Interview Questions

1. Tell me about yourself.
Your interviewer is not looking for a 10-minute dissertation here. Instead, offer a razor sharp sentence or
two that sets the stage for further discussion and sets you apart from your competitors. Give them "your
synopsis about you", specifically a one-sentence description of who you are, your biggest strength and the
major benefit that a company will derive from this strength. Tell a story to give the interviewer a visual of
what you are saying.

For example: Do NOT say, "I’m 22 years old, I have 3 brothers and sisters, I’m married and have a
child on the way, I was on the high school track team, I’m a great cook and sign up for all the cook off’s I
can." They do not care. ‘Tell me about yourself’ means, how can YOU help ME!

For example: Do say, “I am about to graduate with a certificate in Diesel Technology from TSTC. As
long as I can remember, I always loved being on the farm with my grandfather. He taught me how to
drive the farm tractor and I’ve been hooked ever since. I am very mechanically inclined which has helped
me be able to enjoy my classes instead of think of them as work. I excelled in my brakes classes and I see
that is one of the positions that you are hiring for at this time."

2. If I were to ask your instructors or coworkers to describe you, what would they say?
Think of an instructor or coworker you have had good experiences with and is easy to get along with.
Give an example of a project you worked on and were praised by the instructor or show that you enjoy
being a team player and working on projects with other coworkers.

For example: Do NOT say, “Oh gosh, I don’t know. I guess I’m a hard worker. I’ve really never thought
about it.”

For example: Do say, “In my Wind Energy SCADA class we were assigned into teams. My instructor
made me the leader of my team because he said the other students have told him that I explain things
well. I was very proud of that because I like helping people and being a team player.”

For example: Do say, “I think my manager at Sonic would say I work well under pressure. She always
complimented me when I would have 8 or 9 orders turned in at the same time and I never panicked. I
just prioritized and looked ahead to see what needed to be done on all the orders to get them out as fast
as I could.”

3. What is your greatest strength?
This is one of the easier interview questions you’ll be asked. When you are asked questions about your
strengths, it’s important to discuss attributes that will qualify you for the job. The best way to respond is to
describe the skills and experience that directly correlate with the job you are applying for.

For example: Do NOT say, “Hummm. I don’t know. I’m good at some things. I think I’m a good
listener.”

For example: Do say, “When I’m working on a project, I don’t want just to meet deadlines. Rather, I
prefer to complete the project well ahead of schedule.” Or “I have exceeded my sales goals every quarter
and I’ve earned a bonus each year since I started with my current employer.” Or “My time management
skills are excellent and I’m organized, efficient, and take pride in excelling at my work.” Or “I pride
myself on my customer service skills and my ability to resolve what could be difficult situations.” AND
BACK IT UP WITH A STORY!

4. What is your greatest weakness?
The point at which your interviewer asks you to share your greatest weakness is the portion of a job
interview that you dread most, and for good reason: Lame answers like "I'm a perfectionist" or "I care too
much" are well-worn clichés, but how can you intelligently answer that question? When you're asked
what your greatest weakness is, try to turn a negative into a positive.
For example: Do NOT say, “I have a bad temper.” “I hate it when supervisors micromanage me.” “I have trouble getting up in the morning.”

For example: Do say, “Sometimes when I am working on a task I feel a sense of urgency to get projects completed or want to triple-check every item in a spreadsheet but I feel it also makes me a candidate for the position who will make sure that the project is done on time and your work will be close to perfect.”

5. How do you handle stress and pressure?
It’s a good idea to give examples of how you have handled stress to your interviewer. That way, they get a clear picture how well you can work in stressful situations.

For example: Do NOT say, “I can get so mad and sometimes I just blow.” (The interviewer now thinks you are unstable and will not hire you.) “I just walk off when something or someone messes with me.” (The interviewer now thinks you are not a team player and/or you don’t have the guts to stand up for yourself when a problem arises. Either way, you lose.) “Well.” (Saying “Well” nothing more, nothing less is a cop out and sounds silly.)

For example: Do say, “I’m a music lover, and when possible, I get my iPod and put in my ear phones, listen to some music and breathe.” “I do my best to prioritize tasks according to urgency and importance to prevent getting stressed.” “I exercise daily and lift weights. It’s great because it relieves stress and helps me get my mind off of things. Staying healthy helps me in all areas of my life.” “Sometimes I’ll call a friend or a relative and just talk out the problem. Just saying it out loud and getting a different perspective helps.” “If I have a problem with a person or a situation I will sit down and write down the pros and cons of the situation. If I can figure out a way to handle it on my own, I will do that, but if the problem needs to be addressed with the person, I will do that as well.”

