

What Will They Ask?

Stephen F. Austin State University | Center for Career and Professional Development

An interview is a dialogue and provides an opportunity for you and the interviewer to learn more about each other. You will probably be observed on how you react to certain questions and how you are able to “think on your feet” when answering. Preparation is essential to answer the common questions listed below.

1. Tell me more about yourself. **Elevator pitch; preparedness**
2. How would you describe yourself? **Preparedness**
3. Tell me something that shows your ability to work hard and stay committed to a job or assignment.
Ambition and Attitude
4. If you could, pick a key benefit from your college education that you feel prepared you for your field. **Preparedness**
5. Talk about one strength and one weakness you feel you possess? **Emphasize strengths**
6. Give me an example of a time when you tried to accomplish something and failed. **Emphasize strengths**
7. Describe your presentation skills and experience. **Communication**
8. Provide a specific instance where conflict occurred (on the job, in a team, etc.). How did you deal with it? What was the outcome? **Teamwork/Collaboration**
9. Please describe a situation in which you were required to make a decision in a short amount of time. **Decision Making (Leadership)**
10. Give me a specific example of a time when you used good judgement and logic in solving a problem.
Problem Solving/Analytical Skills
11. Tell me about a time when you used your creative abilities to communicate a complex idea visually. **Innovation and Creativity/Initiative**
12. Give me an example of a time management skill that has proven successful for you. **Organization**
13. Describe an instance in which you were able to persuade an important person over to a new way of thinking. **Influence**
14. Tell about a time when you had to adapt to a wide variety of people by accepting/understanding their perspective. **Global Issues/Cultural Competence**
15. In some positions, it is necessary to be a thorough meticulous reader and in other situations, it is important for one to be able to quickly scan through large amounts of information quickly. Describe your most significant scanning experience. **Communication**
16. Have you ever been in a situation where a team member was not holding up his or her end of the project? What happened? **Teamwork/Collaboration**
17. Tell me about a situation when you had to “stand up” for a decision you made even though it made you unpopular. **Decision Making (Leadership)**
18. Solving a problem often necessitates evaluation of alternative solutions. Give me an example of a time when you actively defined several solutions to a single problem. Did you use any tools such as research, brainstorming, or mathematics? **Problem Solving/Analytical Skills**
19. Describe an experience where you were able to work with a group to produce creative solutions and what role you took in that process. **Innovation and Creativity/Initiative**
20. Describe in detail a project that you designed, implemented, evaluated and completed. How did you define and measure the success of this project? **Organization**
21. Tell me about a time in your life when you’ve had to influence a peer or supervisor to do something that they don’t initially believe in. **Influence**
22. Describe how you have worked in a diverse environment: what types of diversity have you encountered? How did you feel about these, and how has this affected your experience and understanding of others? **Global Issues/Cultural Competence**
23. Why do you feel you are a good candidate for this position? **Ambition and attitude**
24. Do you have any questions for me? **Preparedness**

Tips for answering interview questions

- Be yourself. Demonstrate a sincere interest in the position. Project energy and enthusiasm. Be natural in your answers and avoid memorizing your responses.
- Listen carefully and respond accordingly. Give specific examples, brief and to the point, and avoid being overly general.
- Treat the interview as if it were a conversation. Picture yourself speaking with someone you've known for years, not a total stranger you just met.
- Keep answers focused on skills needed for the position. Avoid personal or irrelevant information.
- When answering behavior-based questions, use the STAR method: S – Situation, T – Task, A – Action you took, R – Result of your actions.
- Don't try to bluff your way through a question. Ask for clarification if you are unsure of a question. If you still do not have an answer, explain that you have not experienced this exact situation, then substitute a similar and related experience.
- Never criticize a previous employer. Keep all explanations professional in nature.
- Be confident and comfortable talking about yourself. It may be hard at first, but talk about yourself the way your grandmother might talk about you.
- Don't toot your own horn too much. Avoid bragging and coming across as too cocky.
- Avoid "fillers" (ex. Um, so, hm, uh, like, you know, etc.) by taking a moment to collect your thoughts before responding.
- Use language that puts you on their team: "As a member of your team, I would..."
- Answer questions with a completed structure. That is, an introductory statement, the body of the answer and a strong concluding statement that summarizes your response.
- Work-related examples are always best when answering questions. However, if relevant, valuable experience gained in other areas or activities can be substituted. Think internships, organization involvement, leadership roles, team projects, team athletics, part-time jobs, and volunteer work.
- Place a positive spin on potentially negative questions.