

When developing interview questions, consider three rules of thumb: ask only for information that will serve as a basis for the hiring decision; know how the information will be used to make the decision; and do not ask for information that will not or should not be used to make hiring decisions.

Develop questions based on each major task and responsibility in the position description and on knowledge, skills, and abilities required by the position. Include problem-solving questions that allow the applicant to think creatively. Also include questions that elicit more than a “yes” or “no” response.

The following guide has been developed to provide hiring supervisors a resource from which to select questions that will help identify the candidate who will be most successful in a position.

Because research has shown that past behavior is predictive of future behavior, the questions are behavioral based. They will prevent a supervisor from missing important information, overlooking job motivation and organisational fit, and asking illegal, non-job-related questions. The same set of questions should be used to interview all candidates.

Background Review

Application/Resume

The following questions are designed to confirm the information on the candidate’s resume. Verify the address and phone numbers with information provided by Human Resource Services if applicable.

Educational Background

1. What is the highest level of education you have received?
2. List all degrees you have earned. Give the name of the institution from which each degree was earned and the field of study of each degree.
3. List any other education or training relevant to the (position title) position.

Employment Background

1. Who is your present or most recent employer?
2. What are/were your major responsibilities at (present/most recent job)?



3. Discuss/determine skills and level of expertise related to (position title). (Insert specific questions).
4. Which skills have you acquired in your present or previous positions that make you competitive for this position?
5. What do/did you like best about that position? What do/did you like least?
6. Which accomplishments in your present position are you proud of and why?
7. Why are you planning to/did you leave that position?

Initiative

Following is a list of sample questions designed to gather information about an individual's ability to identify tasks that need to be done without specifically being told to do them.

1. Have you found any ways to make your job easier or more rewarding?
2. What do you do differently from other people in the same position?
3. Have you ever recognized a problem before your boss or others in the organisation? How did you handle it?
4. What do you do in your job that is not covered in your job description?
5. We've all had occasions when we were working on something that just "slipped through the cracks." Can you give me some examples of when this happened to you? Cause? Result?
6. In your past experience, have you noticed any process or task that was being done unsafely (incorrectly)? How did you discover it or come to notice it?
7. Are you doing a good job? How do you know?
8. Give me some examples of doing more than required in your job?
9. Can you think of some projects or ideas (not necessarily your own) that were carried out successfully primarily because of your efforts?
10. What new ideas or suggestions have you come up with at work?



11. This job requires much time working alone. Tell me about a job or project where you worked unsupervised and were given only general guidelines for job/project completion.
12. Have you found any ways to make other employees' jobs easier or more rewarding?
13. What career accomplishments are you most proud of?
14. What did you do to change the aspects of your job that you dislike?

Planning and Organising

Following is a list of questions designed to gather information relating to an individual's ability to schedule work and handle multiple tasks.

1. How do you organise your day?
2. How often is your time schedule upset by unforeseen circumstances? What do you do when that happens? Tell me about a specific time.
3. Describe a typical day ... a typical week. (Interviewer, listen for planning)
4. How do you establish priorities in scheduling your time? Give examples.
5. What is your procedure for keeping track of items requiring your attention?
6. What did you do to get ready for this interview?
7. We have all had times when we just could not get everything done on time. Tell me about a time that this happened to you. What did you do?
8. Tell me how you establish a course of action to accomplish specific long-and-short term goals.
9. Do you postpone things? What are good reasons to postpone things?
10. Give me some examples of projects or tasks where you postponed immediate action. Why?
11. How do you catch up on an accumulated backlog of work after a vacation or conference?

Technical and/or Position Specific

Following is a list of questions designed to gather information relating to an individual's past work experience, duties, and working conditions which are similar to those of the position for which the individual is being considered.

1. What training have you received in _____?
2. Describe how the process can best be performed. Have you discovered any shortcuts? How do they work?
3. Describe your experience with the following tools and equipment. (Interviewer, list job related tool).
4. Walk me through the procedures you would follow to_____.
5. What equipment have you been trained to operate? When/where did you receive that training?
6. What equipment did you operate in your job at _____?
7. Describe your experience performing the following tasks. (Interviewer, list job related tasks).
8. What job experiences have you had that would help you in this position?
9. How do you follow the prescribed standards of safety when performing (task) _____?
10. Have you ever identified potential malfunctions of equipment? How did you discover the potential malfunction? What did you do to correct the problem?
11. Being a _____ certainly requires a lot of technical knowledge. How did you go about getting it? How long did it take you?
12. Do you consider your technical abilities basic, intermediate, or advanced?
13. On a scale of one to ten, ten being you are a perfect technical match or this position, where would you rank yourself?
14. What would you add to or subtract from your technical background to make you more qualified for this position?

Work Standard

Following is a list of questions designed to gather information relating to an individual's personal standard of performance.

