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40 Job Interview Questions and Answers

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The Typical Job Interview

The purpose of the typical job interview is to more closely screen a handful of applicants who have made the final cut. If you are called for a job interview it means that the employer believes you have the basic skills and experience required for the job; however, he wants to see you in person so he can learn more about you, your personality, your appearance, your demeanor and your ability to answer some really stupid questions without losing your temper. Depending on the employer you could be competing against as little as three or as many as 30 other applicants. So you would do well to prepare for the interview carefully if you want the job.

The average person looking for employment usually gets called for 10 to 15 interviews before he gets an offer. Most job interviews follow a standard format:

- (1) Greeting and small talk to put you at ease and break the ice. The interviewer may give you a preview of what will occur during the interview.
- (2) The employer may give you a brief overview of the position or additional information about the organization.
- (3) You respond to questions. If it's a good interview, this is the longest segment and you should do most of the talking.
- (4) You ask questions of the interviewer. Have at least five or ten questions prepared beforehand.
- (5) The interviewer closes the interview and explains the next steps in the process. Be sure to thank the interviewer for his or her time.

During the interview you should:

- ~Be enthusiastic and prepared
- ~Be knowledgeable about the organization
- ~Be confident and sell your skills
- ~Listen carefully and be interested

During the interview, the interviewer will try to determine if you have the following traits:

- (1) Achiever
- (2) Productive
- (3) Self-starter
- (4) Contributor
- (5) Quick Learner
- (6) Easy Going
- (7) Dependable
- (8) Stable
- (9) Responsible

The interviewer will try to determine if you possess the nine traits above by asking you a series of questions and observing your demeanor while you answer them. Therefore, you should spend some time preparing for the job interview in order to make the best impression possible.

Be able to answer the question: "Why should you be hired?"

What skills do you have that are pertinent to the position for which you're interviewing? Identify two or three of your top selling points and determine how you can illustrate them during the interview. What stories can you tell the interviewer about your use of these particular skills or knowledge? And, of course, you must prepare for the job interview by preparing answers to commonly-asked interview questions.

Don't be surprised if you are called back to interview with the same employer two or three times. With the job market in the dumps, employers can easily pick and choose among many applicants. During these interviews you must come across as very friendly, easy to get along with, enthusiastic about the job, as well as be able to intelligently answer interview questions.

Preparing for the Job Interview

Memorizing good answers to typical interview questions isn't enough preparation. Why? Imagine three people sitting in a lobby waiting to interview for the same job. One of the applicants has spent several hours researching the company and its industry. The other two have not done any research at all. Who do you think stands the best chance of getting the job? The person who lets the interviewer know he's done his research.

Spending three, four or even more hours to prepare for a job interview is recommended by career experts. You should become familiar with the company, its products or services, its competitors, the industry in which it operates, and decide how your skills will benefit the company so you can answer interview questions, such as "Why do you want to work for us?" "What do you know about our company?" "How can you benefit our company?" If you do this, your odds of beating out your competition increase dramatically.

Do Research

The best way to start researching a company is simply to type "Name of Company" in to the search form at a major search engine, such as Google.com or, if it's a big company go right to the website: www.nameofcompany.com. Once you know more about the company and its industry, you can better match your skills and qualifications to that company's needs. Now you're ready to prepare for those tough job interview questions.

Other places to do research on companies are as follows:

411Stocks: www.411stocks.com

Business Wire: www.businesswire.com

Brint: www.brint.com

Wetfeet: www.wetfeet.com

Hoovers: www.hooversonline.com

Thomas Register: thomasregister.com

Topics to Research

When researching a company you should know the answers to the following questions before you show up for the interview:

How old is the company?

What are its products or services?

Who are its customers?

Who are its major competitors?

What are its reputation / industry standing?

What are its new products or services?

How large is the company?

What are its short- and long-term goals?

How has the company resolved problems?

Have there been recent employee layoffs?

Where is the company located?

What are the backgrounds of managers?

What training programs are offered?

