



"The best way to predict the future is to prepare for it." – Abraham Lincoln

Interviews aren't just about answering questions — they're about navigating different types of questions with confidence and clarity. Employers use a variety of question styles to assess not only your skills and experience but also how you think, problem-solve, and fit into their culture.

Understanding the types of interview questions you may encounter allows you to prepare targeted responses and avoid being caught off guard. By familiarizing yourself with these question styles and practicing thoughtful answers, you can highlight your strengths, demonstrate your adaptability, and leave a lasting impression.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS DEMYSTIFIED: PREPARE WITH CONFIDENCE

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS - *Insight into what's coming — and how to prepare.*

There are several types of interview questions: behavioral, traditional, situational, technical or skill-based, case/problem-solving, and curveball or personality questions. The kinds of questions you'll encounter often depend on the field you're entering. For example, technical questions are common in engineering or technology-related roles, while situational or scenario-based questions are more typical in healthcare and human services.

Regardless of the industry, you can almost always expect behavioral and traditional questions, as they are the most widely used across all fields. On page 8, you'll find examples of other common question types. Before you start crafting answers, it's essential to focus on how you introduce yourself — **a strong personal introduction sets the tone for the entire interview.**

YOUR PERSONAL INTRODUCTION - *Show Them Who You Are — Answer In 30 Seconds*

Answering the question **"Tell me about yourself?"** can feel overwhelming, induce panic and have you asking "what do they really want to know." Well, the interviewer isn't asking for your life story, your star sign, or your brunch preferences. What they are asking is: **"Tell me about yourself and how your background aligns with this position?"**

◆ **HINT:** Most interview questions are asked in relation to the specific position.

Armed with this insight, you can prepare a tailored response for each interview, highlighting the aspects of your experience and skills that directly relate to the position. Remember, the interviewer seeks professional information, not personal details unrelated to the job.

Remember to...

- Describe yourself in a positive, professional light
- Emphasize your key strengths and qualifications
- Explain how your skills align with the job requirements
- Share how you collaborate and contribute as part of a team
- Highlight specific accomplishments from previous roles
- Demonstrate how you can add value to the organization



- ◆ **HINT:** Practicing your personal introduction out loud helps you sound confident, natural, and clear while ensuring your message is concise and well-delivered.

SAMPLE PERSONAL INTRODUCTION

"Hi, my name is Sam Husky, and I'm about to graduate from the University of Southern Maine with a bachelor's degree in Psychology. During my studies, I developed a strong interest in what motivates people and how to communicate effectively. I've gained practical experience through a Career Exploration Internship at STRIVE, first as a Finance & Human Resources Intern, and later as a Peer Career Guide, where I assisted over 50 students in refining their resumes and cover letters.

I enjoy collaborating with others and supporting team goals. I'm excited about this talent acquisition position because it combines my passion for connecting with people and my well-developed organizational skills. I'm eager to help identify and attract top candidates while learning from your team's expertise. I'm confident my enthusiasm, strong communication, and proactive approach will make me a valuable addition to your hiring efforts."

BEHAVIOR-BASED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

During an interview, expect a variety of questions, including **behavior-based questions** that delve into past experiences, problem-solving abilities, and work ethic. These questions help the interviewer get a sense of how you might behave on the job. They ask how you behaved in past situations to predict future performance.

To help you answer behavior-based questions, try the **START Method (Situation – Task - Action – Result - Takeaway)**. The START Method provides structure, ensures all key information is shared, demonstrates skills, and is easy for interviewers to follow.

During an interview, you are asked, "Tell me about a time you worked in a team." Here is how to answer the question using the STAR Method.

S — SITUATION

What was the situation? Briefly describe the background to help the interviewer understand the context.

Example: "Last semester, I worked on a group project in my abnormal psychology class."

T — TASK

What was your specific responsibility? Explain what you needed to do or accomplish in that situation.

Example: "I was responsible for organizing the team and keeping everyone on schedule."

A — ACTION

What actions did you take? Describe the steps you took to complete your task. Focus on what you did, not just what the group did.

