

How to answer the top 10 interview questions

Interviews can be nerve racking, but preparation is the key to feeling more confident. How do you prepare though, and what questions should you expect?

We tracked down the 10 most-asked interview questions by analysing our Interview Builder tool that employers and recruiters use. Then we asked Steve Shepard, CEO of [TwoPointZero](#) and Suzie McInerney, CEO of [Six Degrees Executive](#) to take us through why employers ask each question and explain what they look for in a response.

Here are the top questions plus tips on how to answer them well.

1. Based on your understanding of this role, which of your skills do you believe will be most valuable to our organisation?
2. What's your understanding of the role and why are you interested?
3. Why are you interested in working at this organisation?
4. At times you will be asked to do many things at once. How do you prioritise your tasks?
5. What parts of your current role do you really love?
6. What parts of your current role frustrate you?
7. Give me an example of a time when you made a mistake or didn't deliver on expectations, what happened?
8. What is the one professional and/or technical skill you would most like to develop?
9. Talk us through your professional and technical skillset.
10. You disagree with the way your manager and supervisor say to handle a problem. What would you do?

1. Based on your understanding of this role, which of your skills do you believe will be most valuable to our organisation?

Why employers ask this: “Employers want to get a sense of how well you understand the role and its day-to-day requirements,” Shepard says. “They also want to find out

whether your skills match the job description and what you can do for the organisation overall.”

How to respond well: “If you can link your skills to what the company or organisation does and its business goals and objectives, you’re on the right track,” he says. “Aim to give practical examples of your past experiences and where your skills can add value. The more you understand about the role and have researched the organisation, considering its stakeholders, customers, business strategy, goals and objectives, the more you’ll be able to talk about how you can contribute.”

Tip: Do some research into the company’s goals and objectives. Check out their website or social media pages, look back to the job ad, then note down which skills of yours could help them in these goals.

2. What's your understanding of the role and why are you interested?

Why employers ask this: “This question helps recruiters gain a genuine understanding of which aspects of the role you are most interested in, in order to assess if you’re well suited to the role,” McInerney says.

How to respond well: Hiring managers and recruiters want to hear how you interpret the role in your own words, rather than just repeating the job ad, McInerney says. “The best answers are those that clearly demonstrate which aspects of the role you will be able to do well and how this will add value to the organisation and help achieve organisational goals.”

3. Why are you interested in working at this organisation?

Why employers ask this: “Have you done your homework? This question shows how much research you have done, demonstrating motivation for the job and providing recruiters with an insight into your own values to ensure they align with the hiring organisation,” McInerney says.

How to respond well: [Take some time to identify your values](#), then be prepared to talk about how these align with the company and what it does. “If you can build a connection with the organisation's people, strategy and values and your own values and aspirations, you will show the potential employer why you’re an ideal fit,” McInerney says.

Tip: Learn what you can about the company's values and aims. Many businesses include this sort of information via their website's 'About us' page.

4. At times you will be asked to do many things at once. How do you prioritise your tasks?

Why employers ask this: "This question aims to reveal your time management and decision-making skills," Shepard says. "Employers want to understand how you prioritise things and the way you engage with people during that process."

How to respond well: Be prepared to give an example of how you prioritised things in a previous role, Shepard says. Can you talk about how you schedule your day to ensure the most important things get done? Or a time where you were able to handle an urgent priority by reorganising other tasks? It's also worth considering how you communicate with others about deadlines or how you keep track of your workload via to-do lists or other organisational tools.

5. What parts of your current role do you really love?

Why employers ask this: "This shows the recruiter what is most important to you and how and why you gain satisfaction from different aspects of your career," McInerney says. "The response helps guide the interviewer on how you can make a difference and what gives you the most energy, for example, people management, processes or innovative thinking."

How to respond well: This one is pretty straightforward: focus on what you find satisfying in this role, or other previous roles if this isn't applicable. "Good answers are less about tasks and more about showing your passion, what you are most proud of, and how you have made an impact in your current role," McInerney says.

6. What parts of your current role frustrate you?

Why employers ask this: "Employers accept that there will be elements of every job that may be frustrating so it's important to be honest when answering this question," Shepard says. "By asking this question they are wanting to find out if you're compatible with the role you're applying for."

How to respond well: Don't be afraid to bring up frustrations, but focus on how you

handle them. “Rather than just venting things you find frustrating about your current role, try to frame your response in a positive light by talking about how you manage your frustration,” Shepard says. But choose what you focus on carefully, he adds. “Remember to think about the job description – for example, you don’t want to say you find dealing with difficult customers frustrating if the role is customer-facing.”

7. Give me an example of a time when you made a mistake or didn't deliver on expectations, what happened? What did you learn?

Why employers ask this: Most businesses accept that people make mistakes, Shepard says. “What is more important is that you learn from them. Employers are trying to establish what processes you use to analyse problems and how you go about solving them.”

How to respond well: “The key here is to focus on the take outs from your mistakes,” Shepard explains. “It’s a good idea to give an example of a past mistake – what were the circumstances? What was your decision-making process and how did you move forward from the mistake?”

8. What is the one professional and/or technical skill you would most like to develop?

Why employers ask this: This is about determining whether you’re interested in learning and growing – which can be a great quality in an employee. “Employers want to find out if you have an appetite for self-development and improvement,” Shepard says.

How to respond well: “An answer that shows a desire to improve behaviour and continuously learn and grow is important,” he says. “Always offer a reason for why you want to develop a particular skill. For example, you might say you’re interested in developing your photoshop skills in order to enhance your marketing ability.”

9. Talk us through your professional and technical skillset.

Why employers ask this: They want to get a clearer picture of your abilities and how you can apply them to the role. “This question aims to understand your full skillset to do the job,” McInerney says.

How to respond well: Rather than a laundry list of generic skills, be prepared to talk about your skills that are most relevant to the job and to give examples. “This question

is a great opportunity to share your technical know-how by demonstrating how you used a particular technical skill in a past job and how this skill will be relevant to the job you're applying for," McInerney says. She says while talking about technical skills is usually straightforward, professional or 'softer' skills like communication and leadership can be more difficult to talk about, so it's important to come ready with examples of these skills in action.

Tip: Examples can be hard to come up with off the top of your head, so prepare a list. You won't be able to refer to it in the interview, necessarily – but the process of creating it could help firm up examples in your head. Understand [what soft skills employers are looking for](#), or look back to projects you've completed or refer to feedback or performance reviews to help you come up with examples of skills that have made a difference.

10. You disagree with the way your manager and supervisor say to handle a problem. What would you do?

Why employers ask this: Employers want to find out how you handle confrontation, Shepard explains. "Are you someone who is argumentative, or do you stay silent? Or perhaps you are someone who calmly states your case and offers alternatives in a constructive way, accepting that not everyone will agree with your point of view."

How to respond well: "This type of behavioural question is best answered using an example, Shepard says. He recommends working through the example like this: "This was a time I didn't agree with my boss, this is how I handled it, this was the outcome and this is what I learned." Of course, it's best to pick an example where the disagreement was resolved well.

It's natural to be nervous in the lead up to an interview, but preparing your answers to these common questions can help you to feel more confident and at ease, and ready to show what you can bring to the role.

Read more:

- [Practice interview builder](#)
- [What's different about going for a job now?](#)
- [5 ways to ease your interview anxiety](#)