



## ANSWERING COMMON QUESTIONS

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### INTERVIEW PREPARATION RESOURCE

## IS THERE A RIGHT ANSWER TO EVERY QUESTION?

Interviewers (regardless of industry) usually have a set of generic questions to ask a candidate to determine things that can't otherwise be measured, such as personality, confidence and fit. There isn't one formula that works for everyone, but it can help to know what the interviewer is looking for in an answer.

### Why do you want to work here?

The interviewer wants to know if you've done research on the company, and whether you believe yourself to be a suitable fit given the information you found. Try to identify a specific unique selling proposition of the company and relate it to your experiences and/or personal values.

#### EXAMPLE (P&G - Marketing Coordinator)

Since completing a class in marketing, I've really come to appreciate companies who conduct relevant research to ensure cultural sensitivity. What I love about P&G is their strategy to global penetration and growth, including an entire department (GBS) dedicated towards region-specific marketing plans. I think that this approach of understanding regional differences perfectly resonates with my own method of effectively researching a client's market presence and competitors in different locations.

### Tell me about yourself.

What can you say about yourself beyond what's listed on your resume? If you're in the interview, they already believe you're qualified. This question isn't meant for you to reiterate those qualifications, but rather your approach to work - which may include the environment you thrive in or what makes you excited about the work. Try to mention some of their company values that you share!



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## EXAMPLE (Bell - Human Resources)

I always tend to compare myself to a bridge, because I'm someone who likes to provide direction to help someone reach their destination. I've always pursued customer-facing roles because understanding someone's goals and providing guidance to make them attainable is so rewarding to me. It's the reason I'm so passionate about HR, especially at Bell: I want to be able to facilitate growth in a team, as I believe that supporting the people around is us the best way to ensure productivity.

## What is your biggest weakness?

The interviewer wants to determine what you consider to be a weakness - and whether it conflicts with the responsibilities of the job or the practises of the company. Try to avoid mentioning clichés such as perfectionism - it's totally fine to be honest and genuine, but you can phrase it differently so that it doesn't appear as a weakness. They are also looking for you to communicate a quality, you are working to improve, and the steps you are taking to do so.

## EXAMPLE (Scotiabank - Administrative Assistant)

In previous roles, I sometimes found it challenging to manage multiple projects at the same time. However, I made an effort to address this difficulty by regularly communicating with my direct supervisors to determine the urgency of each task. Now, I like to organize my projects by breaking them down into daily tasks in a calendar - allocating more time towards projects with higher priority while still making time to work on remaining tasks.

## What are your salary expectations?

There are two things that an interviewer wants to learn about you - whether you're knowledgeable about industry standards, and whether you know your worth. Current students and recent graduates tend to undermine what they bring to the table and settle for a "minimum wage" salary. Before the interview, research what the average salary for someone in this role at your seniority level makes. You can provide a range based on your previous experience. It also helps to sound flexible and open to negotiation.



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## EXAMPLE (SIDI - Entry-Level Web Developer)

I know that web development has recently become a career that is in-demand and valued well across industries. Given my past experiences and contributions I've made to my teams, I'm confidently seeking a salary between \$50,000 and \$60,000. That being said, I'd love to learn more about the expectations of someone in this role and the scale of the projects I would be working on - and later discuss a salary that would be most appropriate.

## What is your greatest accomplishment?

This is the best question for you to be honest rather than occupied with what you think the interviewer wants to hear. More than your actual answer, the interviewer wants to learn about what makes you excited and proud, and see whether there is opportunity for you to accomplish similar things at their company. It also helps to paint a picture for the interviewer - what made this feat exciting for you? What were the challenges, and how did you overcome them?

## EXAMPLE (RBC - Business Analyst)

A feat that I'm incredibly proud of is the networking conference I planned alongside my team members from the ground up, with more than 300 students in attendance. As a founding member of the club responsible for finances and external relations, I remember not knowing how to even approach the task of planning an event with no prior funding. The first step was determining the budget, and with venue and catering costs in mind we landed on a budget of \$10,000. I must have cold called close to a hundred representatives to pitch the event, and through a meeting with our school administrators the school offered to sponsor our venue costs in full! As a result, not only were we able to afford the event, we made over \$7,000 in profit from ticket sales and additional savings. Most importantly, we put on a valuable event for students.



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## GENERAL ADVICE

Of course, it's not guaranteed that every question listed will be asked. On the other hand, they may ask all these questions and more! It's important to remember that regardless of what you answer a question with, how you articulate yourself matters just as much.

When answering questions, there are some guidelines that can help you prepare the perfect answer that is most accurate to yourself and your qualifications.

- Before the interview, make a list of your most relevant experiences, and key lessons that you learned from each. More than likely, you'll have an opportunity to discuss one of them - the interviewer knows about your experiences, but it's also interesting to discover what you learned from them, or how you would translate that learning to the role you have applied for.
- Be familiar with the company in advance. Know the kinds of projects they work on, and make a mental note of any similar projects you've completed. Understand the department you would work under, and who they work closely with. Having this background knowledge will help you to understand how to align yourself with the company.
- Spend 2-3 minutes on each answer. You don't want to go on a tangent for too long, as it'll be difficult for the interviewer to pick out and remember important information. At the same time, you want to be specific when discussing your capabilities. If you feel as though you've come to a natural end, don't force yourself to keep talking - chances are what you've said is all they need to know!
- Check out resources like [www.mockquestions.com](http://www.mockquestions.com). Questions are listed by category and you have access to tips on how to answer sample interview questions. You can search questions by skill, company, or career!



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**YOUR TURN!** Answer one question. What do they want to know and how can you show it?

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