

HR Interview Questions and Answers

[On a scale of one to ten, rate me as an interviewer.](#)

Answer :: Once again, never be negative. The interviewer will only resent criticism coming from you. This is the time to show your positivism.

However, don't give a numerical rating. Simply praise whatever interview style he's been using.

If he's been tough, say "You have been thorough and tough-minded, the very qualities needed to conduct a good interview."

If he's been methodical, say, "You have been very methodical and analytical, and I'm sure that approach results in excellent hires for your firm."

In other words, pay him a sincere compliment that he can believe because it's anchored in the behavior you've just seen. [Read More](#)

[Tell me something negative you've heard about our company?](#)

Answer :: Sometimes companies make it to the newspapers in a negative way. The question is then hard to ignore. When you're applying for a managerial role, you may have ideas to prevent this kind of negative events from happening again. This should however be well prepared up front. Otherwise, dodge the question. [Read More](#)

[Looking back on your last position, have you done your best work?](#)

Answer :: To cover both possible paths this question can take, your answer should state that you always try to do your best, and the best of your career is right now. Like an athlete at the top of his game, you are just hitting your career stride thanks to several factors. Then, recap those factors, highlighting your strongest qualifications.

Why should I hire you from the outside when I could promote someone from within?

Help him see the qualifications that only you can offer.

Example: "In general, I think it's a good policy to hire from within – to look outside probably means you're not completely comfortable choosing someone from inside.

"Naturally, you want this department to be as strong as it possibly can be, so you want the strongest candidate. I feel that I can fill that bill because...(then recap your strongest qualifications that match up with his greatest needs)."

[If you won \\$10 million lottery, would you still work?](#)

Answer :: This type of question is aimed at getting at your bedrock attitude about work and how you feel about what you do. Your best answer will focus on your positive feelings.

Example: "After I floated down from cloud nine, I think I would still hold my basic belief that achievement and purposeful work are essential to a happy, productive life. After all, if money alone bought happiness, then all rich people would be all happy, and that's not true.

"I love the work I do, and I think I'd always want to be involved in my career in some fashion. Winning the lottery would make it more fun because it would mean having more flexibility, more options...who knows?"

"Of course, since I can't count on winning, I'd just as soon create my own destiny by sticking with what's worked for me, meaning good old reliable hard work and a desire to achieve. I think those qualities have built many more fortunes than all the lotteries put together." ... [Read More](#)

["The Opinion Question" - What do you think about ...Abortion...The President...The Death Penalty...\(or any other controversial subject\)?](#)

Answer :: In all of these instances, just remember the tale about student and the wise old rabbi. The scene is a seminary, where an overly serious student is pressing the rabbi to answer the ultimate questions of suffering, life and death. But no matter how hard he presses, the wise old rabbi will only answer each difficult question with a question of his own.

In exasperation, the seminary student demands, "Why, rabbi, do you always answer a question with another question?" To which the rabbi responds, "And why not?"

If you are ever uncomfortable with any question, asking a question in return is the greatest escape hatch ever invented. It throws the onus back on the other person, sidetracks the discussion from going into an area of risk to you, and gives you time to think of your answer or, even better, your next question!

In response to any of the "opinion" questions cited above, merely responding, "Why do you ask?" will usually be enough to dissipate any pressure to give your opinion. But if your interviewer again presses you for an opinion, you can ask another question.

Or you could assert a generality that almost everyone would agree with. For example, if your interviewer is complaining about politicians then suddenly turns to you and asks if you're a Republican or Democrat, you could respond by saying, "Actually, I'm finding it hard to find any politicians I like these days."

(Of course, your best question of all may be whether you want to work for someone opinionated.) ... [Read More](#)

[What was the toughest part of your last job?](#)

Answer :: State that there was nothing in your prior position that you found overly difficult, and let your answer go at that. If pressed to expand your answer, you could describe the aspects of the position you enjoyed more than others, making sure that you express maximum enjoyment for those tasks most important to the open position, and you enjoyed least those tasks that are unimportant to the position at hand.

How do you define success and how do you measure up to your own definition?

Give a well-accepted definition of success that leads right into your own stellar collection of achievements.

Example: "The best definition I've come across is that success is the progressive realization of a worthy goal."

"As to how I would measure up to that definition, I would consider myself both successful and fortunate. (Then summarize your career goals and how your achievements have indeed represented a progressive path toward realization of your goals.) [Read More](#)

[The "Secret" Illegal Questions like:](#)

["Is this person really able to handle the job?" or "Is he or she a "good fit" at a place like ours?" or "Will the chemistry ever be right with someone like this?" etc.](#)

Answer :: Much more frequent than the Illegal question is the secret illegal question. It's secret because it's asked only in the interviewer's mind. Since it's not even expressed to you, you have no way to respond to it, and it can there be most damaging.

