



INTERVIEWING CHEAT SHEET

When interviewing, good questions can be the difference between a hire gone wrong and a new superstar employee. By developing good questions, you can ensure that the selected candidate has the skills and attitude necessary to succeed in their new role.

BEHAVIORAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Behavioral interview questions are an excellent way to draw out examples of a potential employee's past behavior, which is helpful in predicting how they'll handle similar situations in the future. Rather than ask "are you detail-oriented," which most people will respond yes to, ask the candidate for examples of a time that they completed a task that required a high level of accuracy and walk you through how they handled that challenge.

PROBE DEEPER

Don't be afraid to ask follow up questions! Some of the most valuable information comes from asking candidates to elaborate. For example, if you are looking for a candidate to be able to handle a large workload, and your first question doesn't yield the answer you're looking for, keep asking until you get what you're looking for.

ASK QUESTIONS WITH A PURPOSE

Write out a list of the traits you want in a candidate and tailor your questions to fit these. For example, if you need someone who can work independently, ask the candidate to tell you about a time when they completed a project with little or no support and what challenges they encountered. If you need someone with good technological skills, ask about a time they needed to learn a new technology and how they mastered it.

DON'T ASK THESE

These categories are protected classes and could open you up to a discrimination claim if discussed. While it may seem harmless or just making conversation, you're opening yourself up to liability. It is not illegal to ask these questions, but it is to base your hiring decision off of them, so it's best to avoid these questions altogether.

Race

Sex

Religion or creed

Age

National origin or ancestry

Physical or mental disability

SAMPLE QUESTIONS

These questions are a great starting point to developing your interview. Feel free to mix, modify, and use to get the information you need about your candidate!

HANDLING CRITICISM AND FAILURE

Describe a time when you received some constructive feedback from a manager and how you responded.

Tell me about a time that a project you were working on failed and how you handled that.

Give me an example of a time you failed to meet a goal and how you handled that.

MULTITASKING/WORKING IN A BUSY ENVIRONMENT

Tell me about a time you had to prioritize several responsibilities and how you decided what to handle first.

Tell me about a time where you had to work in a less than ideal environment and how you overcame the challenges it presented.

Tell me about the most stressful job you've ever had and how you coped with that.

When you find yourself frustrated at work, how do you handle that? Give me an example.

PAST ACCOMPLISHMENTS

What is your proudest professional accomplishment?

What is your best quality of an employee? Can you give me an example of a time when it helped you perform well at work?

Give me an example of a time when you set a goal and achieved it.

What is the most satisfying part of your current job? Why?

What is the greatest obstacle you've encountered in your career and how did you overcome it?

COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Tell me about a time when a coworker or customer was having difficulty understanding you or your perspective and how you overcame that.

Tell me about your experience presenting or teaching and what the biggest challenge you faced was,

Tell me about a time you had to speak with an important stakeholder and how you prepared for that. Or, if unplanned, how did you react?

Tell me about a time when you caused or were involved in a miscommunication and how you handled the mix-up.

INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

Tell me about a time you had to work with someone you did not care for and how you handled it.

Who is the best boss you've ever had and what made them so great to work for?

Tell me about a time you had to work on a time and how you handled that challenge.

CUSTOMER SERVICE SKILLS

Tell me about a time you had to deal with an angry or upset customer and how you handled that.

Tell me about a time that you provided exceptional customer service.

DECISION MAKING

Tell me about a time when you had to make a quick decision with little or no support. How did you handle this?

Tell me about a difficult decision you made in the past year and how you reached a conclusion.

DELEGATING

Tell me about a time that you delegated a project effectively and any challenges that you faced.

Tell me about a time that you were given a vague or loosely defined assignment. How did you handle this situation?

WORKING INDEPENDENTLY

Tell me about a time when you had to motivate yourself to complete a task that you did not enjoy.

Describe a situation where you were given little or no training for a new job or task and how you handled that.

Tell me about a time that you had to learn a new skill and how you were able to master it.

LEADERSHIP AND SUPERVISION

Have you supervised employees in the past? If so, what was your greatest challenge?

Tell me about a time when you had to discipline an employee and how it went.

Tell me about one of your favorite employees and what made them so great.

What is the hardest part about managing employees?

INTEREST IN POSITION

Why are you interested in working for this organization?

What specifically about this position made you want to apply?

What's the most important thing to you about a job?

Describe your ideal work environment.

PLANNING AND PROBLEM SOLVING

Tell me about a time that you had to complete a project with a short turn-around time and how you handled that.

Tell me about a time that you improved or simplified a process.

Describe a major problem you've faced in the past year and how you overcame it.

How do you stay organized at work? Walk me through your method.

TECHNOLOGY

Tell me about a new technology you learned recently and what challenges you encountered along the way.

LEARNING

How would you describe your ideal learning style?

Tell me about a time when you learned something new with little or no support.

TEAMWORK

Tell me about a group project you worked on recently and what challenges you encountered.

Describe a time when you worked with someone who had a different way of doing things than you. How did you handle this?

ADDITIONAL READING

Armstrong, S., & Mitchell, B. (2008). *The Essential HR Handbook: A Quick and Handy Resource for Any Manager or HR Professional*. Franklin Lakes, NJ: Career Press.

Green, A., & Hauser, J. (2012). *Managing To Change the World: The Nonprofit Manager's Guide To Getting Results*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.