Example: "I created a timeline, set up weekly meetings, and resolved any conflicts that came up."



R — RESULT

What was the outcome? Share the results of your actions. If possible, include something measurable or positive.

Example: “We finished early, got an A on the project, and our professor shared it as an example for other students.”

T – TAKEAWAY

What did you learn from it? How does it relate to the position? Finish with your takeaway and how it relates to the position.

Example: “Overall, I learned that clear communication and organization are essential for successful teamwork.”

Put it all together...Tell me about a time you worked in a team.

Last semester, I worked on a group project in my abnormal psychology class. I was responsible for organizing the team and keeping everyone on schedule. I created a timeline, set up weekly meetings, and resolved any conflicts that came up. We finished early, got an A on the project, and our professor shared it as an example for other students. Overall, I learned that clear communication and organization are essential for successful teamwork.

Another example: Tell me about a time you solved a problem at work

⁵While working at the NumberOne store, we had a shipment delay that caused several customer orders to be late. ¹I was responsible for contacting customers, finding alternative solutions, and ensuring they still had a positive experience despite the delay. ^AI personally called each customer to explain the situation, offered discounts or substitutions, and coordinated with our warehouse to prioritize their orders. ^RAll affected customers were satisfied with the solutions, we received positive feedback on our service, and I helped prevent potential order cancellations. ^TI learned how effective communication and quick problem-solving can turn a challenging situation into a positive customer experience.

Key Tips:

- Keep each part short and clear
- Focus on what you did and what happened because of your actions
- Practice a few examples so you feel comfortable using the STAR Method in interviews

EXAMPLES OF BEHAVIOR-BASED QUESTIONS

1. What was the last project you led, and what was its outcome?
2. Tell me about a time when you went above and beyond your regular duties to help a colleague or solve a problem.
3. Can you describe a project where you demonstrated exceptional teamwork and collaboration?
4. Describe a time when you received recognition or praise from a supervisor or colleague. What did you do to earn it?
5. Tell me about a challenging goal you set for yourself and how you successfully achieved it.
6. Can you share an example of when you effectively handled a difficult customer or client interaction?
7. Describe a situation where you demonstrated strong leadership skills.
8. Tell me about a project or task where you demonstrated exceptional attention to detail and accuracy.
9. Describe a situation where you successfully managed a challenging workload or multiple competing priorities.
10. Have you ever been on a team where someone was not pulling their weight? How did you handle it?
11. Tell me about a time when you had to give someone difficult feedback. How did you handle it?



12. What is your greatest failure, and what did you learn from it?
13. Tell me about a time when you had to deal with conflict on the job.
14. What's the most difficult decision you've made in the last two years, and what was the outcome?
15. Describe how you would handle a situation if you were required to finish multiple tasks by the end of the day, and there was no conceivable way that you could finish them.

TRADITIONAL-BASED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

These questions assess qualifications, motivations, experiences, and suitability for a job role. These questions help the interviewer get a general sense of who you are. Answering these can be difficult because they often require you to discuss negative experiences, or topics that may be difficult to answer. Remember to stay positive, and use **the Positivity Sandwich**.

THE POSITIVITY SANDWICH

A technique where you sandwich constructive or potentially negative aspects of your response between two positive statements. When faced with negative-shaped interview questions, which may focus on weaknesses or challenges, using the positivity sandwich technique can help you address the question tactfully while still highlighting your strengths and positive attributes.

During an interview, you are asked, "What is your greatest weakness?" Remember, the question is asked in relation to the position, not what is your greatest weakness in life! With this in mind, here's how you can apply the positivity sandwich technique effectively:

Start with a positive acknowledgment or connection to the role: Begin your response by positively acknowledging the question or highlighting a relevant, positive aspect related to the topic at hand. This sets a constructive tone for your answer and demonstrates your ability to approach challenges with a positive mindset.

Example: "That's a great question — and one I've considered specifically about this talent acquisition role. I noticed the position requires experience with HireTouch, which immediately caught my attention."