Example: You're physically challenged, or a single mother returning to your professional career, or over 50, or a member of an ethnic minority, or fit any of a dozen other categories that do not strictly conform to the majority in a given company.

Your interviewer wonders, "Is this person really able to handle the job?... Is he or she a "good fit" at a place like ours?... Will the chemistry ever be right with someone like this? But the interviewer never raises such questions because they're illegal. So what can you do?

ANSWER: Remember that just because the interviewer doesn't ask an illegal question doesn't mean he doesn't have it. More than likely, he is going to come up with his own answer. So you might as well help him out.

How? Well, you obviously can't respond to an illegal question if he hasn't even asked. This may well offend him. And there's always the chance he wasn't even concerned about the issue until you brought it up, and only then begins to wonder.

So you can't address "secret" illegal questions head-on. But what you can do is make sure there's enough counterbalancing information to more than reassure him that there's no problem in the area he may be doubtful about.

For example, let's say you're a sales rep who had polio as a child and you need a cane to walk. You know your condition has never impeded your performance, yet you're concerned that your

interviewer may secretly be wondering about your stamina or ability to travel. Well, make sure that you hit these abilities very hard, leaving no doubt about your capacity to handle them well.

So, too, if you're in any different from what passes for "normal". Make sure, without in any way seeming defensive about yourself that you mention strengths, accomplishments, preferences and affiliations that strongly counterbalance any unspoken concern your interviewer may have. [Read More](#)

[The Illegal Question: your age...number and ages of your children or other dependents...marital status...maiden name...religion...etc???](#)

Answer :: Illegal questions include any regarding your age...number and ages of your children or other dependents...marital status...maiden name...religion...political affiliation...ancestry...national origin...birthplace...naturalization of your parents, spouse or children...diseases...disabilities...clubs...or spouse's occupation...unless any of the above are directly related to your performance of the job. You can't even be asked about arrests, though you can be asked about convictions.

ANSWER: Under the ever-present threat of lawsuits, most interviewers are well aware of these taboos. Yet you may encounter, usually on a second or third interview, a senior executive who doesn't interview much and forgets he can't ask such questions.

You can handle an illegal question in several ways. First, you can assert your legal right not to answer. But this will frighten or embarrass your interviewer and destroy any rapport you had.

Second, you could swallow your concerns over privacy and answer the question straight forwardly if you feel the answer could help you. For example, your interviewer, a devout Baptist, recognizes you from church and mentions it. Here, you could gain by talking about your church.

Third, if you don't want your privacy invaded, you can diplomatically answer the concern behind the question without answering the question itself.

Example: If you are over 50 and are asked, "How old are you?" you can answer with a friendly, smiling question of your own on whether there's a concern that your age may affect your performance. Follow this up by reassuring the interviewer that there's nothing in this job you can't do and, in fact, your age and experience are the most important advantages you offer the employer for the following reasons...

Another example: If asked, "Do you plan to have children?" you could answer, "I am wholeheartedly dedicated to my career", perhaps adding, "I have no plans regarding children." (You needn't fear you've pledged eternal childlessness. You have every right to change your plans later. Get the job first and then enjoy all your options.)

Most importantly, remember that illegal questions arise from fear that you won't perform well. The best answer of all is to get the job and perform brilliantly. All concerns and fears will then vanish, replaced by respect and appreciation for your work. [Read More](#)

“The Salary Question” – How much money do you want?

Answer :: For maximum salary negotiating power, remember these five guidelines

Never bring up salary. Let the interviewer do it first. Good salespeople sell their products thoroughly before talking price. So should you. Make the interviewer want you first, and your bargaining position will be much stronger.

If your interviewer raises the salary question too early, before you’ve had a chance to create desire for your qualifications, postpone the question, saying something like, “Money is important to me, but is not my main concern. Opportunity and growth are far more important. What I’d rather do, if you don’t mind, is explore if I’m right for the position, and then talk about money. Would that be okay?”

The #1 rule of any negotiation is: the side with more information wins. After you’ve done a thorough job of selling the interviewer and it’s time to talk salary, the secret is to get the employer talking about what he’s willing to pay before you reveal what you’re willing to accept. So, when asked about salary, respond by asking, “I’m sure the company has already established a salary range for this position. Could you tell me what that is?” Or, “I want an income commensurate with my ability and qualifications. I trust you’ll be fair with me. What does the position pay?” Or, more simply, “What does this position pay?”

Know beforehand what you’d accept. To know what’s reasonable, research the job market and this position for any relevant salary information. Remember that most executives look for a 20-25%\$ pay boost when they switch jobs. If you’re grossly underpaid, you may want more.

