

Interview Questions

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Top Executive Recruiters Agree There Are Only Three True Job Interview Questions:

1. Can you do the job?
2. Will you love the job?
3. Can we tolerate working with you?

Each question potentially may be asked using different words, but every question is just a variation on one of these topics: Strengths, Motivation, and Fit.

Common Teacher Interview Questions

1. First, tell us a little bit about yourself. (Almost every teacher interview begins this way.)
2. Tell us about your experiences working with students at this age level.
3. Describe your philosophy of teaching?
4. List three of your strengths and explain each one.
5. Describe three of your weaknesses as a teacher.
6. In what ways do you encourage creativity in your classroom?
7. Tell us about a lesson in which you've used differentiated instruction.
8. How do you teach kids to utilize higher-order thinking skills in your classroom?
9. Do you make learning fun for students? How do you engage students?
10. If I walked into your classroom on a typical afternoon, what would I see going on?
11. How do you measure student performance in your classroom?
12. Describe a successful lesson. Tell why it was successful.
13. Tell us about your discipline philosophy.
14. What are your classroom rules? How do you make students familiar with the rules?
15. What would you do if a parent complained about an assignment?
16. Describe some methods of "positive reinforcement" that you might use in your classroom.
17. Would you describe yourself as a "tough" teacher or an "understanding" teacher? Explain.
18. In what ways do you communicate with parents on a regular basis?
19. A parent calls you because they are worried about their child's low grades. What would you say?
20. A parent writes a note and tells you that their daughter could not complete their homework assignment because she had a dance recital the night before. What do you do?
21. How do you keep parents informed of their child's progress?
22. How do you use technology to enrich your lessons?
23. Give an example of a time when you've worked on a team.

24. Describe one time when you've acted as a leader.
25. What can you do for a student that is extremely gifted?
26. Most classes have students with a wide-range of reading abilities. What can you do to meet the needs of students with high reading abilities and low reading abilities at the same time?
27. Tell us a little about your student teaching experiences.
28. What is your favorite age/grade/subject to teach? Explain.
29. What are some of the most important things you learned when student teaching?
30. What was the most satisfying moment throughout your student teaching?
31. What was the most frustrating thing about student teaching?
32. What is your definition of a life-long learner? How can you promote that in your classroom?
33. Which extra-curricular activities would you be interested in overseeing?
34. What do you look for in a principal?
35. What are your expectations of a teacher mentor program?
36. What kinds of professional development would you be eager to attend?
37. List five adjectives that accurately describe yourself.
38. Describe the differences between a good teacher and a great teacher?
39. How do you provide support for students who are not performing as well as they should?
40. In what ways can you teach students to be accepting of one-another?
41. How do you meet the needs of a student with an IEP?
42. Describe a high-interest project that you might assign to your students.
43. What can you offer our school that other candidates cannot?
44. Do you think you are a flexible person? Explain.
45. What part of this job are you looking forward to?
46. What part of this job are you apprehensive about?
47. In your opinion, what are the biggest challenges that teachers face today?
48. How can you make your teaching connect to students' real-world experiences?
49. Tell me about your references. If I were to call them, what might they say about you?
50. How can teachers reach out to the community?
51. What is the role of the teacher in the classroom?
52. How would you describe your last principal?
53. Describe effective teaching techniques that result in intended learning.
54. How has your education and life experiences prepared you for this position?
55. What is the most exciting thing happening in the area of education?
56. Describe an ideal curriculum in your area of study.
57. Describe the physical appearance of your classroom.
58. If you could choose to teach any concept in your area, which would you select and why?
59. What should schools do for students?
60. How do you handle the different ability levels of students in classes?
61. What is the role of homework?
62. What has been your most positive/ negative teaching experience?
63. What would you do if a student has been absent from your class for several days?
64. What are your practices in dealing with controversial subjects?
65. Describe current curriculum trends in your area.
66. In what areas do you feel you need improvement?
67. What is your opinion of holding students after school for detention?
68. What is the role of the student in your classroom?
69. Describe some field trips that you would organize for your class?
70. How have your classes made use of the library?

71. How would you change the school-system if you could make any changes?
72. What two books, concepts or experiences have influenced you most?
73. What question have I not asked that you wish I would have?
74. If you are selected for this position, what can we do to help you become successful?
75. In what kind of environment are you most comfortable?
76. How do you individualize learning in your class?
77. Describe how you made a contribution in the last job or activity you were involved in.
78. What values are most important to you?
79. How would you define teaching?
80. What failures have you experienced and what did you learn from them?

PRACTICE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Since most interviews consist of a mix of different question types, practice responding to questions from both the qualification and behavioral categories. Add in some case questions.

- What are your career plans?
- What do you see yourself doing in five years?
- Do you plan to return to school for further education?
- Why are you interested in our organization?
- What do you know about our organization?
- What have you learned from the jobs you have had?
- Tell me about an accomplishment that you are proud of.
- What motivates you to do good work?

