

# Six questions you should be ready to answer to smash that job interview

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With the new year underway employers are beginning to resume normal business activities and restart their hiring process. Similarly, many school and university graduates are beginning their job search after a

well-earned break.

While some employers are using increasingly sophisticated approaches to recruiting such as [psychometric testing](#) and [artificial intelligence](#), interviews remain [one of the most common selection methods](#).

If you have been invited to a [job interview](#), congratulations, as it likely means you have been shortlisted for the role. However, for many people, interviews can be an unnerving process. Not only do they require candidates to think on their feet, but also to create a positive impression of themselves as a potential co-worker.

With that in mind, it always pays to prepare by anticipating what will be discussed and practicing your answers. Here are six types of questions you may be asked:

## **1. Tell me a bit about yourself?**

An interview will often start with broad questions about your background and interest in a job. These may include questions such as: "What motivated you to apply for this role?" or "Tell me about your long-term career aspirations."

For these types of questions, a convincing answer will highlight relevant skills you can bring to the role. These [professional experiences](#) do not have to come from the same type of position. For instance, if you were applying for a customer service job, you might cite communication and problem-solving methods you used on a student team project.

A convincing answer will focus on [intrinsic motivation](#): specifically, the aspects of the job you find interesting, enjoyable or otherwise rewarding. These could involve working with people, solving tricky business problems or making a social impact. Avoid negative remarks

about your current [employer](#) and sources of extrinsic motivation—such as money or benefits—unless part of a salary negotiation.

Your answer will also show how the role aligns with your own values. For instance, if you are applying for a teaching position, you could highlight your belief in the importance of education, as well as anything about the school you admire, such as its program of extracurricular activities.

## **2. How did you resolve a particular problem in the past?**

Behavioral questions require candidates to provide examples of the past actions they took to manage situations. For instance: "Tell me about a time when you received a customer complaint. What actions did you take, and what was the outcome?" Their objective is to predict how candidates will behave in similar situations.

You can prepare for these questions by studying the job selection criteria and anticipating the questions the interviewer may ask.

If you do not have the relevant experience for one of the questions, you can say that you can't recall a specific example, but you could outline how you would deal with the situation described in the question.

## **3. What are your weaknesses?**

Interviewers will often ask about what you see as your greatest strengths and weaknesses.

The strengths part of this question enables you to highlight your knowledge and skills most relevant for the role. In general, it is a good

idea to provide examples of specific accomplishments that illustrate these capabilities.

The weaknesses can be addressed by framing "weaknesses" as professional aspirations. In general, it is a good idea to focus on a capability that is non-essential for the role, in which you would like to gain experience. For instance, if you are not a confident public speaker but recognize it as a necessary for your long-term career, you could say it is a skill you would like to work on.

By expressing willingness to receive further training and development, you can leave a much more positive impression than simply listing your current shortcomings.

#### **4. What are your salary expectations?**

Usually, pay negotiations will occur after an offer has been made, but sometimes the topic will come up during the interview.

Before stating your expectation, it is wise to find out the salary and other benefits associated with the role. If the salary has not been listed in the job description, you should ask the employer what the budgeted salary range for the position is.

Ahead of the interview, do some research and find out what is typical for the role you are applying for based on your level of experience.

Be careful about disclosing your current salary; this information can provide a baseline that can make it difficult to negotiate a higher salary. If you are asked this question, you can politely decline to answer or indicate the information is between yourself and your current employer.

## 5. Inappropriate or illegal questions

Unfortunately, some employers may ask [inappropriate or illegal questions](#). These may relate to relationship status, caregiver responsibilities, childhood planning, physical or mental health, cultural or ethnic background and union activity.

If you are asked an inappropriate question, you can politely ask the interviewer how that information would be [relevant to your ability to perform the job](#).

Ultimately, job candidates have a right to refuse to answer such questions, and employers who ask them may open themselves to [legal action](#) through the Fair Work Commission, Fair Work Ombudsman or the Australian Human Rights Commission.

## 6. Do you have any questions for me?

Often, the interviewer will invite the candidate to ask their own questions. Thoughtfully selected questions can leave a positive lasting impression.

In this part of the interview, you can clarify any aspect of the role you feel unsure about, such as the [working hours](#). It can also be good to do some research on the organization and to ask some more specific questions about its clients, projects, or long-term plans.

Beyond the specific requirements of the role, a good topic to ask about is the team and organizational culture. You could, for example, ask what a typical day in the life of a team member would look like.

At the end of the interview, you should ask about the next steps

including when you should expect to hear back from them.

One final thing to consider about an interview is that it is a two-way process; you are also interviewing the employer to see if the job would be a good fit for you personally and professionally. If the role, organization or people seem unappealing after the [interview](#) process, then it is wise to look elsewhere.

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