

Top 10 Interview Questions

Whilst it is impossible to anticipate all the questions that might be asked in interview, you should however prepare for the most common ones that professional interviewers tend to rely on. I have outlined below the ten most popular interview questions and given some guidelines on how to best answer them.

Tell me about yourself

This question is often used to put candidates at their ease, before the interview “proper” begins. Because the question is so unstructured, it can be quite challenging..... what do you include/leave out, do you focus on your professional or personal life? To answer this question well, you need to bear in mind the following:

- Keep the answer concise – it should last for no longer than two minutes
- From word go, get across your enthusiasm for the role
- Do not simply run through your whole CV – instead focus on 3 or 4 key areas that would be of most interest to the employer for this particular position
- Keep the primary focus on your professional life

Why did you apply to this position?

Many people when asked this question focus on the benefits they will accrue from joining the company. You need to turn the tables and explain how your background is closely aligned with the job specification and how you would add value to the employer.

What do you know about this company?

By showing a deep knowledge of the company, you will convince the employer that you do not just want any job, but want a role in *their* company. In a period of high unemployment, this is crucial. Research the company website, read around the company by doing a search of archived articles in the Irish Times/ Irish Independent/Financial Times or trade journals.

What have you been doing since your last position?

If you are immediately available, you need to be able to account for your time. An employer needs to know that you are motivated and have a strong work ethic. You could cite doing volunteer work, doing a course to update your skills, going to networking eventsmake sure that you present yourself as a forward thinking, dynamic individual.

What are your strengths?

To answer this question effectively, you need to firstly analyse the job specification to understand the most important qualities sought by the employer. Then identify your own strengths and highlight those that most closely match the employer’s needs. I would suggest highlighting three or four strengths and having a small example to back each one up.

What is your biggest weakness?

Unlike strengths, you only need to choose one weakness! I would advise against using the old clichés such as “I am a perfectionist” as they sound a bit glib. Whatever weakness you choose, be clear to let the employer know that you have focused on this

developmental area and have now successfully overcome it. Employers want to know that you are self aware and always looking for ways to develop and do things better.

Where do you see yourself in five years' time?

Emphasise that you want to be within the company and develop significantly in your career. Remember all companies invest time and resources in new employees and need to see a return on investment.

How would your colleagues describe you?

Don't be afraid to blow your own trumpet. You could mention your positive "can do" approach, your willingness to get involved in areas outside your immediate scope of responsibility, your reliability.....perhaps you have a calm head under pressure.

What are your salary expectations?

This is a tricky question as you do not want to undersell yourself and yet do not want to price yourself out of the market. Side step this question by saying that the role is much more important to you than salary and that you are open to all reasonable offers.

Do you have any questions you would like to ask us?

You need to have 2 to 3 questions up your sleeve. From an employer perspective, this shows genuine interest in the role. You could ask for clarification on information given earlier in the interview or you could ask questions on structure of department you would be working in, reporting lines, IT systems etc. Do not ask question on salary or terms and conditions of employment.