

## BE PREPARED FOR COMMON QUESTIONS

There is no way to predict every question you will be asked, so don't panic if you are asked a question you didn't prepare for. Employers often ask odd or difficult questions to see how well you think on your feet. Many questions don't have a right or wrong answer. Feel free to ask for clarification, and pause to collect your thoughts before you answer.

You can expect a couple of typical questions to come up in almost every interview. Prepare answers for these questions ahead of time.

1. First is the **trap question**, which comes up in almost every interview. The trap question is some variation on "What is the area you need most improvement in?" or "What is your area of weakness?" Be honest about your weaknesses but also show or give examples of how you are improving on them. For example:

*"I prefer to see a project through from start to finish instead of working on a single component and never seeing the finished product. I sometimes find it a bit frustrating to work without that overall context."*

*"Sometimes I have a hard time saying no to people, and I end up taking on more than my share of work."*

*"I have never felt comfortable speaking in front of a large audience, so to help myself feel more comfortable with this, I have joined a women's club. At each weekly meeting each member must get up in front of the crowd to give an example of an accomplishment they have achieved each week. I am now beginning to feel more comfortable when speaking to large groups."*

2. Be on the lookout for questions about **why you left your old company** and **why you are interested in the new one**. These questions (or their offspring) are designed to make sure your interest in the new company is sincere and not due to you being fired and/or having serious problems at your former place of employment. If the question the interviewer throws at you is "Why were you fired?" keep the answer simple and brief. "There was a clash in workplace personalities. Though I learned a lot about the insurance industry, my boss and I worked on different levels."
3. Have answers ready for these popular interview questions:
  - Tell me about yourself?
  - What interest you most about this position?
  - Where do you see yourself in 5, 10, 20 years?
  - What is your ultimate career goal?
  - Tell me about a project that involved a tough problem you had to solve?
  - What are your strengths / weaknesses?
  - What separates you from other candidates?
  - How does your previous experience relate to this work?
4. Most importantly, **sell yourself as a problem-solver**. Think about the work you have done, the jobs you had in college, volunteer work you did, or the club that you founded. Then proceed to illustrate how you solved a particular problem by breaking that experience into three parts: 1) The problem you encountered, 2) How you analyzed it, and 3) The solution you implemented.

If you prepare careful answers to these questions in advance, you'll be ahead of the game. In each of your answers, try to convey your enthusiasm and ability to be a team player. And remember to answer every question in a timely manner. Long answers make it seem like you are struggling to find something intelligent to say.