Questions To Ask At the Job Interview

You should always prepare a list of questions to ask the interviewer before going to the interview. Below are some possible questions you might want to ask during a job interview. Avoid asking about salary, vacation time, employee benefits, etc. until you have asked a number of other questions that demonstrate your interest in working for the company.

Good questions to ask the interviewer:

Why is this position available?
Is this a new position? How long has this position existed?
How many people have held this position in the last two years?
Who would be my supervisor? To whom would I report?
Whom will I supervise?
With whom will I be working most closely?
What do you like about working for this company?
What are the current plans for expansion or cutbacks?
What kind of turnover rate does the company have?
How financially sound is this company?
What projects and assignments will I be working on?
What happened to the person that held this position before? Was he promoted or fired?
What is this company's culture? (Rigid and formal or relaxed and flexible?)
What are the current problems facing the company (or my department)?
What do you like the most about working for this company? The least?
What is the philosophy of the company?
What do you consider to be the company's strengths and weaknesses?
What are the company's long and short term goals?
Describe the work environment.
What attracted you (the interviewer) to this organization?
Why do you enjoy working for this company?
Describe the typical responsibilities of the position.
What are the most challenging aspects of the position?
Describe the opportunities for training and professional development.
Will I receive any formal training?
What is the company's promotional policy?
Are there opportunities for advancement within the organization?
When can I expect to hear from you?

Illegal Interview Questions

Federal and state legislation prohibits employers from asking certain questions during the interview based on race, religion, creed, sex and age. Not all employers are familiar with these laws, particularly small employers. What should you do if you are asked one of these illegal questions? Experts say if you want the job you should ignore the violation and answer the question. Others recommend that you very tactfully point out that the question is illegal.

Questions employers are not supposed to ask job applicants:

- (01) What was your maiden name?
- (02) When were you born?
- (03) When did you graduate from high school?
- (04) What is your race?
- (05) Do you have physical or mental disabilities?
- (06) Do you have a drug or alcohol problem?

- (07) Are you taking any prescription drugs?
- (08) Would working on weekends conflict with your religion?
- (09) What country are you a citizen of?
- (10) Have you ever been arrested?
- (11) What language did you speak in your home when you were growing up?

Employers can usually obtain the information sought in the questions above by rephrasing the question. Compare the illegal questions above with the legal ones below:

- (01) What is your name?
- (02) Are you over 18?
- (03) Did you graduate from high school?
- (04) No questions about race are allowed.
- (05) Can you perform [specific tasks pertinent to the job description]?
- (06) Can you perform [specific tasks pertinent to the job description]?
- (07) Can you perform [specific tasks pertinent to the job description]?
- (08) Would you be able to meet the job's requirement to frequently work weekends?
- (09) Do you have the legal right to work in the United States?
- (10) Have you ever been convicted of a felony?
- (11) This job requires that you speak Spanish. Do you?

What should you do if asked an illegal question? If you want the job it wouldn't be wise to point out to the interviewer that he has asked a bad question. Instead, just answer it unless it offends you so much that you feel the need to point out his error. You can simply respond, "I'm sorry, but I don't feel that question is relevant to the position I'm interviewing for." Of course, if you do this, chances are you will offend the interviewer and you won't get the job.

Another tactic to win more job offers is to volunteer information that it is illegal for the interviewer to ask. For example, if you're a young female you know that the interviewer is concerned that you're planning to start a family soon or already have a house full of young children that might interfere with your job. Since he isn't supposed to ask you anything about children you can volunteer this information: "I decided a long time ago that I do not want to have children, so I have no family obligations now or in the future that could prevent me from traveling extensively if offered this position" OR "My children are 15 and 16 years old and they no longer need me as much as they once did, so I can work late and on weekends if necessary."

Post Interview Follow-up

A follow-up thank you letter to the interviewer is an important step in the interviewing process, one that candidates often forget to take. Sending such a letter is not only proper business etiquette, but it also makes you stand out from the other candidates competing for the same position. Write your thank you letter as soon as possible after the interview.

