

READ THIS FIRST

Congratulations on landing your interview! This cheat sheet will help you prepare, so that when the big day comes and they call you into the room, you're prepared for anything they throw at you.

Almost every question interviewers ask is based on these ten "textbook" questions below. (We call them "textbook" questions because they literally teach them in management textbooks.) If you follow the tips below, you'll be in a good position to ace all these questions. Good luck!

BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

- i. Try to speak with someone who works in the organization. (Not only will you gain useful insights, but mentioning that you have done this in the interview shows you are serious.)
- ii. Prepare your own "go-to" answers to each of the ten questions below. Practice saying them until you own your answers.
- iii. Go easy on yourself. Remember that it is normal to feel nervous and that these nerves will go away after a few minutes.

valuable; and (b) where you fit into their team

Trap – underselling yourself; or trying to BS your way through this with a platitude

Secret – define and explain one thing that makes you valuable to a team

4. "Where you do see yourself in five years?"

Interviewer wants to know – that you're not just looking for a stop-gap job.

Trap – disqualifying yourself by saying anything that suggests you won't be working for the company in five years.

Secret – explain what you like about the work and that you would like to continue doing it

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. "Tell me about yourself"

Interviewer wants to know – (a) that you've prepared; and (b) why you want the job

Trap – losing focus by telling them your life story or full career history

Secret – explain in 5-8 sentences why your experience makes you an ideal fit

2. "Walk me through your resume"

Interviewer wants to know – (a) your skills; and (b) why you changed jobs

Trap – blowing your chances by speaking negatively about a past job or boss

Secret – prepare a compelling explanation for why you moved between each job

3. "What makes you better than other candidates?"

Interviewer wants to know – (a) what makes you

5. "Why are you leaving your current job? (Why did you leave your last job?)"

Interviewer wants to know – if you have baggage or skeletons in the closet

Trap – lying, or saying something that might incriminate you

Secret – if you were laid off or fired, frame it so that it is an organizational change or some other reason that has nothing to do with you

6. "What is your biggest weakness?"

Interviewer wants to know – (a) that you're real; and (b) that you are right for the job

Trap – trying to BS or answer with a platitude.

Secret – use the "sandwich" technique: (1) tell them about a strength; (2) point out a flaw that is a natural trade-off of that strength; and (3) explain how you have taken steps to work around this weakness

7. “What do you do during your free time?”

Interviewer wants to know – that you’re a normal, rounded person

Trap – coming across as boring, or telling them about an out-of-work activity they might see as a distraction

Secret – tell them about a hobby that is a little bit different, but that wouldn’t affect your suitability for the job

8. “Why don’t you give me your understanding of the role, and explain how your experience matches up?”

Interviewer wants to know – that you understand the role, and that you are genuinely a good fit

Trap – giving them a laundry list of twenty items

Secret – confirm three important aspects of the role, and explain how your experience matches up with each of these and makes you a good fit

9. “Why this job, at this company?”

Interviewer wants to know – that you’ve done your homework and researched them

Trap – showing that you do not understand their organization, by falling on a platitude, like “you’re the best” or “I like where you’re heading”

Secret – mention something you like about the people, something you like about the mission, and something you like about the work

10. “Do you have any questions for us?”

Interviewer wants to know – that you are as interested in the role as they are in you

Trap – indicating a lack of interest by not asking questions of your own or, worse, asking about salary, vacation time, or benefits

Secret – show that you are intrinsically motivated, by asking question like: “What projects do you have coming up?”, or “What are your best experiences working for the company?”

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

- i. Send a thank you note as soon as you get home (or, at the latest, within 24 hours).

- ii. Make a note of any specific conversation topics that you can refer back to later in any follow-up communication.

- iii. Analyze your performance and think of any questions that you found especially difficult. You need to improve your answers.

- iv. After two weeks – or two days longer than the timeframe they said they’d need to get back to you – make a follow-up call.

- v. Even if your chances of getting the job are high, keep putting more irons in the fire and attend as many interviews as you can. (If you do indeed receive a job offer, these other opportunities will put you in a stronger position for negotiating; and if you miss out on the job this time, having more irons in the fire means you can brush yourself off quickly and get back in the race.)

RESEARCH

If you want to feel more confident, research the following five things before every interview:

- a. Logistics – where do you need to go, where will you park, how far away is it?
 - b. Company – what is their mission, what are their goals, what are their values?
 - c. Ideal Candidate Profile – what type of person are they looking for to fill this role?
 - d. Interviewer – what can you learn about them from their LinkedIn profile?
 - e. Industry – have there been any major developments, changes, or crises?
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FINAL THOUGHT

You were invited to this interview for a good reason: *they think you’re a strong candidate and they want to learn more about you!*