Practice Behavioral Questions

Interpersonal skills

- When working on a team project, have you ever dealt with a strong disagreement among team members or a team member who didn't do their part? What did you do?
- Tell me about the most difficult or frustrating individual that you've ever had to work with and how you managed to work with him or her.
- Tell me about a time when you had to be assertive.

Communication skills

- Tell me about a time when you presented complex information. How did you get your point across?
- Describe a time when you used persuasion to convince someone to see things your way.
- Tell me about a time when you used written communication skills to communicate an important point.

Initiative

- Give me an example of when you had to go above and beyond to get a job done.
- Tell me about projects you have initiated. What prompted you to begin them? Leadership
- Tell me about a time when you influenced the outcome of a project by taking a leadership role.
- Describe your leadership style and give me an example of a situation where you led a group.

Planning and organization

- How do you determine priorities in scheduling your time? Give me an example.
- Tell me about an important goal of yours. How did you reach it?
- Describe a situation when you had many assignments or projects due at the same time. What steps did you take to finish them?
- Give me an example of what you've done when your schedule was upset by unforeseen circumstances?

Flexibility

- Describe a situation in which you overcame a “personality conflict” in order to get results.
- Describe a time where you were faced with issues that tested your coping skills.
- Describe a time when you received constructive criticism.

Creativity/innovation

- When and how did you provide a creative solution?
- What is the most creative thing you have done?

Decision making

- Give an example of when you had to make a difficult decision. How did you approach it?
- Describe a time when you had to defend your decision.
- Summarize a situation where you had to locate relevant information, define key issues, and determine the steps to get a desired result.

DIFFICULT QUESTIONS

When encountering a difficult question, pause for a moment and ask yourself, “What is the interviewer really hoping to learn about me?” A few examples follow:

Tell me about yourself

Keep your comments focused on information that will help the employer determine your qualifications and/or interest in this position. This can include your future career aspirations, what you have gained from your education and/or experiences, and your enthusiasm for a job in your field of interest.

What are your greatest strengths and weaknesses?

View this as an opportunity to point out strengths that relate to being successful in the position for which you are interviewing. Back up your statements with examples. Strategies for addressing a weakness (only mention one) include choosing one you have overcome, or selecting an area/skill that you have not had much time to develop or an area that is not that important to the demands of the work. Also, be genuine with your answers and avoid cliché answers such as “I work too hard” or “I’m a perfectionist.” Employers are impressed by people who can be honest, recognize areas for improvement, and overcome personal challenges.

Tell me about your participation in this religious/political/cultural activity?

Employers may inquire about anything that appears on your resume, so if you do include this type of information be prepared to talk about them. While it is important to be honest about your experiences, you should also be cautious, and if possible, avoid discussing controversial topics during your interview.

INTERVIEW TIPS

- Express genuine interest and enthusiasm when you answer questions.
- Be specific and give examples.
- Organize your thoughts and show an understanding of the issues. The employer may not necessarily be looking for the right response, but how you respond.
- Do not diminish your past experiences; don't say, "I was just a cashier." Talk up your transferable skills.
- A challenge to your qualifications may not be a rejection, but rather a call for more information.

Tips to Asking & Answering Questions Effectively

1. Keep your answers short, but informative. Share a few thoughts that will stimulate further discussion. Try to avoid yes and no answers. Show interest in the questions and sincere thought in your responses.
2. Avoid sounding self-centered. Cite your achievements, but demonstrate an appropriate level of humility. When discussing professional accomplishments, acknowledge the help and support of your teammates, mentors, teachers and role models.
3. Don't reveal insecurities. Accentuate the positive and don't dwell on the weaknesses in your background. Your job on the interview is to convince them you are the right candidate: they won't believe it if you don't sound sure of yourself.
4. Watch your tone. You'll certainly be asked a few stressor questions that are designed to test your ability to handle conflict. Don't get defensive. Your tone can be revealed in both the words you choose and your voice.
5. Listen carefully to the interviewer, no matter how nervous you are. Make sure you understand the question before responding. Make sure your answer covers all parts of a multi-faceted question. Too many candidates ask questions at the end of their interviews on topics that we've already covered.

Questions You Should Ask the Interviewer

Successful candidates always ask questions at their interviews. In fact, the questions you ask can reveal more about your suitability than anything else. Here's what your questions tell us:

1. How seriously you are thinking about the position and the school and how well you understand the school's expectations
2. What your expectations are
3. Your ability to connect general information to the school's particular reality
4. How much research you did about the particular school
5. Your common sense and intellectual curiosity
6. Your energy level and communication skills
7. How well prepared you are (and will be in the future) for a professional meeting
8. Your maturity level

General Rules for Asking Questions

1. Only ask about topics you genuinely care about. You want to appear sincere and interested.
2. Research the topic thoroughly before mentioning it so that you can engage in a discussion.
3. Make sure the answer isn't obvious or has already been answered.
4. Ask the appropriate person.
5. Watch your tone of voice and your body language. Be gracious and diplomatic in how you phrase your questions and reply to responses.

