

About This Document

owner	HR
access & use	All Staff
what it is	A comprehensive list of over 225 sample interview questions organized by category
who uses it	Used by HR, Managers, and Staff involved in the recruiting and hiring process to prepare questions for Phone, Round 1 or Round 2 interviews
used with	<i>IV-ALL-2515-R. Interviewing Guide</i> <i>IV-ALL-2530-M. Phone Interview Questionnaire.</i> <i>IV-ALL-2540-M. Q and A Style Panel Interview Questionnaire</i> <i>IV-ALL-2550-M. Presentation Style Panel Interview Questionnaire</i>

Introduction

This reference document contains over 200 example interview questions to help you avoid ‘blank-page syndrome’ when it’s time to prepare for interviewing.

Question Categories

Click on a category to jump to those questions.

The best questions to start with.....	3
Warming Up.....	3
Gathering Important Information.....	3
Expected Goals Based on Your Completed ‘Position Success Factors Form’	4
Position-Specific Technical Skills.....	4
Situational Interview Questions	5
<i>Position-Specific Questions</i>	5
EXAMPLE - Payroll Clerk.....	5
EXAMPLE - HR Manager	5

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Miscellaneous	20
Accomplishments/Feel-Good Questions	21
Closing it Out.....	21

The best questions to start with

1. Tell me about yourself.

This question ultimately results in a mini presentation from the candidate. It says so much about the individual. Are they 'talk until you drop' candidate, or 'deer in the headlights' candidate? Hopefully, your candidate is a little of both.

2. If you were to create the perfect job for yourself, what would it look like? In high level terms, describe the company you're working in, and the people around you.

This question may also result in a mini presentation. It allows you to see how much this individual has thought about their ideal job, ideal company, and ideal team. The answer will likely reflect the positive experiences they've had, and speak to the opposite of the negative experiences.

Wait until they answer and then ask: What position have you held that most closely resembles your description?

Warming Up

3. Please provide a brief overview of your understanding of our open position.
4. Please provide a brief overview of your understanding of our open position.
5. Please provide us with an overview of your knowledge and experience as it relates to this role (or tell us about a position you have held that most resembles this position).
6. Describe for us the biggest challenge you faced in this type of role. How did you overcome or address it?
7. In your last job, what would you say was your biggest disappointment?

Gathering Important Information

8. Are you legally authorized to work in **CUSTOMIZER: Insert Country?**
9. What languages do you read, speak, or write fluently?
10. Are there any days on which you are not able to work?

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Situational Interview Questions

In each interview, it is good practice to include a situational question that provides the candidate with a hypothetical situation and asks them to describe their follow-on reaction, behavior, or action. The response demonstrates the candidate's critical thinking abilities. Examples are provided below.

POSITION-SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

EXAMPLE - PAYROLL CLERK

29. You have an angry employee who happens to be a favorite nephew of the CEO.
- He is irate about the amount of tax that has been deducted from his bonus.
 - The amount of tax deducted is correct and in accordance with tax regulations.
 - He demands that you reissue him a new check and will not take 'no' for an answer. He's used to getting his way.
 - Your manager and all executives are away for the week.

How do you handle the situation?

EXAMPLE - HR MANAGER

30. You have an employee on maternity leave who is a Marketing Manager.
- Her temporary replacement joined the Company, but did not pass her probationary period and left.
 - The department manager then decided that the department needed a Marketing Assistant and a Marketing Director, but no longer a Marketing Manager.
 - The department manager found the perfect external candidate for the Marketing Director position. However, in order for the candidate to leave her current employer and join the Company, the candidate will only consider regular on-going employment and will not consider a 1 year term contract.

How do you counsel the department manager? How do you balance making the right decision for the business with respecting the possible return to work by the Manager on maternity leave?

SITUATION-SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

EXAMPLE: DOING THE RIGHT THING

31. A co-worker shares in confidence that they are planning on calling in sick for a week but are actually planning on taking a week holiday.

What do you do?