You should send a follow-up thank you letter even if you don't want the job. If this is the case, let the interviewer know in your thank you letter. Ask the interviewer to keep you in mind for any positions with the company that might be available in the future.

Components of the Follow-up Thank You Letter

Your thank you letter can be typed in a business letter format or handwritten using a pre-printed thank you note. The letter or note should express appreciation for the opportunity to interview, tour the facilities, meet other employees, etc. You might also want to write about the following:

- Mention the day of your interview and the position for which you interviewed.
- Express continued interest in the position and the company.

- Re-emphasize your most important skills and qualifications and how you expect to contribute to the organization.
- Include any information you forgot to mention in the interview, if necessary (be brief though).
- Close your letter with a comment about future contact with the employer.

Sample Thank You Letter

"Dear _____:

I appreciated the opportunity to interview at your hospital on Monday. The tour of the facilities and conversations with Acme's laboratory staff gave me a clear overview of the role of technologists at your facility. In particular, I was impressed with the state-of-the-art equipment in Acme's laboratories and the exciting medical research that is being conducted there.

The entire experience has confirmed my desire for employment as a medical technologist with Acme Hospital. My internship as a lab assistant, along with my microbiology and chemistry course work, has prepared me well for this position. Based on my interview, I think I would fit in well with the Acme laboratory staff.

Thank you again for the experience of getting to know your organization better. I would welcome the opportunity to work for Acme Hospital, and I look forward to hearing from you in the next two weeks.

Sincerely,"

Sample Thank You Letter 2

If you decided after interviewing that you do not want the position, your note might offer something like,

"Thank you for the opportunity to interview for the position of _____ the other day. While I still would enjoy working for your company, after learning more about the position I realize that I am searching for a more challenging position that better utilizes my skills and experience and requires less travel. If your company has such a position, please let me know."

Most Commonly-Asked Interview Questions

Below is a list of questions that are commonly asked by interviewers. You should formulate answers to these questions before you go to the interview since doing this will make you more confident during the interview.

- Why should I hire you?
- Why do you want to work for this company?
- What are your strengths and weaknesses?
- What do you think determines a person's progress with a company?
- What have you done to increase your personal development?
- Are you happy with your career progress to date?
- What are your career goals?
- Tell me about yourself.
- What is your most significant accomplishment?
- Are you willing to take calculated risks?
- What are the things that motivate you?
- What is the most difficult situation that you have ever faced?
- Why do you want to leave your present employer?
- What jobs have you enjoyed the most and the least and why?

What actions would you take if we hired you?
Why did you want to get in to this field?
What can you offer us that someone else can't?
How would your supervisor describe you?
Do you work better alone or as part of a team?
What are your primary activities outside of work?
How do you handle people that you don't get along with?
What makes you think you can handle this position?
With what other companies are you interviewing?
What has been your greatest challenge?

Questions Commonly Asked of College Students and Recent Graduates

What is your GPA? Do you feel it reflects your true abilities?
How has your schooling (internships) prepared you for this position?
What was your favorite course in college and why?
Why did you decide to attend X College? Are you happy with your choice?
What factors did you consider in choosing your major?
How did your college experience change you?
What kind of grades did you have in school?
Why were your grades not very good in school?
Why didn't you participate in internship programs while in school?
Why are you applying for a job unrelated to your internship experiences?
Why are you applying for a job not related to your degree?
What extracurricular activities did you participate in?
If you had it to do over again, would you choose the same major?

Most popular questions asked in 2003:

What is your vision of the ideal job and boss?
Why are you searching for new employment?
What are your unique qualifications or experiences that separate you from other candidates?
Describe yourself.
What are your short and long term goals?
What are the best and worst aspects of your previous job?
What do you know about our company?
What would your former boss and co-workers say about you?

Job Interview Questions & How You Should Answer Them

Note: The first forty questions in this section are the most-commonly asked interview questions.

