



Answer Problem Questions

This activity will help you form answers to the most common problem interview questions. Here are a few pointers:

- Write out complete and honest answers for each question.
- Suggestions are included to help you prepare answers that will stand out and impress employers. Don't forget to give lots of examples.
- A good answer should take between 30 seconds to two minutes.
- Sell yourself!

Problem Questions Worksheet

1. Can you tell me a little about yourself?

Suggestions

Talk about your education:
When you're graduating, what
you're majoring in, and what
your achievements are.

Talk about your experience in
both related and unrelated
jobs.

Talk about your good-worker
traits.

2. Why are you applying for this type of job and why here?

Suggestions

You discovered through
training that you enjoy and
are good at this type of work.

You noticed the company's ad;
got a referral from someone;
know the company has an
excellent reputation; and so
on.

3. What training or experience qualifies you for this position?

Suggestions

Refer to your past work and volunteer experiences.

4. What are the greatest strengths you would bring to this job?

Suggestions

Think about your job-related, self-management, and transferable skills.

Talk about your best skills and use examples to prove them.

5. What do you consider your greatest weakness?

Suggestions

Never say that you don't have any weaknesses or that you cannot think of any.

Never talk about a weakness that will prevent you from being hired.

Mention a job skill you have not learned yet or have trouble doing well.

Say something positive after you mention a weakness, such as "But I'm anxious to learn" or "But I can do such-and-such well."

Say that you tend to ask a lot of questions when starting a job, but it's because you want to do the work correctly.

6. How much do you expect to be paid?

Suggestions

Research pay rates by talking with people in the profession.

Give a range such as between \$6 and \$8 an hour.

Ask if new employees have a trial period, how long it lasts, and what happens when it ends. Possibilities include the job becomes full time, salary is increased, or benefits are ended.

7. Can you tell me about a problem you had on a previous job and how you handled it??

Suggestions

This is checking your ability to act maturely and professionally.

Choose an example that shows you handled the situation well.

8. How can you help us make more money or do better as an organization?

Suggestions

Say that you can help by being a highly dependable employee.

Give your definition of dependability: being on time and at work every day; being early and willing to stay late; and getting your work done well and on time.

9. What would you consider your ideal job?

Suggestions

Be realistic.

Make sure your answer reflects stability. Employers are looking for people who will stay for at least two years to be worth their time and effort.

10. Can you tell me why you consider yourself a responsible person?

Suggestions

Think about what the employer's expectations are.

Give several examples that show you are a reliable person.

11. What are your interests and things you like to do most?

Suggestions

Interview Hints Summing It All Up

The person who gets a job offer is not necessarily the best qualified, but the one who makes the best impression.

- **Be neat and clean from head to foot.**
 - **Be knowledgeable about the company.**
 - **Display a positive attitude.**
 - **Smile and be enthusiastic.**
 - **Listen attentively and make direct eye contact.**
 - **Watch your body language.**
 - **Approach the question of salary by giving a range and by knowing a typical salary for the job.**
 - **Don't talk too much and talk yourself out of a job.**
 - **Arrive a few minutes early.**
 - **Get the interviewer to like you.**
 - **Keep looking even if you get an offer. Stop only after you have formally accepted a job.**
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The Call-Back Close

With the call-back close, you can end the interview to your advantage. It will take some practice. You may not be comfortable with it at first. But it works. Here's how:

1. **Thank the interviewer by name.** While shaking hands, say "Thank you (Mr. or Ms. Or Mrs. Jones) for your time today."
2. **Express interest in the job and organization.** Tell the interviewer that you are interested in the position or organization (or both). For example, "The position we discussed today is just what I have been looking for. I am also very impressed with your organization."
3. **Arrange a reason and a time to call back.** If the interviewer has been helpful, he or she won't mind your following up. It's important that you arrange a date and time to call. Never expect an employer to call you. Say something like this: "I'm sure I'll have more questions. When would be the best time for me to get back to you?"
4. **Say good-bye.** After you've set a time and date to call back, thank the interviewer by name and say good-bye: "Again, thank you, Mr.Pomeroy, for the time you gave me today. I will call you next Tuesday morning between 9 and 10 o'clock."

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Following Up

You have left the interview and it's over. Right? Not really. You need to follow up! This can make the difference between getting the job or not. Here are some things you must do.

- **Send a thank-you note.** As soon as possible after the interview-no later than 24 hours- send a thank-you note.
- **Make notes.** Write yourself notes about the interview while it is still fresh in your mind. You will not remember details in a week or so.
- **Follow up as promised.** If you said you would call back next Tuesday at 9 a.m., do it. You will impress the interviewer with how organized you are.

