

Sample Interview Questions

Interviewers express amazement at the number of applicants who drift into interviews with little preparation, not knowing what to say. You can become more effective in handling interviews by practicing your answers to the questions most likely to be asked.

Questions vary a great deal from interview to interview. However, the ones listed below are representative of those you are likely to encounter. Practice responding to some questions with a friend so you can strengthen your interviewing skills and confidence.

Career Goals and Plans

- What would you like to be doing five years from now?
- Why did you choose this career field?

Personal Qualifications

- What is your energy level like? Describe a typical day.
- How would you describe yourself?
- What are some of the greatest personal challenges you have faced during your lifetime?
- What personal characteristics are necessary for success in this field?
- Tell me about yourself.
- What are your qualifications for this position?
- What is your greatest strength?
- Why should I hire you?
- What skills and abilities do you possess?

Hypothetical Questions

- What would you do if...?

Education

- Why did you choose this major? This university?
- What college courses did you like most? Least? Why?
- How did you finance your college education?
- What elective courses did you take? Why did you choose them?
- What are the reasons for your success in college?

- What was the most difficult aspect of obtaining a college degree?
- What are your biggest accomplishments?
- Discuss some of your past leadership roles and your accomplishments in them.
- Do you think your grades are a good indication of your academic achievement?

College Experiences

- Tell me about the extracurricular activities in which you have been involved.
- What positions did you hold? What were the responsibilities of these positions?
- Tell me about your accomplishments in extracurricular activities.
- How did you organize your time in college?
- Explain your role as a group or team member.
- What have been your greatest challenges for improvement of a campus organization?
- Describe your most rewarding college experience.

Work Experiences

- What kind of experience do you have for this job?
- Tell me about the responsibilities of your job.
- Tell me about your toughest job assignment.
- What were your most significant accomplishments on the job?
- Tell me about a conflict situation on the job and how you resolved it.
- Describe some of the pros and cons of working on a team project.
- What kind of accomplishments have you had in your work experiences?
- What would your last two employers say about you as an employee, either good or bad?
- What did you enjoy most about your work experiences? Least?
- What problems did you have in meeting deadlines?
- Describe a difficult problem you've had to deal with.

- Describe a situation where your work or an idea was criticized.
- How do you interact with people around you?
- How would you define a conducive work atmosphere?

Knowledge of the Career Field, Organization, or Position

- Why do you want to work for this organization?
- What interests you most about this job?
- What kind of skills or personal characteristics do you think it takes to be successful in this position? This field?

Relocation and Travel

- Are you willing to go where the organization sends you?

Salary and Benefits

- How do you feel about an income made up totally of commissions?
- What are your expectations for starting salary?

Questions for Teacher Candidates

Motivation/Experience/Training

- Tell me about yourself.
- Why do you want to go into the field of education?
- What experiences have you had related to teaching?
- What qualities do you have that make you an effective teacher?
- What grade levels or subjects do you prefer to teach?
- Have you taught or are you interested in teaching combination classes?
- Do you have experience with special education students?
- Why do you want to teach in our school district?
- Do you have [multicultural/urban/learning disabilities...] teaching experience?
- What do you remember most about your own education?

Teaching Effectiveness

- How do you meet the range of skills and needs commonly present in a classroom?
- When do you use an individual, group and/or whole class teaching approach? Why?
- Let's imagine we are going to observe a teacher teaching a lesson. I tell you in advance to expect a superb lesson. What would you expect to see in that lesson?
- If a teacher wants to be sure pupils will learn a skill to be taught, what should he or she be sure to do when teaching?
- How do you assess your students' needs?
- How would you design a program that would be beneficial to a special needs class that has been integrated into your class for part of all of a day? Can you illustrate with a particular lesson?
- How do you make sure your lessons are taught at the appropriate level?
- How do you stimulate active participation in the classroom?
- How would you use parents in the classroom?
- How would you integrate diversity in your teaching?
- Think of a young person who was your biggest challenge? What was the challenge? How did you approach the challenge?

Teacher Planning and Preparation

- What kinds of planning do you see a teacher doing?
- How do you plan for a year? A week? A day? (Hint: discuss planning objectives, recognize modes of learning, diversity of students and their experiences)
- How do you know what you will cover?
- What types of resource materials do you like to use?