Question 1: Tell me about yourself. This is usually the first question asked because it is a good ice-breaker. You shouldn't use this open-ended question to offer useless information about your hobbies and home life. Many people will make the mistake of saying, "I'm 32 years old, married, and mother of three children aged 5, 7 and 9. My hobbies are knitting and bike riding . . . yada yada yada." This is not a good answer.

A good answer to this question is about two minutes long and focuses on work-related skills and accomplishments. Tell the interviewer why you think your work-related skills and accomplishments would be an asset to the company. Describe your education and work history (be brief). Then mention one or two personal character traits and tell the interviewer how the traits helped you accomplish a task at school or work. Do not describe yourself with tired old clichés such as "I am a team player," "I have excellent communication skills," unless you can prove it

with an illustration. For example: "I would describe myself as a self-starter. At Acme Corporation, there was a problem with so I created a new inventory system (give details) that reduced expenses 30 percent."

For example, someone with a new degree in an IT field might answer this question as follows: "I have enjoyed working with computers since I was nine years old and have always been adept at using them. Throughout junior high and high school, friends and relatives were always asking me for help with their computer problems, so no one was surprised when I chose to major in computers." His answer could go on to explain how in college, he discovered he wanted to concentrate his studies on a specific IT field; how his internships or work experience influenced him or led him in a certain direction; and how he has come to decide that he wants to work for this particular company and why he would be an asset to this company.

Question 2: Why should we hire you? Take several minutes to answer this question, incorporating your personality traits, strengths, and experience in to the job you're applying for. A good answer is to focus on how you can benefit the company. You can best do this by researching a company before the interview and be ready with examples of how your skills, talents, etc., can benefit the problems and concerns of that particular company.

Question 3: What is your greatest strength (or strengths)? State one or two strengths that are work-related and tell the interviewer the story about when that strength helped you accomplish a task at work (or school). For example: "I have the ability to train and motivate people. At Acme Co., employee turnover was very high, so I . . ." (give details of what you did to decrease turnover, train and motivate employees, etc.).

Question 4: What is your greatest weakness (or weaknesses)? Don't answer by claiming that you have no weaknesses. Confess a real weakness that you have, but choose one that isn't particularly relevant to the job you're seeking. Do not answer with phony weaknesses such as "I'm a slave to my job" or "I'm a workaholic." Just state the weakness, tell the interview how it has harmed you in your work life, and what steps you have taken to improve it. A good step one can take to improve a weakness is to read self-help books on the subject. You might offer the title of a book you've read that helped you improve your anger, shyness, impatience, etc.

Question 5: Why do you want to leave your present employer? You could state that you want a more challenging position, higher salary, or more responsibility. Don't mention personal conflicts with your present boss or bad-mouth your current employer or co-workers as this will harm your chances of being offered the job. Keep in mind that interviewers love people who are looking for more challenging positions or responsibility because it shows drive, ambition and motivation.

Question 6: Why do you want to work for this company? Don't answer this question with, "Because you advertised for an X at monster.com." Your answer should offer what you think are the most interesting aspects of the company, for example, "because it is on the cutting edge of technology" or "because you are the industry leader". The research you do on the company in order to prepare for the interview should give you an answer to this question.

Question 7: What do you know about our company? Those who answer this question with, "Not much," will probably not be offered the job. You should always research a company before the interview. Learn about their products / services, size, future plans, current events, etc. If you cannot find information about a particular company, call their offices and ask the receptionist to send you information about the company in the form of a brochure, etc.. You should also research the industry in which the company operates so you are up on what's happening. You can find links to research sites at http://www.resumagic.com/x_researchingcompany.html.

Question 8: Why do you want this position? Your answer should offer what you think are the most interesting aspects of the position. More responsibility and opportunity, including a higher

salary, are acceptable answers, but state them in a way that isn't blunt. For example, "because it pays more" is not a good answer. But, stating that, "The position offers more responsibility, challenges and interesting opportunities, as well as a higher salary," is a good answer.

