

# *Winning Answers to Common Interview Questions*

## Instructor's Guide

### Overview

Every question asked during an interview is a test—of your skills and abilities, of your education and experience, of how well you handle stress and think on your feet. It is also an opportunity for you to prove yourself, to tie those skills and experiences to the requirements of the position and prove you are the best candidate for the job.

Interviewers have a seemingly endless supply of questions they can ask, making it impossible to prepare an answer for every possibility. However, there are several questions that are commonly asked in interviews regardless of the job or industry. By practicing your answers to these key questions—and developing a general strategy for answering any others that might come your way—you will gain the confidence to be successful.

This video provides job seekers with tried-and-true techniques for providing personalized, informative, and persuasive answers to interview questions. It then applies those techniques directly to the most-commonly asked questions they are likely to face. Throughout the video, viewers will be given the chance to stop and consider their own responses to these questions. This instructor's guide provides suggestions and activities for making the most of the strategies outlined in the video.

### Presentation Suggestions

Ask participants what interview question they fear the most or have had difficulty answering in the past. What made the question difficult? How did they respond? In retrospect, how might they have responded differently? What strategies have they developed for answering difficult interview questions since then? You might also ask what interview question they have been asked the *most* and what kinds of responses have proved successful in the past. Try to get a sense of the kinds of questions participants are used to and which ones they tend to struggle with.

When you feel participants have some sense of the most common and/or problematic interview questions, distribute the **Anticipation Quiz** for them to complete prior to watching the video. If you wish, allow your clients or students to share and discuss their answers.

Show the video. Encourage individuals to make changes to the answers they wrote down for the Anticipation Quiz while watching the video. If you wish, allow clients or students to do this section-by-section whenever the video suggests a pause.

At the conclusion of the video, ask individuals to discuss any changes they made to the answers on the Anticipation Quiz as a result of information in the video. Follow up the discussion with the **Activities**.

Use the **Discussion Questions** to request oral or written responses from clients or students, or assign the questions as homework essays.

Give the **Quick Quiz** at the conclusion of class or a workshop and correct the quizzes as a group.

Assign the **Homework Option**, if desired.

## Anticipation Quiz

Directions: Answer these questions as completely as possible. You may revise your answers as you watch the video.

1. True or false: A good interview answer will always try to match your skills to the needs of the company.
2. What are the three steps to answering any interview question?
3. True or false: You should never admit to having any weakness in an interview.
4. List three ways you can prove that you have the skills required to do the job.
5. What should you do if pressed to give your salary requirements during an interview?
6. What are some examples of questions you can ask an interviewer when given the opportunity?

## Answer Key

1. True.
2. Understand what is really being asked, frame your response to focus on your skills and abilities, and prove your answer with examples from your experience.
3. False. But you should be prepared to talk about how you have improved.
4. (Answers may vary.) Provide examples of success in the form of anecdotes, statistics, and feedback from employers and customers.
5. Research the average salary for that type of job ahead of time and offer a range that you would be comfortable with accepting.

6. (Answers may vary.) What does a typical day look like? What is the company culture like? What education and training programs are available? Are there opportunities for advancement? Where do you see this company in the next few years?

## Activities

### Activity #1

Title: Three Steps

Format: Individual/Pairs

Time: 20-30 minutes

Materials: List of Interview Questions, Three Steps Worksheet

Procedure:

1. The video outlines a three-step process for answering almost any interview question: understand what is really being asked, frame your response to focus on your skills and abilities, and prove your answer with examples from your experience. Have participants pick one of the questions on the list provided at the end of this guide and then use the Three Steps Worksheet to write out a response to that question.
2. In pairs, participants should then practice asking and answering the questions they chose in a mock interview situation.

### Activity #2

Title: The Most Important Question of All

Format: Individual/Pairs

Time: 20-30 minutes

Materials: Paper/pencil

Procedure:

1. Ultimately every answer you give in an interview should come back, in some way, to this question: What makes you the best candidate for the job? Give participants time to write an answer to this question with regards to the type of job they are currently seeking. This will be their *core answer*, containing the key points that they will want to draw on throughout an interview.
2. Participants should then work in pairs to answer some of the *most common questions* presented in the video. Encourage them to use parts of their core answer in each response.

3. When everyone has had the chance to answer some questions, come back together as a group and discuss strategies for bringing every interview answer back to the core answer as well as their key skills and experience.

## Discussion Questions

1. Many job seekers have something about their job history that they'd prefer to avoid discussing during an interview, whether it's a layoff or a sizeable gap in work history or a criminal conviction. How do you address these points during an interview? How can you cast something potentially negative about your work history in a more positive light? How can you assure an employer that you are still the best candidate for the job?
2. Where do you see yourself in six months? Three years? Ten years? Twenty? Having both short- and long-term goals is important when it comes to planning your career. How would you take your career goals and translate them into an answer to this same question during an interview?
3. Often, it's not just *what* you say, but *how* you say it that matters. Body language, eye contact, tone of voice, etc., all contribute to the impression you make. What are some strategies for making a positive, professional impression during an interview?

## Quick Quiz

Directions: Match each interview question to the employer's underlying concern.

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| 1. What are your strengths?                           | A. How do you overcome adversity?<br>How have you improved yourself?                         |
| 2. What are your weaknesses?                          | B. Can we afford you? Do you have realistic expectations about this job?                     |
| 3. Where do you see yourself in five years?           | C. Were you fired or let go because of poor performance or an inability to work with others? |
| 4. Why did you leave your last position?              | D. What specific skills will you bring to the table to help us reach our goals?              |
| 5. Why do you want to work here?                      | E. Will you stay and make a career here or leave at the first new opportunity?               |
| 6. What are you looking for in terms of compensation? | F. What do you know about this company? Will you be able to contribute from day one?         |

## Answer Key

1. D
2. A
3. E
4. C
5. F
6. B

## Homework Option

The majority of the video covers questions that an interviewer will ask you. However, as the video suggests, it's important to have a few questions ready for the interviewer as well. Make a list of five to ten questions that you would ask if given a chance in a job interview. These questions can be related to your concerns about the work environment, advancement opportunities, company values, daily activities, company culture, or anything else that you feel is important to your career. Come to the next meeting prepared to share your questions with the group.

## List of Interview Questions

Are you a leader or a follower?

Are you a risk-taker?

Are you willing to relocate?

Are you willing to travel?

Describe your management style.

Do you have plans for further education?

Do you prefer working on a team or by yourself?

Have you ever been fired or asked to resign?

Have you ever gone against company policy? Why?

How did you hear about this position?

How do you define and measure success?

How do you handle difficult customers?

How do you handle pressure?

How has your education prepared you for this career?

How would your coworkers describe you?

If you had to describe yourself in one word, what would it be and why?

May I contact your references?

What are your career goals?

What are your hobbies?

What are your strengths?

What are your weaknesses?

What could you contribute to make this company better?

What did you like the least about your last job?

What did you like the most about your last job?

What do you know about our company?

What is your dream job?

What motivates you?

What previously held job do you consider to be your favorite and why?

What prompted this career switch?

What types of people do you have trouble getting along with?

What would you try to accomplish in the first week/month on the job?

What's one new thing you learned to do in the last year?

Why do you want this job?

Why should we hire you?

## Three Steps Worksheet

Interview question

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What is really being asked? What are the employer's main concerns?

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What skills and abilities do you have that will address those concerns?

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What evidence/examples/anecdotes can you provide that show those skills in action?

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