honest and aware of your own strengths and weaknesses.

**Do not say:** “I’m always late. I just can’t get out of bed in the morning!”

**Do say:** “In the past, I’ve recognised weaknesses in [X, Y or Z]. However, this is something which I’ve identified and am currently addressing. I always want to improve.”

You are turning a negative into a positive – you recognise a weakness but demonstrate initiative with your desire to improve. This is an honest and professional answer which considers your interviewer.

### 2. Where do you see yourself in five years?

There is no “perfect” answer, but it’s important to consider the response your interviewer is seeking. They want to establish what you consider important. Are you ambitious? Are you honest? Consider your answer and be honest with yourself and about your career goals.

**Do not say:** “In your job.”

**Do say:** “I see myself in a role where I am challenged and my performance valued. I have aspirations to manage a team and would like to be a manager within five years, ideally within an organisation which considers my personal development as important as my contribution.”

Take time in your preparation to think about if you are successful in securing the role, where would you like to be in five years. Don’t hide your ambition and be transparent. The interviewer will respect candour and commitment to personal development and your willingness to work hard to achieve your goal.

### 3. How would current colleagues describe you?

This question is designed to put you on the spot and see if you are prepared to answer a question honestly. The interviewer is testing your self-awareness. The panel can pick out a storyteller. Feel free to highlight a negative character trait, as long as you can turn it into a positive.

**Do not say:** “Without a doubt, they’d say I’m incredible at my job. Best employee ever!”

**Do say:** “They recognise that I’m a hard worker. It’s known that I’m vocal with my opinions, but always considerate of others and I think my colleagues would say I listen and take on-board any differing views.”

This response is professional, but shows you can be self-critical.

#### **4. Describe a situation where you have received negative feedback. How did this affect you and how did you respond?**

Another curveball! A test of your ability to think under pressure and how you deal with criticism. The interviewer wants you to show that you can be reflective. Can you accept negative feedback and respond positively?

**Do not say:** “My boss told me that I wasn’t performing well. I took this personally and that’s why I’ve decided to look for a new job.”

**Do say:** “In the past, a manager addressed an area of my performance that they didn’t feel was up to scratch. While it’s difficult to hear, I listened and asked how they thought I could improve. With their feedback in mind, I approached it as a project and worked on my performance in this area. I made a point of checking back in with my manager a month later to follow up.”

Don’t be afraid to recognise your faults and show you improved your performance to achieve results.

#### **5. Why are you looking for a new job?**

A straightforward question...as long as you don’t fall into the trap of speaking negatively about your current job, employer or manager. This is a major red flag to an interviewer. Focus on the new challenges that a change of position could bring and highlight your ambition to succeed.

**Do not say:** “My boss is a nightmare and I am sick of the way he/she treats me. They never give me challenging tasks to support my development and give me no respect.”

**Do say:** “I’ve spent [X] amount of time in my current role and I’ve learned a lot from this position however I’m keen to gain new experience and continue to learn and develop. I love a challenge!”

Our suggested answer has avoided speaking negatively about your current situation without being dishonest. It shows you are driven, focused and keen to learn.

#### **6. Give an example of a time when you’ve handled a major crisis?**

This question appears tougher than it actually is. The interviewer is looking at two things: your ability to cope under pressure and also to determine what you consider a “major crisis”. Project a cool character, capable of remaining calm in a chaotic situation.

**Do not say:** “It’s hard to think of a specific example here. Generally I’m quite level headed and pride myself on just getting the work done.”

**Do say:** “There was an incident at work which involved some high pressure tasks with short timeframes. After reviewing the situation, I considered my options and made an informed decision which I thought was best. Following this, I consulted my manager to check if there was anything I could have done differently.”

Bend this answer to a strong example demonstrating you can calmly make informed decisions under pressure, without adding to the stress. The first answer is not an answer – interviewers want to see that you are capable of identifying that things do go wrong and recognise the importance placed on resolving these issues.

## 7. How would you review your own performance?

An important question offering a great opportunity to showcase your ability to review your performance objectively, useful in any role. Demonstrate how you have done this in the past and how it brought you success.

**Do not say:** "I don't tend to measure my own performance. If my line manager has a problem with my performance, they will tell me."

**Do say:** "I want to grow and develop so actively seek feedback whenever possible, from my peers, customers and line manager. I always try to learn from mistakes and think that feedback is the best way to improve. I keep notes and set myself objectives to work towards."

## 8. Use three words to describe yourself

A test of your ability to think on the spot...although it doesn't hurt to have some adjectives already in mind to impress them. Avoid negative words. Our suggestion shows how to spin a negative into a positive. Think about the role you have applied for and tailor your response to it.

**Do not say:** impulsive, opinionated and ruthless (no matter what you see on "The Apprentice").

**Do say:** creative, honest and thorough.

The second response is positive, upbeat and are assets every employer desires.

## 9. What kind of environment do you work well in?

Are you introvert or an extrovert? A team player or lone wolf? Here is a chance to put your personality in the spotlight. There isn't a right or wrong answer, it's about how you phrase yourself.

**Do not say:** I work better on my own with minimal supervision. I don't like to be micro-managed. I just like working by myself and find being part of a team really awkward, but I'll do it if I have to."

**Do say:** "I work well on my own with minimal supervision but I'm still a team player. I have worked well in groups in the past and understand the importance of free and open communication among colleagues. I am able to adapt to my surroundings based on what is required at any given time."

Be open about who you are at work, but don't dwell on the negatives. Show you can achieve the balance between team player and working alone. Demonstrate your versatility and adaptability.

## 10. Why should I hire you?

Usually the final question, and sometimes a tricky one to answer. By this point, the interviewer probably has an idea about your suitability for the role. This presents an opportunity to summarise the key points you want to be remembered. But be careful not to answer with arrogance.

**Do not say:** "I'm the best candidate for the job, you won't regret your decision."

**Do say:** "I strongly believe I am the right candidate for this role for several reasons (then provide a couple). I have demonstrated in my answers and application/CV that I have the capabilities to fulfil the duties. I am fully committed to personal development and would welcome the opportunity to learn new skills."

These are our Top 10 Trickiest Questions, but this list is far from exhaustive. There will always be an awkward question that pops up when you least expect it, but if you take the time to think about your response and stay honest, you will give a great answer and secure that job!

Don't forget: You **MUST** do your research on the organisation and be prepared to answer a "so what do you know about our business" question. Use the company's website, find out about the business in the press, look at company literature, Companies House, talk to employees...there is a wealth of information out there! Never say, not much.

Finally, think about some pertinent questions to ask your future employer about the business, the role and themselves (just don't ask about the holiday or sickness policy)!