Question 9: Do you work better alone or as part of a team? If the position you're applying for requires you to spend lots of time alone, then of course, you should state that you like to work alone and vice versa. Never sound too extreme one way or another. Don't say that you hate people and would "die if you had to work with others" and don't state that you "will go crazy if you're left alone for five minutes". A healthy balance between the two is always the best choice. If you have previous experience illustrating the fact that you can work alone or with others, then offer it. For example, you might state that in your previous job you spent a significant amount of time alone while traveling, or that you have learned how to get along well with people in the workplace by working on numerous team projects.

Question 10: What did your last supervisor criticize most about your performance? A good way to answer this question is to offer a criticism you received that is not very important or not directly related to the position you're applying for. For example, telling the interviewer that you were constantly criticized for coming to work an hour late is not a good idea. But revealing a minor criticism and telling the interviewer what steps you took to improve yourself is a good way to answer this question. In fact, if you can state that you have already solved the problem and received a higher mark on a subsequent performance review, then say so.

Question 11: Where do you see yourself in five years? Assume that you will be promoted two or three times in five years, so your answer should state that you see yourself working at whatever job is two or three levels above the job in which you are applying. Do not claim that you will be "running the company" in five years. You might want to add that you understand your promotions will be earned through hard work and that you don't assume you will be promoted just because you stayed with the company.

Question 12: Why have you changed jobs so frequently? Reasons for job hopping should always be based on your past employers' failure to challenge you or fail to give you enough opportunity for advancement, and not on the fact that your past employers were incompetent, dumb, or unfair. Make sure you point out any jobs you did hold for a long time. Mention that your current goal is long-term employment and back that up with any proof you have to want job stability such as a new baby, new marriage, new home, etc. If the job you're applying for offers you the challenges and environment you were always looking for, then say so.

Question 13: Are you willing to relocate? If relocating wasn't an issue the interviewer wouldn't be asking the question. Therefore, the only acceptable answer is "Yes." If you answer in the negative you will not get the job. If you really don't want to relocate, then perhaps you shouldn't accept the job if it is subsequently offered to you. If you aren't sure, then ask questions about relocation, such as when it is likely to occur, where you will relocate to, and would it involve a promotion.

Question 14: Are you willing to travel? If traveling wasn't part of the job, the interviewer wouldn't be asking this question. Therefore, the only acceptable answer is "yes". If you are willing to travel, answer yes and give some illustrations of work travel you have done. But if you do not want to travel, you should find out more about this aspect of the job before accepting the position, such as how much travel will be involved, where will you be traveling to and for how long.

Question 15: Are you willing to work overtime? If this wasn't an aspect of the job, the interviewer wouldn't be asking this question. Therefore, the only acceptable answer is "yes" if you want to be considered for the job. If your past jobs involved overtime, now would be the time to tell this to the interviewer.

Question 16: Have you ever been fired or asked to resign? When answering this question, keep in mind that the interviewer knows that almost everyone has been fired at least once and it is almost always due to a personality conflict with the boss or coworkers. So, answer this question honestly, but without attacking your former boss or employer, and without sounding defensive or bitter. Do not mention that you have been fired many times unless asked specifically, "How many times have you been fired?" Have a sense of humor when discussing your firings so that the interviewer doesn't get the idea you are a nut who might come back to the workplace with an assault rifle if you're fired. Tell the interviewer what you learned from being fired. If you have been fired many times, mention what steps you have taken to improve yourself (i.e., I have read self-help books about . . . getting along with others . . . improving my time management . . . improving knowledge, work habits, etc.). Also, point out any past jobs you held when you got along well with your boss and coworkers or received good performance reviews or a promotion.

Question 17: How long have you been searching for a job? Why haven't you received a job offer? Why have you been unemployed for so long? It is always better to answer this question with "I just started looking" but this is not always possible, particularly if your resume indicates you've been unemployed for the last six months. If you can't hide the fact that your job search has been taking awhile, then state you're being selective about whom you will work for. Of course, stating this might prompt the interviewer to ask, "What offers have you turned down?" which could land you in hot water if you haven't actually received any job offers. (It isn't a good idea to lie in answering this latter question.)

