

Fifty Questions

Interviewers Frequently Ask College Seniors

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. What are your long-term and short-term career goals and objectives? When and why did you establish these goals and how are you preparing yourself to achieve them?
3. What specific goals, other than those related to your occupation, have you established for yourself for the next 10 years?
4. What do you see yourself doing five years from now?
5. What do you really want to do with your life?
6. What are the most important rewards you expect in your business career?
7. What do you expect to be earning in five years?
8. Why did you choose the career for which you are planning?
9. Which is more important to you, the money or the type of job?
10. What do you consider to be your greatest strengths and weaknesses?
11. How would you describe yourself?
12. How do you think a friend or a professor who knows you well would describe you?
13. What motivates you to put forth your greatest effort?
14. How has your college education prepared you for a professional career?
15. Why should I hire you?
16. What qualifications do you have that make you think you will be successful?
17. How do you determine or evaluate success?
18. What do you think it takes to be successful in a company like ours?
19. In what ways do you think you can make a contribution to our company?
20. What qualities should a successful manager possess?
21. Describe your ideal working relationship with your supervisor.
22. What two or three accomplishments have given you the most satisfaction? Why?
23. Describe your most rewarding college experience.
24. If you were hiring a graduate for this position, what qualities would you look for?
25. Why did you choose your particular college?
26. What led you to choose your major field of study?
27. What college subjects did you like best? Why?
28. What college subjects did you like least? Why?
29. If you could do so, how would you plan your academic study differently? Why?
30. What changes would you make in your college experience/job?
31. Do you have any plans for further study?
32. Do you think that your grades are a good indication of your academic achievement?
33. What have you learned from participation in extra-curricular activities?
34. In what type of work environment are you most comfortable?
35. How do you work under pressure?
36. What part-time or summer jobs have been most interesting to you? Why?
37. How would you describe your ideal first job after graduation?
38. Why did you decide to seek a position with this company?
39. What do you know about our company?
40. What two or three things are most important to you in your career?
41. Are you seeking employment in a company of a certain size? Why?
42. What criteria are you using to evaluate the company for which you hope to work for?
43. Do you have a geographical preference? Why?
44. Are you willing to relocate?
45. Are you willing to travel?
46. Are you willing to spend six months (a year, etc.) as a trainee?
47. Why do you think you might like to live in the community where our company is located?
48. What major problem have you encountered and how did you deal with it?
49. What have you learned from your mistakes?
50. What questions do you have for us?

Behavioral Interview Questions

Decision Making and Problem Solving

- Give me an example of a time when you had to refrain from speaking or making a decision because you did not have enough information.
- Give me an example of a time when you had to be quick in making a decision.
- Have you ever solved a problem others around you couldn't? What did you do?
- What do you do when a problem stops you in your tracks?
- Do people generally come to you to help in problem solving?
- Sometimes it is easy to "get in over our heads." Describe a situation in which you had to request help on one of your projects or assignments.

Leadership

- What is the toughest group that you had to cooperate with?
- Have you ever had difficulty getting others to accept your ideas? What was your approach? Did it work?

Motivation

- Give me an example of a time when you went above and beyond the call of duty.
- Describe a situation when you were able to have a positive influence on the actions of others.

Communication

- Tell me about a situation when you had to speak up (be assertive) in order to get a point across that was important to you.
- Have you ever had to "sell" an idea to your co-workers or group? How did you do it? Did they "buy" it?

Interpersonal Skills

- What have you done in the past to contribute toward a teamwork environment?
- Describe a recent unpopular decision you made and what the result was.

Planning and Organization

- How do you decide what gets top priority when scheduling your time?
- What do you do when your schedule is suddenly interrupted? Give an example.
- Tell me about a time when you made personal sacrifices to meet the demands of the job.

Customer Focus

- When you think of companies who do well serving their customers, which ones come to mind? Why?
- When was the last time someone lost you as a customer? Why?
- What do customers do that irritates you? How do you react?

