

A Few Interview Questions and Sample Answers

These are my personal examples! You must prepare your own!

1) Why should we hire you?

Well, I hope that the profile, training and experience outlined in my CV would provide the reasons. I am above all enthusiastic to start life in the real world after eighteen years of education and training, and I am ambitious to do well and build a career in international business. I think I appreciate the challenges, and I am now ready to launch myself with enthusiasm and commitment on the world of work!

2) What would you look to accomplish in the first two weeks on the job?

I would hope firstly to establish a good working relationship with colleagues and secondly to learn more about the details of the job so that I could do it as well as possible. On a personal level, I would hope that when my parents ask me after two weeks how things are going I can give them a positive answer!

3) What would be your biggest concern on starting work for us?

I would of course be most concerned not to let anyone down (including myself!). That would mean listening carefully to instructions and carrying them out in a professional, respectful and successful way.

4) What do you think you would like the most and least about working in this position?

I haven't thought about what I would like the least since that would be rather negative and pointless. If there IS something I end up disliking then I will find that out soon enough. What I AM looking forward to is a new challenge in a professional environment after my years of education!

5) What problems do you anticipate working for us?

I don't think I anticipate any general problems as such. I think I have a good idea of what this position involves as well as the personal and professional qualities required to do it well.

6) How would you describe your ability to work as a team member?

The ability to work in a team is a sine qua non in the modern business world and something that I am well used to. I have been - and enjoyed being - in numerous team-working environments (including on work experience). How good I am will be up to others to judge.

7) Are you a leader or a follower?

I would hesitate to categorize myself as either, since I feel I could be both depending on the situation and environment and what was asked of me. I have been both in work-experience situations at various times. I think I am sociable and decisive enough to fill both roles.

8) What are your strengths and weaknesses?

I am definitely ambitious, determined, conscientious and hard-working. As for weaknesses, I am perhaps too easily irritated by a lack of clarity, rigour, honesty and respect for others.

9) What can you offer us that someone else can not?

To be honest, it is impossible to say what someone else could not offer you, but what I can offer is reliability, ambition, hard work and a professional attitude.

10) How would you deal with an angry or irate customer?

The first thing to remember is that: *"The customer is always right."* even when he or she is wrong. Secondly, losing control of one's own emotions is a lose-lose situation, so the main thing would be to stay calm (even in the face of insults and/or unreasonableness), to listen carefully and to propose solutions that lie within the realm of acceptability to the company

11) Tell me about a time when you failed at something.

I can't remember that far back! No, seriously, I failed my driving-test the first time when I knocked over a gendarme trying to flag me down (just joking!) but I analysed the reasons for the failure, had a few more lessons and passed the second time. Nobody will get far if they give something up at the first failure.

12) By what criteria do you judge your own performance?

There are two aspects to this. The first - and actually most important - criterion would be: *"Have I done the best I could have?"* The second would be; *"Have I accomplished the task that was set - either by my employer or by myself?"* As for the second, the critical thing here is to define before starting what would constitute success, so a careful analysis of the task is required at the outset.

13) Can you name some of the principal requirements for a successful business career?

Well, there are many, but essential above all are: clarity of thought and analysis of everything one does, good organisation, prioritising, determination, resilience and an ability to get on well with people. A happy disposition and sense of humour are also a big help; nobody wants to work every day with someone who lacks these! And last but not least comes an element of LUCK, but as we all know, hard-work and luck go together.

14) What would your current boss or teacher say about you?

Well, I describe myself in my cv as pro-active, hard-working, conscientious and with an open mind, and when I showed my cv to my teacher he said he found it to be accurate and fair! What else can I say!!

15) Who is your biggest hero and why?

There are many people I admire immensely, so to single one out is difficult. However, if pressed, I would perhaps mention a couple. Firstly, Jonas Salk, whose development of the polio vaccine made an immense contribution to medical science and saved millions from a devastating and crippling disease which was widespread in the 1950s. Then there is the Immortal Bruce Lee who said: *"If you truly love life don't waste time, because time is what life is made of."* which is a beautiful thought to live by.

16) What thing or things make you angry?

Injustice and abuse of power at all levels make me angry. People fortunate enough to acquire power have a moral duty to respect it. Unfortunately, many lack the personal qualities to live up to this duty.

17) How important is the truth to you? Would you ever consider lying?

I hugely value Truth and would only tell a lie under two conditions: 1) the Truth would be personally distressful to someone and 2) NOT telling the truth would do no real harm. However, such situations are quite rare, so the inclination should always be to be truthful. Unfortunately, some people in positions of power do not like being told the truth, but there are too many "yes-men" in the world, and I am certainly not one of those.

18) What are the most important qualities of a salesperson?

Well, it goes without saying that one has to have a complete knowledge of what it is one is trying to sell, and I mean of every aspect of it including what it is made of, how and where it is made and so on, because you never know what a customer is going to ask and any sign of ignorance would look foolish. And on a professional note, it is important to emphasize the **benefits** the product will bring to the customer rather than its mere **features**. In general, engineers sometimes make poor salesmen because they tend to stress the features of a product: how it works and so on, whereas the customer is most interested in what benefits the product will bring to his business, including of course cost savings, customer satisfaction and so on.

19) What kind of boss would you like to work for?

One who is firm, but fair; one who demands a lot but appreciates commitment, praises it, and leads by example. A good boss communicates well, and not only to criticize. He or she should be a good listener, because employees sometimes have good ideas! And most importantly, one who knows how to deal patiently and sympathetically with employees who are difficult and/or less than perfect, the latter of course being all of us!

20) Have you ever had a difficult boss? How did you deal with the situation?

Well, I was working as Deputy-Head of a new private school in Africa which was still under construction and when they started building a chapel on the site I told the owner that it would be better to build a gymnasium first, because for me the physical well-being and comfort of the pupils came before their spiritual needs, since (obviously) they could pray anywhere, whereas finding a safe place to play basketball was not so easy. I could have kept quiet, as I knew she was not likely to respond well to criticism, but I felt I had a duty towards my pupils. As it happens, she didn't respond well to my expressing an opinion, but a fundamental requirement of a good boss is to appreciate and respect his or her employees' ideas and opinions and to evaluate them on their merits. Her failure to understand this was one reason why I left that job earlier than I had planned to.