

PREPARING FOR YOUR INTERVIEW

To prepare for an interview you should try to complete a mock (or practice) interview. Assistance with mock interviews can be provided by Midstate Independent Living Consultants, Job Centers, friends, and family. Following is a list of frequently asked questions and some suggestions for good answers. Download the worksheet of practice questions, write in your own answers, and practice answering them out loud during a mock interview. **Hint:** You should never answer yes or no to questions. You need to discuss your answers in complete sentences.

Q. Tell me about yourself.

A. This is the dreaded, classic, open-ended interview question and likely to be among the first. Keep it mostly work and career related. Example, I am detailed-oriented, I get along with people, and show up for work on time, etc.

Q. Why do you want to leave your current job? (Why did you leave your last job?)

A. Be careful with this. Avoid trashing other employers and making statements like, "I need more money." Instead, make generic statements such as, "It's a career move."

Q. What are your strengths?

A. Point out your positive attributes related to the job, I am organized, I work well in a group as well as independently.

Q. What are your weaknesses?

A. Everybody has weaknesses, but don't spend too much time on this one and keep it work-related. Point out minor weaknesses. I can be too detailed oriented sometimes. I don't always keep my desk looking neat.

Q. Which adjectives would you use to describe yourself?

A. Answer with positive, work-oriented adjectives, such as *conscientious*, *hard-working*, *honest* and *courteous*, plus a brief description or example of why each fits you well.

Q. What do you know about our company?

A. To answer this one, do your research and discuss who the company is. You don't need know the history of the company but do pick a few significant facts about the company.

Q. Why should I hire you?

A. Point out your positive attributes related to the job, and the good job you've done in the past. Include any compliments you've received from management.

Q. What past accomplishments gave you satisfaction?

A. Briefly describe one to three work projects that made you proud or earned you pats on the back, promotions, raises, etc. Focus more on achievement than reward.

Q. What qualifies you for this job?

A. Talk about your skills, experience, education and other qualifications, especially those that match the job description well. Avoid just stating what the employers already know from your application.

Q. What makes you want to work hard?

A. Naturally, material rewards such as perks, salary and benefits come into play. But again, focus more on achievement and the satisfaction you derive from it.

Q. What type of work environment do you like best?

A. Tailor your answer to the job. For example, if in doing your job you're required to lock the lab doors and work alone, then indicate that you enjoy being a team player when needed, but also enjoy working independently. If you're required to attend regular project planning and status meetings, then indicate that you're a strong team player and like being part of a team.

Q. Why do you want this job?

A. To help you answer this and related questions, study the job ad in advance. But a job ad alone may not be enough, so it's okay to ask questions about the job while you're answering. Say what attracts you to the job. Avoid the obvious and meaningless, such as, "I need a job."

Q. How do you handle pressure and stress?

A. This is sort of a double whammy, because you're likely already stressed from the interview and the interviewer can see if you're handling it well or not. Everybody feels stress, but the degree varies. Avoid talking about negative responses to stress like overeating and focus on positive ways of handling stress like exercising, relaxing with a good book, talking to close friends, etc.

Q. Explain how you overcame a major obstacle.

A. The interviewer is likely looking for a particular example of your problem-solving skills and the pride you show for solving it. Example, There was a situation where I did not have as much information as I needed and there was no supervisor around but I was required to make a decision, I listed out what would happen in both circumstances and came up with what seemed to be the best possible decision.

Q. Where do you see yourself five (ten or fifteen) years from now?

A. Explain your career-advancement goals that are in line with the job for which you are interviewing. Your interviewer is likely more interested in how he, she or the company will benefit from you achieving your goals than what you'll get from it. It's not a good idea to tell your potential new boss that you'll be going after his or her job nor is it wise to say you only want this job until another one comes along.

Q. Tell me about a problem you had with a co-worker and how you solved the problem?

A. Don't talk bad about the situation. The employer is trying to understand how you would deal with conflict. You should discuss what the positive outcome was. For example, you discussed the situation with the co-worker and then had to go to your supervisor to solve the problem.

Q. Why did you leave your last job?

A. If you resigned or were fired you can simply say you had different opinions and both parties felt it was best to end the employment relationship. Do not let harsh feeling come out during the interview. The employer does not want to hear about how wrong the last employer was.

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