Dealing with Lack of Knowledge

- Tell me about a time when you had a problem where you just didn't know what to do.
- What do you do when someone important asks you a question you can't answer?
- Tell me a time when you had to learn a new procedure/process in order to do your job successfully?

Composure

- Tell me about a time when you had to deal with an arrogant, condescending person or one who makes you angry.
- Tell me about a time when someone pushed you to your limit.
- Tell me about a time when your boss asked you to do something you didn't think was appropriate. How did you respond?

Career Ambition

- What do you like and dislike doing at work and why?
- Do you have a career plan?
- All jobs, including this one, have satisfying/dissatisfying aspects. Based on your understanding of the position, what would you find satisfying and dissatisfying?

Command Skills

- Tell me about some tough negotiations you've been in.
- How do you feel you handled your last difficult negotiation?

Interpersonal Savvy

- Tell me about a time when you changed your approach to someone midstream because something wasn't working.
- Tell me about a time when you successfully solved a problem because you took the time to look at the big picture. What did you do? What happened?

Work Style

- What's your tolerance for routine and task repetition?
- Are you able to thrive in an environment where priorities and duties change unexpectedly?

Listening

- What do you do when you think someone is not listening to you?
- What's your response when someone says to you that you're not listening?

Patience

- How do you react when your patience is really tested?

Team

- Tell me a story that would help me better understand what kind of team player you are.
- Tell me about a time when developing good working relationships in your own work group was critical for success. What did you do? What happened?

General Behavioral Interview Questions

- How do you plan to achieve your goals?
- How do you evaluate yourself?
- What work experience has been the most valuable to you and why?
- What has been your greatest challenge?
- What were the biggest problems you encountered in college? How have you handled them? What did you contribute?

- How do you think you have changed personally since you started college?
- Why did you choose the extracurricular activities that you did? What did you gain? What did you contribute?
- What was the most useful criticism you received and who was it from?
- Tell me about a project you initiated.
- How do you solve conflicts?
- Give me an example of a problem you solved and the process you used.
- Describe the project or situation that best demonstrates your analytical skills.
- Which academic course had the greatest impact on you and why?
- Give examples of your “team player” qualities.
- Take me through a project where you demonstrated planning skills.
- How do you motivate people?
- What types of situations put you under pressure and how do you deal with the pressure?
- Tell me about a difficult decision you have made.
- Give an example of a situation in which you failed and how you handled it.
- Tell me about a situation when you had to persuade another person to see your point of view.
- What frustrates you most?
- What interests or concerns you about the position or company?
- Give me a specific example of your work or learning in a multicultural setting and what impact did the experience have on you.
- What two or three accomplishments have given you the most satisfaction?
- Describe a situation where you had a conflict with another individual, and how you dealt with it.
- Describe your leadership style.
- In a particular leadership role, what was the greatest challenge?
- What characteristics do you think are important for this position?
- What can you contribute to our organization?
- What challenges are you looking for in a position?
- How are you conducting your job search and how will you make your decision?
- What are your expectations of your future employer?
- What two or three things are most important to you in the position?
- What do we need to know about you that has not been covered?
- Why should we hire you?

Professional and Graduate School Interview Questions

Before answering the following questions, it is important to remember that most interviewers will be looking for three things when you answer questions:

1. Your answer
2. How well you can organize your thinking
3. How well you express yourself

Interviews will vary among programs and the individuals conducting the interviews. Questions may be direct, indirect, hypothetical or behavior-based. Below is a sampling of questions you might be asked during an interview.

Personal Characteristics / Skills / Strengths:

Tell me about yourself.

What is your strongest personal asset?

What are your strengths and weaknesses as a student?

Name 3 strengths that you have and why you consider these strengths.

What would one of your friends/teachers/supervisors say about you?

What would a supervisor or professor say your strengths are?

Academic Experiences/Performance:

Why did you major in _____?

Why did you choose to attend _____ College/University?