The interviewer is seeking the following traits:

- Maturity
- Communication Skills
- Honesty
- Motivation
- High Energy Level
- Confidence
- Humility
- Compassion
- Listening Skills
- Sense of Humor
- Analytical Skills
- Leadership Potential

New Interview Questions

Below is a list of questions that you may not have thought about previously. Think about how you would answer these questions in a job interview:

- If you had the option, would you change your college career?
- How do you go about deciding what to do first when given a project?
- What are the most important rewards you expect in your business career?
- Provide an example of how you are a risk taker.
- If you could have any job in the world, what would it be?
- Why do you want to work for us and not for our competitor?
- What did you think of your previous manager/supervisor?
- What did you do in your last job to increase value?
- What are some of the things that bother you?
- Tell me about the last time you felt anger on the job.
- Do you need other people around to stimulate you or are you self-motivated?
- What management style gets the best results out of you?
- How can our company offer you what your previous company could not offer?
- How long do you think it would take before you were making a significant contribution to our organization?
- How ambitious are you?
- What do you like and dislike about the job we are discussing?
- Why did you choose a career in education?
- What do you think is the most important dilemma facing our school today?
- How much does your last job resemble the one you are applying for? What are the differences?
- Did your last job live up to your expectations? Why are you leaving now?
- Explain the organizational structure and hierarchy in your last school. Did this suit you?
- Do you prefer to work in a small, medium or large school?
- What interests you about our school?
- Do you consider yourself successful in your career to date?
- What was your greatest success in your professional career? How did you achieve it?
- What has been your biggest failure in your professional career?
- Did you feel you advanced and progressed in your last job?
- How do you handle criticism?
- What would you like to avoid in your next job?
- How did you get on with your previous supervisor and co-workers?
- What will your references say about you?

Questions to Ask

Take a moment to look at the questions below. Re-write them in your own words so you can ask them in interviews.

Hint: Never, ever ask about money or benefits in the initial interview. It's important to focus questions on the interviewer, then the company, and finally on you.

Step 1: Connect With The Interviewer

- How did you join the company? What makes you stay?
- What has this company taught you?

Step 2: Learn About The Work Environment

- What makes the department I'd be working in successful?
- I've done my homework on the school, but I'd love to hear you describe the corporate culture here in your own words?
- What makes this a great place to work? And since no school is perfect, what could be improved upon?
- What traits do you feel a person needs to be successful at this school?
- Can you give me an example of a recent hire that has been successful?
- How does the organization measure its success? What evaluation criterion do they use?
- What are the three greatest strengths of this school? What are the three greatest strengths of the department I'd be working in?
- What are the three biggest challenges the school faces this year? And for the department I'd be working for?

Step 3: Ask For Feedback

- If I could add/change anything about myself and my experience to make me a better fit for the position and the school, what would it be?
- What are the next steps in the hiring process?

Top 10 Things a Recruiter Won't Tell You

1. Your interview attire is outdated/messy/too tight/too revealing/too flashy.
2. Your physical appearance is disheveled/outdated/sloppy/smelly/overpowering.
3. Your eye contact is weak/shifty/intense.
4. Your handshake is limp/too forceful/clammy.
5. You say ah/um/like too much.
6. You talk too much/use poor grammar/say inappropriate things when you answer interview questions.
7. You appear overconfident/pushy/self-centered/insecure/alooof/ditzy/scatter-brained/desperate.
8. You talk too fast/too slow/too loud/too soft.
9. You giggle/fidget/act awkward/have facial tics/lack expression.
10. You lack sincerity/self-confidence/clarity/conviction.

So, How Do You Fix These?

Given that 93% of communication is non-verbal, I can tell you that many of the negatives above can be improved by focusing on one thing: attitude.

If you are angry, fearful, or confused, it's going to show. You must find a way to feel confident about yourself and your ability to contribute. This comes from knowing your strengths and embracing them and knowing the organization you are applying to, so you can articulate clearly and with enthusiasm why you would be a great fit for the job.

Top 7 Survival Tips For New Grads In The Workplace

1. Be Patient

Job promotions or advancement will happen, but not necessarily on your timelines.

2. Don't Forget To Thank Those That Help You

This can have far-reaching impacts on your career – those that become your biggest supporters (reinforced by thanking them) can open doors you can't even imagine... both now and in the future.

3. Realize Your Career Will Be A Series Of Choices, Not "A" Choice

If you don't like your environment, then look to change to one that is a better fit.

4. Tread Lightly and Carefully

It is important to understand the school's political environment. Refrain from gossiping.

5. Education Doesn't End With Your Graduation

Professional development will give you the job-specific skills to be successful. You need to demonstrate continuous learning by taking classes, trainings, workshops, webinars, and attending conferences.

6. Network

Build connections with people with whom you have some kind of shared interest or goal. You will find that job and growth opportunities come your way because these people can and want to help you.