



## GENERAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND SAMPLE ANSWERS

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General interview questions are some common questions asked across different jobs and industries. These questions are to verify or confirm the information on your resume and to understand your motivation, key strengths, weakness, future career goals, and/or salary expectations.

### Key Preparation Tips

- Analyze your job posting and consider what the company is seeking in a candidate.
- Understand why they ask each question and interpret their intention or concerns behind their questions
- Have strategies for your answers and practice your answers!

### 1. Tell me a little bit about yourself/ Tell me about your background

#### Why ask this?:

- Break the ice and help you transit into a business mode
- See how you summarize yourself as a fit for the position

#### Strategies:

Summarize the following key points using **PAWS** formula:

- **Personal**- Where you are in terms of career readiness/ development
- **Academic**- a brief history of your education and professional development
- **Work Experience**- a summary of your relevant work experience or school projects
- **Skills**- a summary of your key hard skills and soft skills

Make each point relevant to your target job requirements and descriptions!

#### Common Mistakes to Avoid:

- Starting with your name or where you are from. Don't give too many personal details.
- Making it lengthy by talking about all the details of your experience and skills. Interviewers will have follow-up questions about them. Answer in under a minute.

#### Sample Answer:

*I will be graduating this December with an Accounting Diploma from BCIT. At BCIT, I completed a number of hands-on accounting projects and volunteer work for tax-clinics with community organizations. Through my training and volunteer work, I developed my competency in handling general accounts receivable & payable and performing general payroll functions. I believe that my accounting experience, ethical standards, and professionalism would make a valuable contribution to your team.*

## **2. What interests you about our company and why would you like to work with us?**

### **Why ask this?:**

- Find out what you know about the company, industry, position (and if you took the time to research)
- Understand your priorities and preferences — which aspects of the company and/or job are appealing to you and why?
- Make sure that you are sincerely interested in the job and will be motivated to perform if hired

### **Strategies:**

- Research the company: go through the company's website and media coverage. Reach out to trusted "inside contacts" in your network for information.
- Make them feel special: acknowledge the company's uniquenesses and how they make you want to work for them. They could include the reputation of key leaders, admiration of products/services, admiration of the company initiatives (community involvement, training programs), company culture and values, or company growth/success.
- Align your skills, passion, or values with the role, company work culture or values

### **Common Mistakes to Avoid:**

- Mentioning too general things about the company that anybody can talk about
- Focusing on how you can benefit from the company, instead of what you can offer to the company

### **Sample Answer:**

*I have a great respect for what the Vancouver Refugee Society does for the community. The work that you do to increase public awareness and support refugees and their families is vitally important and it would be a privilege to support this work. Having spoken with your representative at the Refugees Services Networking event, I was excited when I saw that you were recruiting a Communications Assistant. My passion and expertise in social media would contribute to increasing public awareness and engaging younger supporters, something that I understand you are determined to do.*

### 3. What are your greatest strengths/ Tell me what you could bring to the company?

#### Why ask this?:

- Assess your self awareness and unique personal growth
- Get a feel for what makes you unique and how you will best contribute to the company
- See if your strengths align with the needs of the role and company

#### Strategies:

- Keep your answer relevant to the duties or requirements of the role
- Use the job posting and other research you've done about the role to make connection between your strength and challenges or requirements of the job

#### Common Mistakes to Avoid:

- Being overly humble or listing strengths that don't relate to the role
- Listing too many strengths— focus on 1-3 max
- Leaving out an explanation of how you've learned or demonstrated that strength

#### Sample Answer:

*I really excel at communication and relationship building. In my industry-sponsored project, I felt really comfortable breaking down the components of the work we were doing in a way that was easy for the client to understand and feel confident we were meeting their vision for the finished product. I used active listening techniques to confirm the client was on the same page as the team members, and debriefed with the team to ensure our progress was aligned with the client's goals. I've heard from my IT network that a big challenge for technical sales roles is ensuring the client has enough technical knowledge of the project to feel informed without overwhelming them with jargon or complication technical aspects. I think my ability to bridge different levels of knowledge and build trust can be a key way to overcome that challenge.*

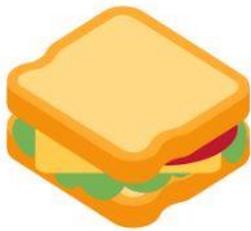
### 4. What is your greatest weakness?