Address the weakness directly: Respond to the negative aspect of the question honestly and openly. Acknowledge the concern or weakness, but focus on how you've worked to overcome it or what steps you've taken to improve. Be specific and provide examples to illustrate your progress.

Example: "At my recent internship, we used Workday as our hiring platform, so HireTouch would be new to me. Recognizing that, I've already started exploring how HireTouch works, especially its similarities and differences compared to Workday."

Close on a positive, proactive note: Conclude your response by emphasizing the positive outcomes or growth opportunities that have resulted from addressing the challenge. Highlight how you've learned from the experience and how it has helped you develop valuable skills or insights.

Example: "This has helped me identify areas I'll need to strengthen and has given me a head start in preparing to use HireTouch effectively if I were to join your team."



Put it all together...

"That's a great question — and one I've considered specifically in relation to this talent acquisition role. I noticed the position requires experience with HireTouch, which immediately caught my attention. At my recent internship, we used Workday as our hiring platform, so HireTouch would be new to me. Recognizing that, I've already started exploring how HireTouch works, especially its similarities and differences compared to Workday. This has helped me identify areas I'll need to strengthen and has given me a head start in preparing to use HireTouch effectively if I were to join your team."

Key Tips:

- Keep it authentic and relevant
- Focus on Growth and Action
- End on a Confident, Forward-Looking Note

◆ **HINT:** By using the positivity sandwich technique when answering negatively framed interview questions, you can address concerns or weaknesses in a constructive, optimistic manner while still highlighting your strengths and qualifications. This approach demonstrates your ability to learn from challenges and grow professionally, leaving a positive impression on the interviewer.

EXAMPLES OF TRADITIONAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Can you tell me a little about yourself?
2. Why should we hire you?
3. Which of your professional strengths are you most proud of, and why?
4. What do you consider to be your professional challenges?
5. What is your greatest professional achievement?
6. Describe a difficult work situation and what you did to overcome it.
7. Where do you see yourself in five years?
8. What type of work environment do you prefer?
9. Tell me about a time you showcased leadership.
10. Tell me about a time you disagreed with a decision made at work.
11. How would your boss and co-workers describe you?
12. How do you deal with pressure or stressful situations?
13. What are three things your former manager would like you to improve on?
14. What are three positive things your last boss would say about you?
15. What are your career goals?

EXAMPLES OF OTHER TYPES OF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Situational Questions: These present hypothetical scenarios and assess how you'd handle them.

Examples: "What would you do if your team missed a deadline?"
"How would you handle a disagreement with a coworker?"

Technical or Skill-Based Questions: These evaluate specific knowledge or abilities related to the role.

Examples: "How do you troubleshoot a network issue?"
"Walk me through how you'd build a marketing campaign."

Case/Problem-Solving Questions: Common in consulting, tech, and analytical roles; test how you think.

Examples: "How many gas stations are there in the U.S.?"
"Here's a business scenario — what would you do?"



Cultural Fit/Values-Based Questions: These questions assess whether your values align with those of the organization.

Examples: "What type of work environment helps you thrive?"
"How do you define success?"

Curveball or Personality Questions: These test creativity, quick thinking, or personality.

Examples: "If you were an animal, what would you be and why?"
"What's your superpower?"

A GUIDE TO LAWFUL AND UNLAWFUL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

It is the responsibility of every employer to ensure that all questions asked of a job applicant are lawful and relevant. An untrained or inexperienced interviewer may inadvertently stray into questioning that seems reasonable but is inappropriate and unlawful.



The **guiding principle** for lawful interview questions is: can the employer demonstrate a job-related necessity for asking the question?