When did you choose to enter this occupational field and why?

How did you make the decision to apply to our program? What other programs did you consider?

How has your undergraduate background prepared you for our program?

What courses have you enjoyed the most?

What courses have been most difficult for you?

What satisfaction have you gained from your studies?

Tell me about the research project you completed with Professor _____?

Do you feel your academic record accurately reflects your abilities and potential?

Do you feel you have worked to your full potential?

How would you rate yourself in the following areas?

1. Reading and Comprehension
2. Analytical Skills
3. Communication – oral and written, listening

What didn't you like about your college/university?

Tell me about a professor or supervisor that you didn't like and why.

Why would you be an asset to our department? How would you be able to contribute to our program?

What skills and experiences do you feel have prepared you for admission to this program?

Why should we consider you for our program instead of several other equally qualified candidates?

How many programs have you applied to besides our institution/program?

What will you do if you are not accepted into our program?

Extracurricular Activities:

What extracurricular activity has been most satisfying to you?

What is the most significant contribution you have made to your school?

What activities do you enjoy most outside of the classroom?

Do you have any hobbies or outside interests?

Tell me about any volunteer experiences in which you have participated.

Weaknesses:

- What challenges do you think you might face in the graduate program?
- What would you say is an area in which you need improvement?
- What would you change about yourself and why?
- What skills or abilities do you hope to strengthen through our program?

Goals:

- What has motivated you to pursue this academic field?
- What are your short-term and long-term goals?
- Why do you want a graduate degree in _____?
- How do you see this program fitting into your career goals?
- Tell me about a goal you have set for yourself and how you have achieved it or intend to achieve it.

Leadership/Teamwork/Problem Solving Skills, etc.:

- Tell me about a major accomplishment and how you achieved it.
- Tell me about a situation in which you showed initiative.
- Tell me about a group in which you were involved. How did you contribute to make this group achieve a goal?
- Tell me about a time you assumed a leadership role.
- Tell me about a recent significant problem you faced and how you handled it.
- Tell me how you handle stress.
- Tell me about a time you had a number of assignments due. How did you make sure you successfully completed all of them on time?
- Tell me about a time when you were confronted by a fellow student, co-worker or a customer. How did you handle it to resolve the conflict?
- Tell me about a time you were faced with a difficult situation and how you handled it.
- Tell me about a mistake you made and how you handled it.
- Define teamwork/success/quality/fairness.
- What was the last book you read or movie you saw?
- How will you make the world a better place?
- If you could have dinner with someone (living or dead), who would that person be?

Field Specific Questions & Current Events:

You will undoubtedly encounter questions that relate specifically to your chosen field of study. Be certain that you are aware of current trends, issues and controversy in your field so that you will be able to answer questions intelligibly. Below are a few examples:

- What do you believe to be the major trends in your intended career field at this time?
- What do you think about _____ (current event)?
- What problem in the world troubles you most? What would you do about it?
- What is the most important development in this field over the past 25 years, and why?

Questions Applicants Might Ask an Interviewer:

Asking questions not only helps you as a candidate determine the “fit” of the program with your desired academic and career objectives, but it also communicates to the selection committee the extent of your interest in their program:

- What characteristics distinguish this program from others in the same academic field?
- How long does it take typically to complete the program?
- Where are recent alumni employed? What do most graduates do after graduation?
- What types of financial aid are offered? What criteria are used for choosing recipients?

What opportunities are available through the program to gain practical work experience? Are there opportunities such as assistantships, fellowships or internships available? What are the deadlines to apply for these opportunities?

Are there any scholarships or fellowships available? How do I apply?

Do most students publish an article/conduct research prior to graduation?

I've read articles written by _____ and _____. To what extent are students involved in assisting these faculty members with related research projects?

What types of research projects are current students pursuing?

How are graduate test scores, grades, letters of recommendations, and personal statements evaluated for the admissions process?

What is the selection timeline?

When will candidates be notified about their acceptance into the program?