



Interviewing Skills: Top Ten Questions

Adapted from St. Norbert College and MU Career Center

1. Tell me about yourself.

This question you want to let the interviewer 4 or 5 main points about yourself. Try not to talk too long about this, and end with how those main points led you to that company.

2. What is your most significant accomplishment?

This is an opportunity to make a great impression! Be sure to review your experience and select a significant accomplishment that is meaningful to you. Telling a two-minute story including details and personal involvement can paint an impressive picture of your accomplishment.

Discuss any sacrifices you had to make to achieve this accomplishment and why it was important to the company.

3. Why do you believe you are qualified for the position?

Focus! Pick two or three main factors about the job and your corresponding characteristics that are most relevant. Provide specific examples from your experience that illustrate why you are qualified. It helps to select a technical skill, a specific management skill (organizing, staffing, planning), and a personal success attribute to mention.

4. Have you ever accomplished something you did not think you could?

This question addresses your goal orientation, work ethic, personal commitment and integrity. Provide a good example that illustrates a time when you overcame numerous difficulties to succeed. Prove you are not a quitter and that you will "get going when the going gets tough."

5. Describe a time where your performance went above and beyond expectations.

Use an example; i.e., handling an irate customer or a time where an associate needed assistance with an urgent project that may or may not have had anything to do with your responsibilities. Be sure to demonstrate a "whatever it takes" attitude.

6. What do you like/dislike most about your current position?

This question helps identify your compatibility with the open position. If you enjoy challenges, pressure situations, and opportunity, or dislike bureaucracy and frustrating situations, you may want to share that in your response.

7. What are your career goals? Where do you see yourself 5 years from now?10?

Many people don't know exactly where they will be in 5 or 10 years and it's fine to express that you may not have an exact position in mind. What you should convey, however, is how much additional responsibility you want to take on or whether or not a clear career path is important to you. You should be able to elaborate on how you will be an asset to the company in the future.

8. What are your most significant strengths?

Know your four or five key strengths. Be able to discuss each with a specific example. Select those attributes that are most compatible with the job opening. If you choose "management" or "interpersonal skills" as strengths be prepared to describe the specific characteristics of management (planning, organizing, results, staffing, etc.) or how your relationship skills have proven critical to your success.

9. What are your most significant weaknesses?

This is an opportunity to discuss skills that you are working towards improving. You can use specific examples to show how you've improved over time or, better still, how a weakness can be turned into strength. For example, how concentration on the details results in higher quality work, even though it may require more time.

10. Where are you from?

If you feel comfortable answering, you can tell them where you are from. Otherwise, you can talk around the question by saying something like "My country of origin is China" or "I've lived in both China and the United States". You could also simply say where you are from now: "For the past five years, I have lived in Columbia, Missouri while in school."

11. How long do you think you will stay in the U.S.?

A good answer would be: "I can work for at least a year using my OPT, which involves no paperwork for the company. Then if the company is satisfied with my performance, I would be very happy to stay as long as possible. If the company would like to place me in another country, I would also be interested in that." You could also say that you don't want to limit your possibilities by setting a time limit.

12. How are your communication skills?

Before going into an interview, it is a good idea to get objective feedback on your English skills from peers and colleagues. Ask them how they feel about your English ability. In the interview, highlight your positive communication qualities: oral, written, email skills and things you have done to overcome language barriers. You could also give positive examples such as "When I speak up in class, my classmates have never asked me to repeat my comments."

13. How are you more qualified than an American candidate?

Emphasize your international experience. If you speak other languages, this is a good time to point out how that can benefit the company. You might wish to tie your international experience to the company's mission statement, if they are claiming to be a global company. Additionally, you may wish to put the attention onto your overall contribution to the company instead of your international status. For example, "It is difficult for me to compare myself to someone whose qualities I do not know; but I do think I am a great fit for this company due to the management skills, leadership qualities, and communication abilities that your organization is looking for."