Making a Final Decision

The interview process is not over until you accept a job. This can sometimes be an easy decision. At other times, deciding can be difficult. Before you take or turn down a job, consider the following points:

- Responsibilities and duties of the job.
- Hours you will have to work.
- Salary and benefits.
- Location and how you will get there. For example, can you take the bus or will you need a car?
- Working conditions
- Opportunity for advancement.

Once you accept a job verbally, write an acceptance letter that confirms the starting date and time. Be sure to keep a copy of your letter.

Thank-You Notes

Sending a thank-you note is a simple act of appreciation, and most people don't take the time to do it. It is simply good manners to send thank-you notes to employers who interview you and to anyone who helps you during your job search.

Thank-you notes also have practical benefits. People who receive them will remember you. But employers say that they rarely get thank-you notes. Employers describe people who do send them with positive terms, such as thoughtful, well organized, and thorough.

A thank-you note won't get you a job you're not qualified for, but it will impress people. When a job opens up, they will remember you. People in

your job search network will also be more interested in helping you. If they know of an opening or meet someone who does, they will think of you.

Here are some tips for preparing thank-you notes:

- **Paper and envelope.** Use good-quality notepaper with matching envelopes. Most stationary stores, card shops, and office-supply stores have these supplies. Avoid cute designs. Notepaper with a simple "Thank You" on the front will do. Off-white and buff colors are good.
- **Typed versus handwritten.** You do not always have to send a formal, typed thank-you letter. Handwritten notes are fine unless handwriting is illegible or sloppy. A neat, written note can be very effective.
- **Salutation.** Unless you are thanking a friend or relative, don't use first names. Write "Dear Ms. Krenshaw" rather than "Dear Lisa." Include the date.
- **The note.** Keep it short and friendly. This is not the place to write, "The reason you should hire me is..." Remember that the note is a thank you for what the person did. It is not a hard-sell pitch for what you want. As appropriate, be specific about when you will next be in contact. If you plan to meet with the person soon, send a note saying you look forward to meeting again and name the date and time.
- **Your signature.** Use your first and last names. Avoid initials and make your signature legible.
- **When to send it.** Send your note no later than 24 hours after your interview or conversation. Ideally, you should write it immediately after the contact while the details are fresh in your mind. Always send a note after an interview, even if things did not go well.
- **Enclosure.** Depending on the situation, a reference card with your information is often an ideal enclosure.

Thank-You Note Examples

2244 Riverwood Avenue
Philadelphia, PA 17963
April 16, 20XX

Ms. Helen A Colcord
Henderson & Associates, Inc.
1801 Washington Blvd., Suite 1201
Philadelphia, PA 17993

Dear Ms. Colcord:

Thank you for sharing your time with me so generously today. I really appreciated seeing your state-of-the-art computer equipment.

Your advice has really proved helpful. I have an appointment to meet with Mr. Robert Hopper on Friday. As you anticipated, he does not intend to add more computer operations in the next few months.

In case you think of someone else who might need a person like me, I'm enclosing a reference card. I will let you know how the interview with Mr. Hopper goes.

Sincerely,

William Henderson

Interview Follow-Up

Several techniques will get you in front of the interviewer again. To keep in touch with potential employers, you can make a return visit or, if you haven't heard from an employer after two or three days, telephone the company. Telephone calls should be made in moderation. Since many employers never receive thanks, a thank-you card is very important and will remind the interviewer of you in a positive manner. This valuable technique can be a personal note, or typed letter as follows:

January 20, 20XX

Mrs. Jan Callaghan, President
Inter Comm
1122 Loch Avon
Garden Grove, CA 90606

Dear Mrs. Callaghan:

Thank you for the courtesy you extended during my interview on Tuesday, January 19, 20XX. It was exciting to learn about the opportunities within Inter Comm.

I am taking this opportunity to point out that my vocational training with Los Angeles Regional Occupation Program included 100 hours of on-the-job training. It provided me with valuable hands-on experience, and I feel confident that with a short orientation I can immediately make a positive contribution to your company.

If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact me at the noted telephone number and address.

Sincerely,

Roy Byrd
2345 Robinson Lane
Monterey Park, CA 91754
(571) 123-5151



Checklist of Steps to Take the Evening Before Your Interview

- _____ 1. Select and lay out what you plan to wear. Make sure everything is cleaned, pressed, and appropriate. Avoid flashy clothes, excessive jewelry, and strong perfume or cologne.
- _____ 2. Gather and review the materials you plan to take with you. Include your career portfolio, extra copies of your resume, list of references, and letter of recommendations.
- _____ 3. Make sure you know how to get there on time. Take written instructions or a map if you are not familiar with the interview's location.
- _____ 4. Take a small notepad and two pens for jotting important notes from your interview.
- _____ 5. Take extra money to cover unexpected expenses.
- _____ 6. Get a good night's rest.

Good Luck!