Never lie about what you currently make, but feel free to include the estimated cost of all your fringes, which could well tack on 25-50% more to your present “cash-only” salary. [Read More](#)

[Sell me this stapler...\(this pencil...this clock...or some other object on interviewer’s desk\).](#)

Answer :: Of course, you already know the most important secret of all great salesmanship – “find out what people want, then show them how to get it.”

If your interviewer picks up his stapler and asks, “sell this to me,” you are going to demonstrate this proven master principle. Here’s how:

“Well, a good salesman must know both his product and his prospect before he sells anything. If I were selling this, I’d first get to know everything I could about it, all its features and benefits.”

“Then, if my goal were to sell it you, I would do some research on how you might use a fine stapler like this. The best way to do that is by asking some questions. May I ask you a few questions?”

Then ask a few questions such as, “Just out of curiosity, if you didn’t already have a stapler like this, why would you want one? And in addition to that? Any other reason? Anything else?”

“And would you want such a stapler to be reliable?...Hold a good supply of staples?” (Ask more questions that point to the features this stapler has.)

Once you’ve asked these questions, make your presentation citing all the features and benefits of this stapler and why it’s exactly what the interviewer just told you he’s looking for.

Then close with, “Just out of curiosity, what would you consider a reasonable price for a quality stapler like this...a stapler you could have right now and would (then repeat all the problems the stapler would solve for him)? Whatever he says, (unless it’s zero), say, “Okay, we’ve got a deal.”

NOTE: If your interviewer tests you by fighting every step of the way, denying that he even wants such an item, don’t fight him. Take the product away from him by saying, “Mr. Prospect, I’m delighted you’ve told me right upfront that there’s no way you’d ever want this stapler. As you well know, the first rule of the most productive salespeople in any field is to meet the needs of people who really need and want our products, and it just wastes everyone’s time if we try to force it on those who don’t. And I certainly wouldn’t want to waste your time. But we sell many items. Is there any product on this desk you would very much like to own...just one item?” When he points something out, repeat the process above. If he knows anything about selling, he may give you a standing ovation. [Read More](#)

[If you are an employee then what do you look for when you hire people in your organization?](#)

Answer :: Speak your own thoughts here, but for the best answer weave them around the three most important qualifications for any position.

Can the person do the work (qualifications)?

Will the person do the work (motivation)?

Will the person fit in (“our kind of team player”)?

.... [Read More](#)

[What are your goals?](#)

- Answer :: Many executives in a position to hire you are strong believers in goal-setting. (It’s one of the reason they’ve achieved so much). They like to hire in kind.

If you’re vague about your career and personal goals, it could be a big turnoff to many people you will encounter in your job search.

Be ready to discuss your goals for each major area of your life: career, personal development and learning, family, physical (health), community service and (if your interviewer is clearly a religious person) you could briefly and generally allude to your spiritual goals (showing you are a well-rounded individual with your values in the right order).

Be prepared to describe each goal in terms of specific milestones you wish to accomplish along the way, time

periods you're allotting for accomplishment, why the goal is important to you, and the specific steps you're taking to bring it about. But do this concisely, as you never want to talk more than two minutes straight before letting your interviewer back into the conversation. [Read More](#)

[What was the toughest challenge you've ever faced?](#)

Answer :: This is an easy question if you're prepared. Have a recent example ready that demonstrates either:

A quality most important to the job at hand; or

A quality that is always in demand, such as leadership, initiative, managerial skill, persuasiveness, courage, persistence, intelligence, etc. [Read More](#)

[What's the most difficult part of being a \(job title\)?](#)

Answer :: First, redefine "difficult" to be "challenging" which is more positive. Then, identify an area everyone in your profession considers challenging and in which you excel. Describe the process you follow that enables you to get splendid results...and be specific about those results.

Example: "I think every sales manager finds it challenging to motivate the troops in a recession. But that's probably the strongest test of a top sales manager. I feel this is one area where I excel."

"When I see the first sign that sales may slip or that sales force motivation is flagging because of a downturn in the economy, here's the plan I put into action immediately..." (followed by a description of each step in the process...and most importantly, the exceptional results you've achieved.)

The "Hypothetical Problem";

Instead, describe the rational, methodical process you would follow in analyzing this problem, who you would consult with, generating possible solutions, choosing the best course of action, and monitoring the results.

Remember, in all such, "What would you do?" questions, always describe your process or working methods, and you'll never go wrong. [Read More](#)

[How many hours a week do you normally work?](#)

Answer :: If you are in fact a workaholic and you sense this company would like that: Say you are a confirmed workaholic, that you often work nights and weekends. Your family accepts this because it makes you fulfilled.

If you are not a workaholic: Say you have always worked hard and put in long hours. It goes with the territory. In one sense, it's hard to keep track of the hours because your work is a labor of love, you enjoy nothing more than solving problems. So you're almost always thinking about your work, including times when you're home, while shaving in the morning, while commuting, etc. [Read More](#)

