

How to Answer the Most Common Interview Questions.

"TELL ME ABOUT YOURSELF"

What the hiring manager is really asking....*"How do your education, work history, and professional aspirations relate to the open job?"*

How to respond: Select key work and education experience information that shows the hiring manager why you are a perfect fit for the job and for the company.

For Example: "I went to X University where I majored in Y and completed an internship at Z Company. During my internship, I did this and that (name achievements that match the job description), which really solidified my passion for this line of work."

"WHERE DO YOU SEE YOURSELF IN FIVE YEARS?"

What the hiring manager is really asking....*"Does this position fit your long-term career goals? Do you even have long-term career goals?"*

How to respond: Do NOT say you don't know (even if you don't) and do not focus on your personal life (it's nice that you want to get married, but not relevant). Show the employer you've thought about your career path and that your professional goals align with the job.

"WHAT'S YOUR GREATEST WEAKNESS?"

What the hiring manager is really asking....*"Are you self-aware? Do you know where you could stand to improve and are you proactive about getting better?"*

How to respond: A good way to answer this is with real-life feedback that you received in the past. For instance, maybe a former boss told you that you needed to work on your presentation skills. Note that fact, then tell the employer how you've been proactively improving. Avoid any deal breakers (I don't like working with other people or I'm a perfectionist and I work too hard.").

"WHAT MOTIVATES YOU TO PERFORM?"

What the hiring manager is really asking....*"Are you a hard worker? Am I going to have to force you to produce Quality work?"*

How to respond: Ideal employees are motivated internally, so tell the hiring manager that you find motivation when working toward a goal. Contributing to a team effort, and/or developing your skills. Provide a specific example that supports your response. Finally even if it is true, do not tell an employer that you're motivated by bragging rights, material things, or the fear of being disciplined.

"TELL ME ABOUT A TIME YOU FAILED."

What the hiring manager is really asking....*How do you respond to failure? Do you learn from your mistakes? Are you resilient?"*

How to respond: Similar to the greatest weakness question, you need to demonstrate how you've turned a negative experience into a learning experience. To do this, acknowledge one of your failures,

take responsibility for it, and explain how you improved as a result. Don't say you never failed, don't play the blame game, and don't bring up something that's a deal breaker (I failed at a drug test once...")

"WHY DO YOU WANT TO WORK HERE?"

What the hiring manager is really asking..."are you genuinely interested in the job? Are you a good fit for the company?"

How to respond: Your goal for this response is to demonstrate why you and the company are a great match in terms of philosophy and skill. Discuss what you've learned about them noting how you align with their mission, company culture, and reputation. Next highlight how you would benefit professionally from the job and how the company would benefit professionally from you.

HOW MANY COUCHES ARE THERE IN AMERICA?"

What the hiring manager is really asking..."Can you think on your feet? Can you handle pressure? Can you think critically?"

How to respond: When faced with a seemingly absurd question like this (there are many variations). Resist your urge to tell the interviewer the question is stupid and irrelevant, and instead walk him through your problem-solving thought process. For this particular question, you would talk about how many people are in the U.S. where couches are found (homes, hotels, furniture stores). etc.

As with other parts of the job application process, it's a good idea to solicit feedback from family, friends, and former colleagues. Try out your answers to each of these questions on at least two people, then revise based on feedback.