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39. Please describe your work-from-home set up and what components were provided by your employer.
 - a. How is the space set up to block out distractions?
 - b. Has your previous employer inspected and approved your workspace for WCB requirements for safety and ergonomics?
 - c. Do you use a laptop or a desktop?
 - d. Describe the monitors you work with.
 - e. What is your upload and download speed?
 - f. Do you have anti-virus software?
 - g. Is your computer and access password protected? How long after you step away from your computer does password protection get enabled?
 - h. Do you have a printer?
 - i. Do you have a physical filing system?
 - j. How were company-sensitive printed documents handled?
40. Did your employer provide with you with monetary allowances to set up your workspace?
41. Would you say that you thrive or become impaired as a result of working from home?
42. What do you like best about working remotely?
43. What do you like least about working remotely? What were your biggest challenges?
44. What is your preferred work environment? (remote, in-office, combination). Why?
45. What would be your ideal work-from-home/go-into-the-office split?
46. Do you consider yourself an introvert or extrovert?
47. How did your manager or the organization measure your productivity while working from home?
48. What methods or tools do you personally use to stay productive and focused while dealing with distractions that may arise while working from home?
49. Did you remote into your employer's servers or was your work saved on your desktop?
50. What web conferencing tools are you familiar with?
51. Has slow internet speed been an issue for web conference connectivity and stability?
52. What attire do you think is acceptable for web conference participants?
 - a. Pajamas and baseball caps are ok.
 - b. Sweatshirts.
 - c. Business-casual wear.

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71. What are 'document properties'? How would I access/view them? Edit them?

MICROSOFT EXCEL TESTING QUESTIONS

72. If you are working with a complex spreadsheet, how would you go about quickly finding the information you are looking for?
73. Can you tell me about some of the ways you can format numbers in an Excel workbook?
74. Do you know what a cell reference is? Can you explain how would you create a hyperlink to a cell located on another sheet of the same workbook? A different workbook?
75. Can you tell me about your experience working with functions and formulas in Excel? Can you give me a few examples of some basic functions?
76. Can you explain what a 'named range' is and how you might use it in a spreadsheet?

MICROSOFT OUTLOOK TESTING QUESTIONS

77. Can you describe how you have used Outlook in your previous positions? For example, have you used Outlook for mail only, or have you worked with the Calendar, scheduled meetings, created tasks, etc.?
78. Can you explain how you would schedule a meeting, book a meeting room, and invite attendees? What would you do if you needed to update the meeting request—for example, change the time or location, or modify the meeting agenda?
79. What do you know about Rules in Outlook? How might you use this functionality?

MICROSOFT POWERPOINT TESTING QUESTIONS

80. Your manager has given you a PowerPoint 'New Hire Onboarding' presentation consisting of 15 slides of text. She has asked you to update the presentation and make it more compelling to new employees. How could you enhance and add impact to the presentation?
81. Can you explain how you would add the same information to every slide? For example, suppose you wanted to include the date at the bottom of each slide, how would you do this?
82. PowerPoint is traditionally used to create presentations. How else might you use a finished PowerPoint file?
83. Can you explain what a transition is? If instructing a new PowerPoint user, how would you suggest they use transitions in their presentations? For example, how would you advise them to choose their effects? What should they avoid?

Creativity

84. Tell me/us about the most unusual or creative idea you personally came up with.
85. Tell me/us about one of the most exciting breakthroughs you recently achieved on a project or assignment. What was involved and why did you consider it a breakthrough?

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Teamwork/Building & Maintaining Relationships