GUIDELINES FOR INTERVIEW QUESTIONS



No questions are to be asked based on an applicant's gender, race, color, age, national origin, religion*, marital status, disability, sexual orientation, or any other non-job-related basis. (**Note that churches and other religious organizations may give preference to individuals of their religion.*)

EXAMPLES OF LAWFUL AND UNLAWFUL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Employers can ask many lawful questions to help determine the suitability of job applicants. The following are examples of both acceptable and unacceptable questions:

Topic	 Unlawful	 Lawful
<i>Family</i>	Number of children, ages What are your babysitting arrangements? Do you have preschool-age children at home? Do you have a car?	What hours and days can you work? Are there specific times that you cannot work? What was your attendance record on your last job? Do you have responsibilities other than work that will interfere with specific job requirements, including reliable attendance?
<i>Citizenship/ National Origin</i>	What is your national origin? Where are your parents from? What is your maiden name?	Do you have the legal right to work in the US? Have you ever worked under a different name?
<i>For Reference Checking</i>	What is your father's surname? What are the names of your relatives?	Have you ever worked under a different name?
<i>Arrest and Conviction</i>	Have you ever been arrested?	Have you ever been convicted of a crime? If so, when, where, and what was the disposition of the case?



Topic	 Unlawful	 Lawful
<i>Disabilities</i>	Do you have any disabilities? Have you been treated for any illnesses in the past 5 years? Have you been treated for any mental conditions? Are you taking prescription drugs? Is there any health-related reason you may not be able to perform this job?	Can you perform the essential duties of the job you are applying for with or without reasonable accommodation?
<i>Emergency</i>	What is the name of a relative to be notified in the case of an emergency?	What is the name of the person to be notified in case of emergency? (Ask only after the individual has been employed.)
<i>Credit Record</i>	Do you own your own home? Have your wages ever been garnished? Have you ever declared bankruptcy?	None (Credit references may be obtained if in compliance with the Fair Credit Reporting Act of 1970 and the Consumer Credit Reporting Reform Act of 1996)
<i>Military Record</i>	What type of discharge did you receive?	What type of education, training, and work experience did you receive when you were in the military?
<i>Language</i>	What is your native language?	What languages do you speak and write fluently? (If job-related)
<i>Age</i>	When were you born?	Can you prove your age with your ID? – Only in roles where applicants need to be legal adults
<i>Addresses</i>	What was your previous address? How long did you reside there? How long have you lived at your current address? Do you own your own home?	None, except as such information may be required for authorized consumer reports, as noted above.
<i>Worker's Compensation</i>	Have you ever filed for Workers' Compensation? Have you had any prior work injuries?	None
<i>Religion</i>	What is your religious affiliation? Do you attend church regularly? Which religious holidays will you be taking off from work?	Can you work on Saturdays?
<i>Gender/ Gender Identity</i>	Do you wish to be addressed as Mr., Mrs., Miss, or Ms.? Are you a man or a woman?	None
<i>Race/ Ethnicity</i>	Are you a minority? Where are your parents from?	None



Sex	Were you born a man or a woman?	None
Sexual Orientation	Do you have a girlfriend or boyfriend?	None
Pregnancy	Are you pregnant? Do you have or plan to have children?	None
Marital Status	Are you married? Are you single?	None

IF ASKED AN IMPROPER QUESTION, YOU HAVE A FEW OPTIONS:

- You are free to answer the question. However, keep in mind that if you provide this information, you may jeopardize your chances of getting hired, in the event you provide the “wrong” answer. There may be a legal recourse available to you, but this is not the preferred outcome for most job applicants.
- You can refuse to answer the question. Unfortunately, depending on how the refusal is phrased, you run the risk of appearing uncooperative or confrontational and losing the job. Again, there may be legal recourse, but this is hardly an ideal situation.
- You can examine the question for its intent and respond with an answer as it might apply to the job. For example, if the interviewer asks, “Are you a U.S. citizen?” or “What country are you from?” you have been asked an improper question. You could respond, however, with “I am authorized to work in the United States.” Similarly, if the interviewer asks, “Who is going to take care of your children when you have to travel for the job?” your answer could be, “I can meet the travel and work schedule that this job requires.”
- You can ask for clarification, for example, “I am happy to answer that question if you can tell me how it relates to the position roles and responsibilities for which I am interviewing”.
- For additional information, see resources at the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission website:
<http://www.EEOC.gov>

Please note: This information is provided for educational purposes only. It is not intended to be, and does not represent, legal advice in any form. If you require advice, it is suggested that you contact a competent legal professional to discuss the specifics of your circumstances and obtain the advice you require.