

Asking Questions in Your Interview

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The Importance of Asking Questions in Your Interview

Most interviewers will ask if you have questions for them and expect applicants to have a thoughtful list of 2-4 questions ready. Your questions for them provide an opportunity to:

- Indicate your serious interest in the position and in your own career development
- Learn more about the details of the job and organization
- Highlight or elaborate on relevant skills and qualifications

Be Thoughtful in Your Approach

As you prepare for the interview, be thoughtful in your approach:

- Why are you asking this question? What are you hoping to learn or convey by asking this question?
- What is the best way to phrase your question? What's the most diplomatic way to get at the information you're seeking?
- Be genuine with your questions. Ask them because you're interested, not because you've been told you should have questions to ask!

Conduct thorough research (such as informational interviews, campus information sessions and online research) about the organization to help inform the thoughtful questions you will ask during your interview.

Asking About the Position

Take the opportunity to ask questions specifically about the position for which you are interviewing. Ask questions about your job responsibilities, training for the position, and your potential teammates. These will not only help you imagine yourself succeeding in the position, but also provide you the chance to say more about your qualifications and related accomplishments.

- What would a typical day in this position be like? *Be sure you've read the position description thoroughly before applying and interviewing for the position!*
- What projects can a new employee expect within his or her first year of employment?
- May I see the area where I might be working?
- What kind of training might I expect?
- What skills are necessary for someone to succeed in this job/position? *Reiterate how you have those or similar skills and that you are a quick learner.*
- What are the traits and qualities of the people who are the most successful within the organization? *Describe situations in which others noted those qualities in you or different traits of yours that you think will be valuable in this setting or organization.*

- Is there something I can do or study to get a head start on learning the job?
 - How will my performance be evaluated? *Here you might mention the qualities your previous supervisor really valued in you or commendations you received for superior performance.*
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Asking About the Organization

Asking questions about the organization will help you determine if the organization is a good fit for you. Does its mission align with your values? Is the company culture one in which you can be your best professional self? How will work expectations affect your work/life balance? Will your professional development be encouraged and supported? Questions you might ask:

- What are the anticipated changes in the company/department in the next two years? How might this affect the position that I am applying for?
 - Here's an opportunity for you to talk about your adaptability and provide relevant examples of skills you hadn't previously discussed.
 - I read in the Wall Street Journal recently that you're planning to update...
 - This is a great question because it highlights your company research. Whenever you've done research to understand the industry, employer or position, let the employer know – it indicates your commitment and initiative.
 - Can you tell me more about the work environment/team communications or interactions?
 - What training and development processes and resources are in place to support employees' success and continued development?
 - Asking questions about professional development can communicate that you are interested in both the company and a career in the field. Be sure to emphasize your interest in lifelong learning and growth rather than give the impression you are interested in other positions.
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Concluding the Interview

- It is appropriate to ask about the next steps and time line for the hiring process.
 - Ask for the business card of everyone who has interviewed you, and follow up with a personalized thank you note, within 24 hours, to each interviewer.
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Questions NOT to Ask in the Interview

- “What does the company do?” or questions readily answered on the company's website. Spend some time researching on the website before your interview.
 - The interview is NOT the time to ask questions about salary or benefits. The interview is better spent building rapport, learning about the employer's needs and expectations, and describing to them how your skills and interests are a great fit. Ask about salary and benefits after an offer has been made to you.
 - Don't ask yes or no questions. Open-ended questions provide greater opportunity for continued +/- deeper conversation.
 - Don't ask about the interviewer's own career path unless this really helps you understand the position and/or employer with whom you're applying. The interview is about you and your fit with the position, not the interviewer.
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