6. Describe a difficult work situation / project and how you overcame it.
Give concrete examples of difficult situations that actually happened at work or in one of your classes or labs. Then discuss what you did to solve the problem. Keep your answers positive and be specific. Itemize what you did and how you did it. Try to stay away from personal issues.

For example: Do NOT say, “Hmmm. I can’t think of anything. I’ve never really had a problem like that.”

For example: Do say, “When I was in my engines lab class we had to take apart a engine and put it back together. It was a team project and four of us were on a team. We each had our own part we had to do to get the project to work. One of our team members had to drop the class and without notice we were down to three people and the project was due in two days. We all got together and figured out what exactly he had done and still needed to do and divided his work among the three of us. We had to work more quickly and longer hours to make sure it all got done, but it did, and we got an A on the project.”

7. How do you evaluate success?
Give an example of work and personal and show that there must be a nice balance between both.

For example: Do NOT say, “If I am making a lot of money.”

For example: Do say, “I evaluate success in different ways. At work, it is meeting the goals set by my supervisors and my fellow workers. It is my understanding, from talking to other employees, that this company is recognized for not only rewarding success, but giving employee’s opportunity to grow as well. After work, I enjoy playing softball, so success on the field is catching the winning pop-up.”

8. What are your goals for the future?
Don’t discuss your goals for returning to school or having a family, they are not relevant and could knock you out of contention for the job. Rather, you want to connect your answer to the job you are applying for.
For example: Do NOT say, “In five or so years I’d like to be married and have a family. I want a big house and a boat. I may take some classes at the University in town.” Or “I see myself doing your job!”

For example: Do say, “My long-term goals involve growing with a company where I can continue to learn, take on additional responsibilities, and contribute as much of value as I can.” Or “I see myself as a top performing employee in a well-established organization, like this one. I plan on enhancing my skills and continuing my involvement in (related) professional associations.” Or “Once I gain additional experience, I would like to move on from a technical position to management.”

9. Why do you want this job?
Frame your answer around the job. Tie your skills, work ethic, and experience back to the job that you want. This is also a good time for you to add in something the company does (Habitat for Humanity, charity work, interesting company fact, etc.) that you would like to be a part of.

For example: Do NOT say, “Because it’s a great starting place for me and I can learn how to do things, then move on to something else.”

For example: Do say, “This is not only a fine opportunity, but this company is a place where I feel my skills can make a difference. It contains the challenge to keep me on my toes. That’s the kind of job I like to anticipate every morning.” Or “I understand that this is a company on the way up. Your website says the launch of several new products is imminent. I want to be part of this business as it grows.”

10. Why should we hire you?
The best way to respond is to give concrete examples of why your skills and accomplishments make you the best candidate for the job. Take a few moments to compare the job description with your abilities, as well as mentioning what you have accomplished in your other positions. Be positive and reiterate your interest in the company and the position.

For example: Do NOT say, “Because I need and want a job.” Or “I’m a hard worker and really want to work for this company.”

For example: Do say, “From our conversations, it sounds as if you are looking for someone to come in and take charge immediately. It also sounds like you have had difficulty finding a person who can work late when needed on weekends. With the skills I have learned at TSTC, I have I can do the work accurately and efficiently which will save your company money. My instructors and fellow students would tell you I am a team player who has a positive attitude and outlook. I have the ability to stay focused in stressful situations and can be counted on when the going gets tough. I’m confident I would be a great addition to your team.”

11. Do you have any questions for me?
Remember, your answer is always, YES! Think of a well prepared question that has to do specifically with the job you are interviewing for. This is NOT the time to ask about salary or the company benefit package. Also, do not ask a question that the answer can be easily found on the company’s website.

For example: Do NOT say, “No.” (Not only is this the wrong answer, but it’s also a missed opportunity to find out information about the company.)

For example: Do say, “Yes, I do. I was wondering, what is a typical career path for someone with my skills and experiences?” Or “Yes, I do. From what you’ve been asking during the interview, it sounds like you have a problem with customer satisfaction. Can you tell me a little more about the current situation and what the first challenges would be for the new person?”