Classroom Management and Behavior

- What are some characteristics of a well-managed classroom?
- How would you teach appropriate behavior in your class?
- How would you set expectations for behavior?

- A parent calls and says that you embarrassed his child in front of the class. How are you going to respond to the parent?
- What does “classroom control” mean to you?
- What discipline methods work for you?
- What is your primary goal with student discipline?
- What are some examples of rules you would have in your classroom?
- How would you be sure your rules are carried out?
- How much responsibility for their learning do you feel students should have to take?
- Are you a “let them go to the pencil sharpener whenever they want” type of person?
- What types of rewards and consequences would you use?

Staff Development/Professional Growth

- What do you see yourself doing over the course of the next several years to improve your abilities as a professional?
- What weakness would you like to work on? (Hint: focus on professional abilities, not personal idiosyncrasies)
- What areas of growth do you want to focus on?
- What professional development topics most interest you?

Staff Rapport and Relationships

- As a teacher new to a school, what would you see yourself doing to contribute to healthy staff relationships and to become a part of the staff?
- What should a principal expect from teachers?
- What should teachers expect from the principal?
- What kind of a team player are you? (Hint: focus on flexibility, functioning as part of a total unit, collaborative educator)
- How do you approach working with tenured, more experienced teachers?
- If pushed to the limit, what are those things that you hold dear and probably won't lose over your 40-year teaching career? (Hint: teaching philosophy)

Grading Systems

- What grading system works for you?
- Under what conditions, if any, would most of your pupils receive D's and F's? How and why could this happen?

Technology

- Describe your beliefs about the use of technology in the classroom.
- What do you see as the point of technology in the classroom?
- What technology skills do you have?

Closing Comments/Questions

- What additional talents and skills do you have?
- What extracurricular activities can you supervise?
- Do you have questions or additional comments for us? (Hint: always come prepared with additional questions. It shows that you are serious about the job.)

Questions For the Employer

Interviews allow both the employer and the candidate to ask questions that will help each party make a better decision. Your questions should show a sincere interest in this particular employer, an awareness of the employer's needs, and how you can fulfill those needs.

What is a good question? In general, good questions should not be so basic that they lead the interviewer to assume that you have not done any homework on the position or employer. Avoid asking questions you could have easily answered by doing some research. Concentrate on developing questions that will help you get the information needed to make an informed decision. Well-thought out questions will further enhance the employer's impression of you.

An inappropriate question at the initial interview is one that deals with salary and benefits. These type of questions lead the interviewer to assume that dollars, not duties, are most important to you. There will be ample time at the follow-up interview to ask questions related to your personal needs.

Job Description/History

- How would you describe a typical day on the job?
- What tasks are involved in the job? Can you give me a written job description?
- Why is this position open? Is this a regular, longstanding position, or has it been newly created?
- What happened to the person previously occupying this position?
- Ideally, what kind of person are you seeking to fill this position?
- What are some of the more difficult challenges of this job?
- What is the career path in this job? What is the next move for the person who is successful in this job?
- What are the special projects currently underway in the department? What are some that are coming in the future?

Supervision

- How much contact with management is there?
- To whom would I report?
- With whom would I be working?
- To what extent will I be working independently or as a team member?

The Organization

- What do employees like best about the organization?
- How much employee turnover is there?
- What is the best way for me to become familiar with the organization's missions and policies?
- What is the style of the organization and its values?
- What are the chances of being relocated, once on the job?

Evaluation

- What would a new employee be expected to have accomplished in the first 6 months on the job? The first year?
- How are performance reviews given? Who will evaluate my performance? How often is performance evaluated?
- How are raises/promotions determined? What are the long-range possibilities for professional growth and promotion?

Orientation/Training

- Is there a training or orientation program for new employees?
- What kind of professional development or continuing education is available for employees?

Criteria for Hiring

- Is there any area of my experience that you want to know more about?
- As you evaluate my candidacy, is there anything in my resume or background that you feel is problematic? If so, I'd like to discuss it with you.
- When will I be notified of your decision?

Center for Career and Professional Development
Clarion University
419 Becht Hall



Clarion, PA 16214
814-393-2323
www.clarion.edu/career
careers@clarion.edu
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