A bad economy and a crowded market are good reasons one might have trouble finding a job. However, be aware that many interviewers will hold this against you even if the job market was very bad and many people were having trouble finding employment.

Question 18: What previously held job do you consider to be your favorite and why? This is actually a trick question asked to determine if you enjoy the type of work the position you're applying for involves. Therefore, the answer to this question should be a job that requires the same or similar work that you will be required to perform in the new job. If you do not have a previous job wherein you performed similar tasks, then offer an answer that does not suggest you are ill-suited for the position. For example, if you are applying for a high-stress, demanding job in a chaotic environment, don't tell the interviewer you loved your position with Acme because of the mellow, low stress "work at your own pace" atmosphere.

Question 19: Do you consider yourself to be organized? Do you manage your time well? The interviewer wants to hear about your work skills concerning time and task management, not that you have neatly separated the paperclips in your desk drawer into different trays based on size. A model answer might be "I manage my time very well. I routinely complete tasks ahead of schedule. For example, . . . (offer the interviewer proof of your organizational skills by telling him about a major project that you organized and completed on time or mention the fact that you consistently received an outstanding grade on previous performance reviews regarding your time management). Don't reveal to the interviewer that you are habitually late or that you complete tasks at the very last minute.

Question 20: Would you choose the same career if you could start over again? How you answer this question depends on whether or not you are trying to win a job related to your career history or are trying to enter a new field. No matter how much you despise the career you originally chose, do not admit this fact to the interviewer because it tells him you consider your work to be drudge. If you are trying to enter a new field, of course, tell the interviewer that you would choose the field you're now trying to enter if you had it to do all over again -- that's why you're trying to enter it now!

Question 21: Why have you stayed with the same employer for so long? Just as moving from job to job too frequently can harm you, so can staying with the same employer for too long --

particularly if you've never been promoted and your resume indicates you haven't been intellectually challenged in years. Your answer should state something about your having worked successfully with many people both inside and outside of the organization, including different bosses and co-workers, as well as interacting regularly with various types of organizations and customers.

Question 22: Do you consider yourself to be a risk-taker? How you answer this question depends on the type of company it is. If it is a start-up company or within a highly-competitive industry, then they are probably looking for those more willing to take risks. If you believe the company is this type, then offer an example of a risk you've taken in business. If the company is a well-established industry leader, risk takers are not as highly valued. Of course, no company is looking for employees who are foolish in their risk-taking behavior, so a good rule of thumb is to place yourself somewhere in the middle -- you are neither too foolish nor overly cautious.

Question 23: Would your present employer be surprised to know you're job hunting? Never answer this question with negative information such as "My current boss wouldn't be surprised in the least to hear I'm leaving since he's been trying to shove me out the door for years!" Always tell the interviewer that you are happy with your current employer and job, but are simply looking to stretch your wings out and take on a job with more challenge, and yes, more salary and opportunities for advancement.

Question 24: How well do you handle change? The only acceptable answer is one stating you handle change very well. Don't just make this claim, offer an example of how well you coped with a major change that took place in your work environment. A common shakeup occurs when your employer brings in new automation or changes its culture. In any event, tell the interviewer what you did to cope or adapt to a change that occurred with a previous employer -- and this should be a major change, not a minor one.

Question 25: What salary are you expecting? You should do some research before the job interview so that you don't ask for too much or too little. You might be asked to justify why you are worth the salary you are asking, so be prepared with an answer (i.e., tell them how your skills and experience will benefit the company so much that your salary will be a bargain for them.) Links to good salary resources can be found at www.salary.com.