100. In your previous position, how did you go about building relationships with key stakeholders? Whether internal (team members) or external stakeholders.
101. Tell me/us about a time when you did not agree with a team decision or consensus. (What happened? How did you go about accepting and supporting the decision?)
102. Have you been a member of a team that struggled or failed to accomplish its goal? (If so, what assessment did you make of the reasons for the failure?)
103. Going back to your last team experience, what role did you typically play on the team? (Leader, follower? How would others describe your interaction and participation in team meetings?)
104. Tell me/us about a time when a team member did not pull their weight? (What happened? What did you do if anything? How did you react?)
105. Describe a situation in which you had to arrive at a compromise or guide others to a compromise.
106. Tell me/us about a time when you were part of a team that worked exceptionally well together. (What do you think the reasons were for its success?)
107. When did you last coordinate your work with others on a team project? (What do you think was your most successful contribution? Would the other team members agree?)
108. Tell me/us about a time when a colleague impeded your progress at work, or held you up in completing a project. (What steps did you take to continue to move the project or work forward?)
109. Can you please provide a specific example of something you did that helped build enthusiasm in others.
110. Describe a time when everyone in a meeting was opposed to your ideas. (How did you react? How did you try to work it out? Were you successful?)
111. How strongly do you feel that people should be held accountable for their performance? Can you tell me about a situation where you worked closely with someone who was not held accountable?
112. In your current/previous position, how do you think other members of your team would describe you and your contribution to the team?

Decision Making

113. Is your preference to work with a manager who gives you lots of room and control when taking on a new or riskier assignment? Or would you rather work with a manager who checks in often and is fairly involved in the details?

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Strategic Focus

128. What is the most strategic initiative you have worked on? What was your involvement?
129. Describe a strategic mistake you made that cost the business money.
130. What is your definition of 'strategic thinking'? (In your last position, describe how you applied strategic thinking to your position/responsibilities).
131. What percentage of your work in your previous position would you say was strategic in nature?
132. Tell me about a time when you developed a strategic plan for an initiative or for your department/team. (What criteria did you focus on to develop the plan? What were the components of the plan? Was it successful? Why or why not?)

Bias for Action/Results Orientation

133. What significant results have you produced in your current position/did you produce in your last position? Why is/was the organization a better place because of your work? What achievement stands out in your mind?
134. What results are you aiming to achieve in your current position/did you aim to achieve in your last position? Are you making progress in this area? Did you achieve them? What are your objectives for the next 6 months?
135. Tell me about a time when you had to go above and beyond the call of duty in order to get a job done.
136. If you **had** to pick one, would you say you are more relationship-oriented or results/execution-oriented?
137. Can you provide me with 2 examples of things you've done in your last position that demonstrate your willingness to work hard?
138. Please tell us about a time when you challenged your manager's idea or decision. (If candidate is unable to think of a situation, ask: Tell us about a time when you had to be assertive with someone in a senior position.)

Quality

139. Describe a situation in which you found that your results were not up to your manager's or team's expectations. (What happened? What action did you take?)
140. If you **had** to pick one, which do you think is more important? Speed of execution or attention to detail?

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151. Describe a time when you had to provide a direct report with difficult feedback regarding their behavior or performance. (Provide details about how you carried out this conversation and the outcome of the discussion.)
152. Describe a situation in which you had to convince others in your organization of the value of moving forward on a particular higher risk initiative. (Outline what you did and the results of your efforts.)
153. Tell me about a time when you had to implement a performance improvement plan. Was it successful? Have you ever seen a performance improvement plan be successful?
154. When is it appropriate to proceed directly with a termination instead of a performance improvement plan?
155. Tell me about a direct report who you feel you successfully mentored?
156. As you know, in change management theory, the audience is typically split as follows:
 - a. 15% change champions
 - b. 15% resisters
 - c. Everyone else is in betweenIf you had to choose only one group to focus on to drive the change, which of the 3 would you focus on and why?
157. How has your management style changed since your first management position in your career? What have you learned along the way about what not to do, or how not to manage?
158. Would your staff describe you as patient? Can you give us an example?
159. Tell me about a time when you had an employee who worked hard, but was much less productive than another employee who was not only productive, but also produced error-free quality work. How did you address this?
160. How do you know when a staff member is simply not effective in their job, even if their behavioral competencies and commitment levels are well above average?
161. What do you do when one of your staff asks for additional headcount or consistently communicates to you that the department is overworked? How do you know that the situation is not simply a productivity or efficiency issue?
162. What is your philosophy around staff mix? Is the goal to have only A players on your team? What percentage of A, B, and C players are acceptable on a team?
163. Convince us that you are highly skilled at building a strong team.
164. Please tell us about a time when you implemented a significant process or systems change into an organization?
165. Tell me about an event or situation at work where you initiated having fun with your team. Do you make time for celebration? How do you celebrate success?