#### Why:

- Identify any major red flags regarding your experience, skills or personality
- Assess your self-awareness and honesty.
- Find out if you are committed to personal growth and overcoming challenges

#### Strategies:

- Think about something that isn't your strong suit (e.g., one of the asset technical requirement that you don't meet yet). Make sure that the weakness you're going to use is minor enough not to raise red flags and is a "fixable" problem.
- Refer to it as a past issue. Show how you have taken steps to overcome it, or are currently improving on this weakness.
- Use the Sandwich Method:



- + End with a positive
- Sandwich the weakness
- + Start with a positive

#### Common Mistakes to Avoid:

- Mentioning any critical weakness related to the key requirements of the job
- Lying or using one of the common typical answers that are not applicable to you (e.g. perfectionism, public speaking, etc)
- Spending too much time talking about your flaws.
- Saying you will improve on this in the future in the role you are applying for

#### Sample Answer:

*I really enjoy working in a team and I believe that teamwork is important in this field. In the past, I once had a hard time letting control of a project by sharing tasks with others. I was convinced that I could do it all on my own and that asking for help would be taken as a sign of weakness. This led to me taking on too much responsibility and overwhelmed me, resulting in me being frustrated. It hasn't been easy learning to let go, but I've been working on trusting others and sharing the responsibilities for projects. As a result, I have been able to really accomplish some incredible things. Now I clearly see the value of cooperation on a deeper level. I also understand that projects, which would have been fine if I had done on my own, are way better as a result of the input and work of the entire team.*

#### 5. How would you describe your ideal work environment?

##### Why ask this?:

- Assess if your personality, preferred work environment, and (or) work styles are in alignment with the company

##### Strategies:

- Go through the company’s website, tweets, videos, Facebook posts, etc. to get an idea of what’s important to the team. Take into account how their company is structured in terms of work days, formality, i.e. small start-up vs. large corporation, etc.
- Focus on wanting an environment that allows for the use and growth of your established skills and qualities.
- Talk about your work-style and try to word your answer so that it blends in well with the company’s work environment or culture.

**Common Mistakes to Avoid:**

- Straying from the actual company and its workings by making it all about your general ideas of an ideal work culture.
- Reading off the job description or company’s “about us” page. Make it personal to you!
- Talking about how your ideal workplace is one with lots of vacation time and flexible hours.

**Sample Answer:**

*My ideal work environment is one that is centered around working as a team and that allows everyone’s talents to flourish. When I was researching your company, your desire to cultivate each of your employees’ skills was very impressive to me. I find that I work best in an environment that is empowering and positive, no matter what the work is that I’m doing.*

**6. Where do you see yourself in five years?**

**Why ask this?:**

- Identify if your career plans or goals fit in with the company
- Discover whether you care about their work and you will stay with the company

**Strategies :**

- If the position you’re interviewing for is on the track to your goals:

Share your genuine goals with some specifics. For example, if you’re being interviewed for an accountant position with an accounting firm where they want a future CPA and you know your goal is to become a CPA, share that. And add specifics about the sort of clients you hope to work with, which will help your answer sound genuine, not canned.

- If the position isn’t necessarily a one-way ticket to your aspirations:

Think about where this position could realistically take you and talk about how that aligns with some of your broader professional goals. Focus on the skills and experiences you hope to gain

rather than on specific job titles. Explain what your plans to contribute to the company would be if you were to land the role.

#### **Common Mistakes to Avoid:**

- Phrasing your answer in a way that makes the role at hand sound like a stepping stone.
- Positioning yourself as competition for anyone interviewing you by speaking about on specific job titles such as a manager

#### **Sample Answers:**

*I'm really excited about this position at Clear Consulting because, in five years, I'd like to be seen as someone with deep expertise in the energy sector, and I know that's something that I'll have an opportunity to do here. I'd also be very happy to take on more responsibilities here in the next few years and potentially even take the lead on some projects.*

### **7. What is your salary expectation?**

#### **Why ask this:**

- See if your expectations are within the company's budget
- Test your confidence in your ability to do the job
- Test your negotiating skills (applies to certain professions such as sales )

#### **Strategies:**

- Bounce the ball back to the interviewer and find out how much the company pays. Then try to mention your expectation within the range.
- In order to get your reasonable number, do your research to learn as much as possible about the position and comparable salaries from local and industry sources and job sites such as [Glassdoor](#), [Payscale.com](#), [Salary.com](#), and [LinkedIn](#). See if you can get any insider information, too.
- Next, say “flexible” or “negotiable” after you give out your number or range. Unless their offering number is too low or you are willing to risk losing the role, mention that you are open to negotiation.
- Be prepared to justify where you believe you fall in a range: i.e. you exceed their requirements, you have previous relevant experience etc.

#### **Common Mistakes to Avoid:**

- Disclosing your expected number or current salary without checking your target employer's expectation or your own thorough research
- Stopping with one source of salary data

- Focusing on salary only. Salary is one part of total compensation, and, sometimes, other forms of compensation, like bonuses and stock or even extra vacation time and working from home, may make the total compensation acceptable even if the salary is not what you want.

### **Sample Answers:**

*Before I give you a number, I'd like to understand how you compensate employees and how this job fits into your compensation structure. I'm curious to know the salary range for this position and the standard benefits you provide. That will give me a better idea of what an appropriate salary would be.*

*I am really interested in this job and I know I could do a good job. I am okay to start with the\_\_\_\_\_ (a bottom number of the company's salary range). However, would it possible to discuss a raise at the end of my probation if you are happy with my performance?*

*I've done some research and I have found that the average wage for this type of position is about 45000 to 50000 per year, so that's fine range I am looking for. However, I am open to negotiation on salary and I am certain that we can find something satisfactory for both of us once you find me a good fit for the role*