Question 26: How do you resolve disputes with co-workers? How do you handle conflicts in the workplace? Don't claim that you have never had a dispute with a co-worker. The interviewer will know you are lying, since getting along with co-workers is one of the hardest things in the world to do. The best answer to this question tells the interviewer about a dispute you had with a co-worker and how you resolved it so that they outcome was positive. Your answer should tell the interviewer how you resolved it on your own, and hopefully, that you and this other person are now friends, or at least are able to work together productively. Also, concentrate on resolving work-related issues rather than personal feuds. For example, telling the interviewer about your problems getting a co-worker to take your suggestions on a specific project seriously is a much better topic than telling the interviewer about your long-standing feud with a co-worker over a prime parking space in the company parking lot. And don't tell the interviewer that you resolved a dispute by tattling to the boss or trying to get the other person fired. Employers are sick of dealing with employee conflicts and they want a mature person who can resolve conflicts on her own without tattling or complaining to the boss.

Question 27: Who was your favorite boss and why? Who was your least favorite boss and why? These are two of the most difficult interview questions to answer unless you understand what the interviewer wants to hear, and if you realize that you can answer both questions with basically the same answer. Employers are looking for employees who are interested in contributing to the company, improving their job skills, and making a contribution. So, instead of insulting or demeaning your past bosses by telling the interviewer that he was always "hogging all the credit" or was "totally incompetent", state that you wished he had offered

you more feedback about your job performance, provided you with more job training, or challenged you more by providing you with more opportunities to show what you can do, etc. You can answer the question, "who was your favorite boss and why?" using the same answer: "John Doe was my favorite boss because he offered me lots of feedback about my job performance, taught me almost everything I know about marketing, and gave me plenty of opportunities to prove myself by giving me very challenging projects to complete." Never put down your past employers or blame them for anything in a demeaning or insulting way, since it makes you come across as petty.

Question 28: What could you have done to improve your relationship with your least favorite boss? Again, refrain from stating negativities about your former boss. Put a positive spin on your answer by telling the interviewer that, if you had it to do all over again, you would have requested more feedback from your boss regarding your performance and requested to be assigned more projects, etc.

Question 29: What book are you currently reading (or what was the last book you read)? What were the last three books that you read? The only correct answer is to offer the title of a nonfiction book, preferably one that is on a subject related to your career or business in general. For example, if you are a sales person, tell the reader you're currently in the middle of, "Selling for Dummies." Or, if that seems too much of a cliché, offer the title of a book on improving your time management, personality, efficiency, etc. Of course, we aren't suggesting that you lie and claim to be reading a book that you aren't really reading. As part of your job search, you will have to start reading one or two acceptable books so that you can intelligently discuss them if the subject is brought up during an interview. The interviewer might ask you how the book is helping you (what you have learned from it), so have an answer ready. Some interviewers will try to determine if you regularly read by asking you for titles of 3, 4 or 5 books you've read this year, so be ready.

Question 30: What is the last movie that you saw? Replying that you "don't have time to watch movies as you are completely devoted to your job" is not a good answer and will not win you any points, even if the interviewer was dumb enough to believe you. Interviewers are looking for well-rounded people who enjoy healthy activities, such as relaxation and entertainment, and will expect you to state the name of a movie. The movie title that you give in reply to this question should always be one that is popular with the general public, but uncontroversial, meaning that it doesn't have any negative or zealous political or religious overtones. Also, don't reveal the fact that you spend way too much time watching movies by stating you have seen a particular movie 15 times or that you spend too much time watching movies. For example, don't tell the interviewer that you are obsessed with Star Trek movies and regularly attend Star Trek conventions dressed up as Mr. Spock. A well-known uncontroversial movie, popular with the general public, and one that the interviewer is likely to have seen, is always a good choice.

Question 31: Are you considering offers from other employers? It is recommended that you NOT disclose any other offers you have received or discuss the companies with whom you have interviewed. Therefore, a good answer to this question is to state that you do not have offers from other companies. (Of course, if for some reason you believe you would have a better chance of getting the job offer if you disclosed this information, then do so.)

