

MOCK INTERVIEW – SAMPLE QUESTION LIST

Sample general interview questions (pick 5 – at least one from each section)

Overall Sense of You

- Tell me about yourself.
- What motivates you to put forth your greatest effort?
- Why should I hire you?
- Describe the relationship that should exist between a supervisor and those reporting to him or her.
- What two or three accomplishments have given you the most satisfaction? Why?
- What two or three things are most important to you in your work?
- What do you do in your spare time?
- How long do you plan to stay with us if you get this position?
- Would you be willing to travel/relocate?
- Why are you reentering the workforce at this time?
- Will you be available during the hours required of this job?

Knowledge

- What do you know about this field?
- What do you think are the most pressing issues in this field?
- What challenges does this position present?
- What do you think it takes to be successful in this organization?
- Why did you decide to seek a position with this company?
- What criteria are you using to evaluate the company for which you hope to work?
- What do you know about our company?
- What do you think is the most critical public issue of our time?
- After a graduation: How will your degree benefit the organization?

Readiness/Experience (transferable skills)

- Discuss your strengths and weaknesses.
- What major problems have you encountered and how did you deal with them?
- What have you learned from your mistakes?
- How do you react to pressure?
- What types of decisions are most difficult for you?
- How have your prior experiences and education prepared you for this job?
- What has been your biggest frustration to date? How did you handle the situation?
- Have you ever supervised anyone in a work setting? Have you ever hired or fired anyone?
- What experience do you have in this field? How have you prepared yourself to switch fields?
- How have you influenced productivity and results in your previous work experiences?
- How have you prepared yourself to assume the challenges of this position?
- How do your current skills apply to this position?
- In what ways do you expect your relationships with current peers to change? How will you manage this shift?

Goals & Motivation (reasons for change)

- Why are you leaving your current position/company?
- What do you see yourself doing five years from now?
- Why are you leaving your current field? What did you like about it? What didn't you like?
- Why do you think you will like this field?
- Why are you reentering the workforce at this time?

Most common questions and answers suggested by professional interviewers:

What do you see yourself doing five years from now?

“I want to hear something related to the position,” says Haley Peoples, college relations manager for JC Penney Co. Inc. in Dallas, Texas. “I don’t want to hear ‘I want to be an astronaut’ or ‘I want to win the Academy Award.’” This question is designed to help the interviewer know if the job seeker will be happy in that position, or if he or she wants to work in it only as long as it takes to find something “better.”

How do you make yourself indispensable to a company?

“We are looking for both technical and interpersonal competence,” says Doris J. Smith-Brooks, recruiting and advertising manager for Boeing Co. in Seattle, Washington, who explains that students who have interned or completed cooperative education assignments generally answer the question best because they know what working for a company entails.

What’s your greatest strength?

“Don’t just talk about your strength—relate it to the position,” Ferguson says. “Let them know you are a qualified candidate.”

What’s your greatest weakness?

“Say something along the lines of, ‘I have difficulty with this thing, and these are the strategies I use to get around it,’” Ferguson says. “For example, you could say, ‘I’m not the most organized of individuals, so I always answer my e-mails and phone calls right away. I’m aware of the problem and I have strategies to deal with it.’”

How do you accept direction and, at the same time, maintain a critical stance regarding your ideas and values?

Smith-Brooks repeats that internship or co-op experience can give students the experience to answer that question, pointing out that students with good interpersonal skills honed on the job can understand how to walk that fine line.

What are some examples of activities and surroundings that motivate you?

“Most of our technical disciplines are teamwork professions and require getting along with and motivating other people,” Smith-Brooks says.

From http://www.jobweb.com/Resources/Library/Interviews/Interviewers_92_01.htm

Behavioral interview questions (pick 1 – look for STAR response)

Recruiters at Abbott Laboratories use the *STAR* method of interviewing, which involves getting the interviewee to describe a *situation* that includes a *task* that needed to be accomplished, the *action* taken to accomplish the task, and the *result* of that action.

Tell me about a time when your course load was heavy. How did you complete all your work?

“We generally are looking for an answer like, ‘Last semester I was taking 21 credits, so I made sure I had a day planner and mapped out all my assignments,’” says Felix J. Martinez, senior staff recruiter at Abbott Laboratories in Abbott Park, Illinois. “We’re looking for a plan-ahead kind of individual, not someone who just flies by the seat of his pants.”

Tell me about a time when you had to accomplish a task with someone who was particularly difficult to get along with.

“I want to hear something that shows the candidate has the ability to be sensitive to the needs of others but can still influence them,” Peoples says, adding that he’s heard plenty of wrong answers to that question. “Don’t say ‘I just avoided them’ or ‘They made me cry.’”

Tell me how you handled an ethical dilemma.

“Suppose you worked at a bank and a long-time customer wanted a check cashed right away but didn’t have the fund balance in his account to cover the check,” Martinez says, explaining that if the bank’s policy prohibited cashing checks in that manner, the teller would have a choice of violating bank policy or alienating a good customer. Martinez says the best way to handle such a situation would be to go to a supervisor, explain the situation, and ask for advice. He adds that students who can’t offer a situation that they handled correctly the first time can explain how they learned from making mistakes.

“Explain that the next time, this was how you would handle it,” he says.

Tell me about a time when you had to resolve a problem with no rules or guidelines in place.

“I’m looking for a sense of urgency in initiating action,” Peoples says, explaining that the question probes a student’s ability to overcome obstacles.

Other sample behavioral questions:

Describe a time when you were faced with problems or stresses at work that tested your coping skills. What did you do?

Give an example of a time when you had to be relatively quick in coming to a decision.

Give me an example of an important goal you had to set and tell me about your progress in reaching that goal.

Describe the most creative work-related project you have completed.

Give me an example of a problem you faced on the job, and tell me how you solved it.
Tell me about a situation in the past year in which you had to deal with a very upset customer or co-worker.

Give me an example of when you had to show good leadership.

Ask if they have any questions for you (make up answers).

Thank them for their interest and see if they ask about next steps.

Debrief the interview; ask them what they thought and they provide your feedback. You can use the feedback sheet as a reference.