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182. Describe a time when you challenged or felt strongly that an existing approach/work practice needed to be changed, but met with resistance to your proposed course of action. (What did you do to move past the resistance and achieve the desired results?)
183. Describe a situation in which you had to convince others in your organization of the value of moving forward on a higher risk initiative. (Outline what you did and the results of your efforts.)
184. Describe the last time you approached a work matter with passion and conviction.

Emotional Maturity/Self-Reflection

185. Please tell us about the most difficult person you've ever had to work with. No names please, just describe the situation and the person.
Once they finish, ask: Were you able to win them over? How? (Listen to their tone when they speak about the other person. Is it negative? Do they take any responsibility for the situation? Were they able to work with that person or eventually turn the relationship around?)
186. We have all lost our cool at work at one time or another, even if only just once. Would you tell us about a work situation where you lost your cool? What was the circumstance and how was it resolved?
187. If you were to rate yourself from 1 to 10 — 1 being not assertive at all and 10 being aggressive and dictatorial — how would you rate your level of assertiveness?
If the number is higher than 6 (which it should be), ask: In your last position, tell me about a time when someone in your organization did not take well to your level of assertiveness.
188. Please describe the most difficult ethical situation you have experienced at work.
189. Reading people or a situation, or being politically astute can be an important skill at work. Can you give me a specific example of when your analysis of a situation or another person's motives or feelings paid off for you?
190. What is your pet peeve at work? What annoys you?
191. How do people know when you are stressed?
192. Tell me about a (your) personal trait that posed some challenges for you at work in the past.
193. If you were to enroll in a personal self-improvement course, what course would it be?
194. If you were to teach a personal self-improvement course, what course would it be?
195. Please give me an example of your sense of humor at work.
196. What are the 2 least favorite traits of the worst manager you have ever had?
197. What are the top 2 qualities of the best manager you ever had?
198. How do you like to be managed? What management style does not work well for you?

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216. If you were to bring an item to this interview that best suits your personality, what would it be?
217. Imagine this sheet of paper could do anything. How would you sell it to me?
218. What song best describes your philosophy about work?
219. How many pizza parlors are in New York City?
220. Why are manhole covers round?
221. Pick 2 famous people to be your parents.
222. Knife, fork or spoon? Which one is the best utensil?
223. How do you make an omelet?
224. If you inherited a small island:
 - a. What would you do with it?
 - b. What would the top 3 rules be?
 - c. Who would live there?
225. Have you ever taken company office supplies home?
226. How many snowboarders are there in Sweden?
227. If a day was reserved for you to do one thing as much as you wanted, what would that one thing be?
228. How many soccer balls can you fit in a school bus?
229. Name Snow White's seven dwarfs.
230. How much does a submarine weigh?
231. What's your favorite song? Would you perform it for us now?
232. Why does a record player turntable spin clockwise?
233. What do you expect would be written on your gravestone?
234. How would you drop an egg on ceramic tiles without breaking it?
235. If you had to be someone else, who would you be?
236. What can you never eat for breakfast?
237. If you were a car, which one would you be?
238. If you had to move 3 chairs from one side of the room to the other without touching them, how would you do it?
239. On a scale of 1 through 10, rate me as an interviewer. As an interviewer, tell me about my top 2 strengths and 1 area that can be improved upon.
240. I have no sense of smell and never have. Describe the smell of grass to me.
241. You can choose the paint color for your work area. What is it?

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261. Who is the business person you admire most? Why?

Accomplishments/Feel-Good Questions

262. Please identify 2 significant accomplishments or changes that you can take credit for in your last 2 positions. What were the concrete results that you could point to? What legacy did you leave behind for which people would say *"xxxx did that and it was well done!"*

263. Describe something that you're passionate about.

264. What do you feel is your greatest career accomplishment? What are you most proud of?

265. Think back to the best job of your career. Describe why it was the best.

Closing it Out

266. Why should we hire you?

267. What can you do or provide for us in this position that another candidate may not? What would you say is your competitive advantage?