Question 32: When can you start? It is customary for most employees to give at least two weeks notice to their current employer. Those in management positions are expected to give longer notice. You will not earn points if you express disrespect toward your current employer by telling the interviewer that you plan to quit your present job without giving sufficient notice. He will assume you will show his company the same amount of disrespect. It is also a good idea to tell the interviewer you plan to start learning about your new position / employer on your off-hours (i.e., reading employee training manuals, etc.) Telling the interviewer you can't begin work for a few months because you want to take some time-off is not a good idea.

Question 33: Why did you decide to attend X College? Are you happy with your choice?

Always state that you are happy with your choice, even if you aren't. Do not state that "it was the only place that would accept you". Do not make negative statements about the school or your professors either. A good reason for choosing a particular school is because you liked the particular program they offered, or it is known for offering a good education in your particular major.

Question 34: What factors did you consider in choosing your major? A great answer is to state you have always wanted to become X since you were a child and picked your major accordingly. If you're changing career fields or applying for a position unrelated to your major, tell the interviewer you were interested in that subject at the time, but circumstances haven't taken you down a new path. Of course, you should put a positive spin on also stating that you have benefited tremendously by changing careers (learned new things, made you more hardworking, etc.).

Question 35: Have you ever fired anyone? The interviewer does not want you to express either too much indifference or too much sympathy for those you have had to fire. Tell the interviewer how you discussed the employee's shortcomings with him several times and tried to help him improve, but as a last resort, you had no choice but to fire the person.

Question 36: How do you motivate employees? There is not a simple way to motivate all people due to the vast number of personality types and situations in which people work. The best answer is one that tells the interviewer that each employee must be uniquely motivated. You should offer several examples of situations where employees were successfully motivated.

Question 37: What is your commitment to this job? Most people would respond with an answer avowing a deep commitment to the company and the job; however, a better answer would be to state that your commitment will grow as you get to know the company and the people in it.

Question 38: Aren't you overqualified for this job? Note that employers don't like to hire overqualified people because they won't stay around long. But since it is probably obvious that you're overqualified, admit that you are, but also emphasize the positive. For example, "I am overqualified in some ways. I have more experience that is required for this job, but you are looking for someone who is an expert in X, and that's me. However, that doesn't mean I'm completely overqualified. I feel that I have much to learn in the area of X, which is a big part of this job and I know it will keep me challenged"

Question 39: Are you opposed to doing a lot of routine work? Don't answer with, "Oh yes, I will enjoy filing eight hours a day, 40 hours a week, 50 weeks a year!" Instead, try to assure the interviewer you aren't going to go mad doing your boring job. For example, "I know this position requires a lot of routine work, but I don't expect to start at the top. I'm willing to start at the bottom and prove myself. Eventually, I will be assigned tasks that require more brain power."

Question 40: Do you have any questions? This question is usually the last one an interviewer will ask as it is a logical way to end the interview. Never go to an interview without preparing questions to ask beforehand. Avoid asking about salary, vacation time, employee benefits, etc. until you have asked a number of other questions that demonstrate your interest in working for the company. Good questions to ask the interviewer:

Why is this position available?

Is this a new position? How long has this position existed?

How many people have held this position in the last two years?

Who would be my supervisor? To whom would I report?

Whom will I supervise?

With whom will I be working most closely?

What do you like about working for this company?
What are the current plans for expansion or cutbacks?
What kind of turnover rate does the company have?
How financially sound is this company?
What projects and assignments will I be working on?
What happened to the person that held this position before? Was he promoted or fired?
What is this company's culture, (i.e., is it rigid and formal or relaxed and flexible?)
What are the current problems facing the company (or my department)?
What do you like the most about working for this company? The least?
What is the philosophy of the company?
What do you consider to be the company's strengths and weaknesses?
What are the company's long and short term goals?
Describe the work environment.
What attracted you (the interviewer) to this organization?
Why do you enjoy working for this company?
Describe the typical responsibilities of the position.
What are the most challenging aspects of the position?
Describe the opportunities for training and professional development.
Will I receive any formal training?
What is the company's promotional policy?
Are there opportunities for advancement within the organization?
When can I expect to hear from you?

You can also ask questions regarding information you found when conducting research about the company.