1. What are your standards of success in your job? What have you done to meet these standards?
2. Bosses sometimes are not satisfied with the way we do certain things or complete certain projects. Can you give me some examples of when this happened to you?
3. What do you consider the most important contribution your department has made to this organisation? What was your role?
4. What factors, other than pay, do you consider most important in evaluating yourself or your success?
5. Everyone has to bend or break the rules sometime. Can you give me some examples of when you had to do this?
6. When judging the performance of others, what factors or characteristics are most important to you?
7. Describe the time you worked the hardest and felt the greatest sense of achievement.
8. Tell me about a time when you weren't very pleased with your work performance. Why were you upset with your performance? What did you do to turn around your performance?
9. We've all had to work with people who are very difficult to get along with. Give me an example of when this happened to you. Why was the person difficult? How did you handle the person? What was the result?
10. When have you declined a work-related decision? Why?

Teamwork

Following is a list of questions designed to gather information relating to a person's ability to work and get along with others.

1. We've all had to work with someone who is very difficult to get along with. Give me an example of when this happened to you. Why was that person difficult? How did you handle that person?

2. When dealing with individuals or groups, how do you determine when you are pushing too hard? How do you determine when you should back off? Give an example.
3. From time to time, all of us are confronted by someone who wastes our time at work. Tell me about some situations like that. What did you do?
4. How do you go about developing rapport (relationships) with individuals at work?
5. Give me some examples of when one of your ideas was opposed in a discussion. How did you react?
6. Describe a situation when you found yourself dealing with someone very sensitive. What happened?
7. Describe some situations when you wished you had acted differently with someone at work.
8. Tell me, specifically, what you have done to show you are a team player at _____.
9. We all have ways of showing consideration for others. What are some things you've done to show concern or consideration for a co-worker?
10. When did you last lose your temper at work? Describe the reasons. What was the outcome?
11. How do you keep your employees informed with what is going on in the organization?
12. What methods do you use to keep informed with what is going on in your area?

Communication Skills

Following is a list of sample questions designed to gather information relating to an individual's communication skills. This section also includes observations to be made during the interview.

Interviewer's Observations

- A. Consider if the applicant is able to express himself/herself effectively and in a well-organized manner.
- B. Observe whether the applicant has good eye contact.

C. Consider whether the applicant's grammar, sentence structure, etc. are appropriate to the requirements of the position.

These questions should be customized to fit your position. Normally, only two or three questions would be used:

1. We've all had occasions when we misinterpreted something that someone told us (like a due date, complicated instructions, etc.) Give me a specific example of when this happened to you. What was the situation? Why was there a misinterpretation? What was the outcome?
2. What kind of reports/proposals have you written? Can you give me some examples?
3. Give an example of when you told someone to do something, and they did it wrong. What was the outcome?
4. What reports that you are currently preparing (or recently prepared) are the most challenging and why?
5. What kinds of presentations have you made? Can you give me some examples? How many presentations do you make a year?
6. Give me an example from your past working experience where you had to rely on information given to you verbally to get the job done.
7. What different approaches do you use in talking with different people? How do you know you are getting your point across?
8. What is the worst communication problem you have experienced? How did you handle it?

Leadership

Following is a list of questions designed to gather information relating to an individual's utilisation of appropriate interpersonal styles and methods in guiding individuals or a group toward task accomplishment.

1. Tell me about a time you had to take a firm stand with a co-worker. What was the situation? What was difficult about the co-worker? What was the firm stand you had to take?



2. Describe how you instruct someone to do something new. What were you training them to do? Walk me through how you did it.
3. Tell me about a time you had to win approval from your co-workers for a new idea or plan of action.
4. Tell me about a new idea or way of doing something that you came up with which was agreed to by the boss. What did you do to get it to the right person? What did you do to get the boss to agree? Be specific.
5. Describe any supervisory or leadership training, schooling, or work experience you have had and its relevance to this position.
6. Give a specific example of something you have done that demonstrates you are a team player.
7. What leadership skills and experience do you have that would qualify you as an effective leader? Be specific.
8. What are your long-and-short term plans for your department? Are they in writing?

Job Motivation

Following is a list of questions designed to help identify an applicant's motivation to do the type of work the position requires. The intent is not to see if they had good motivation/satisfaction in their previous jobs, but to see if the types of things they enjoy doing will be available in this position. For example, if a person said he enjoyed his last job because he liked to work outside and with people doing different things all of the time, a desk job in accounting would probably not provide high satisfaction.

1. What do you like best (least) about your job as a _____ ?
2. What were/are your reasons for leaving _____ ?
3. Give me some examples of experience in your job at _____ that were satisfying? Dissatisfying? Why?
4. What gave you the greatest feeling of achievement in your job at _____ ? Why?
5. Give me an example of when you worked the hardest and felt the greatest sense of achievement.

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6. All jobs have their frustrations and problems. Describe specific job conditions, tasks, or assignments that have been dissatisfying to you. Why?
7. Give me some examples of past working experience that you have found personally satisfying.
8. What are some recent responsibilities you have taken on? Why did you assume these responsibilities?
9. Tell me about the most boring job or task you have had. Why was it boring? What did you do about it? How did you handle the boredom?
10. Tell me about a time when the duties and responsibilities available in a specific position overlapped with duties and responsibilities that brought you personal satisfaction.
11. Why do you want to be a _____ (title of position)?
12. Why did you choose this (career, type of work)?
13. What job values are important to you?

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