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# 23 Most Common Interview Questions and Answers in 2017

Written by Lydia Coffey
Updated May 8, 2017

Source: http://www.internships.com/student/resources/interview/prep/faq

Interviewing is one of the most stressful experiences in a student's career.

But with the right tools, anyone can ace an internship interview. Even someone who has never had a job before.

I’ve spent most of my career in human resources, and today am going to give you the inside scoop on how to answer 23 of the most common interview questions for internships.

### Interviewing Basics

You might be wondering:

Why does it matter how I answer questions? As long as the interviewer has my resume, they’ll know what my skills are. Right?

Wrong!

A resume is just the tip of the iceberg for hiring managers. From personal experience, I can tell you that **most hiring managers spend less than 10 seconds looking at your resume**.

Resumes say next to nothing about your work ethic, personality, personal motivations, etc. If you really want that internship, it’s in the interview that you will need to shine.

Let's take a look at a breakdown of the different types of interview questions the hiring manger will ask you:

1. [**How to Answer Interview Questions About Yourself**](http://www.internships.com/student/resources/interview/prep/faq#yourself)
2. [**How to Answer Interview Questions About Your Previous Experience**](http://www.internships.com/student/resources/interview/prep/faq#previousexperience)
3. [**How to Answer Interview Questions About the Company**](http://www.internships.com/student/resources/interview/prep/faq#company)
4. [**How to Answer Interview Questions About Others**](http://www.internships.com/student/resources/interview/prep/faq#others)
5. [**How to Answer Interview Questions About Your Work Style**](http://www.internships.com/student/resources/interview/prep/faq#workstyle)
6. [**Bonus Interview Questions**](http://www.internships.com/student/resources/interview/prep/faq#bonus)

>>>We have a seperate article that dives into the otherside of the interview equation: [**What are the best questions to ask in an interview?**](http://www.internships.com/student/resources/interview/prep/faq)

## How to Answer Interview Questions About Yourself

These are the questions that will give the interviewer a sense of who you are as a person. They will ask about the basics of your personality, and expect honesty and openness in your responses.

The most frequently asked “about you” interview questions are:

### 1. Tell me about yourself.

An “elevator pitch” is a 10- to 30-second summation of your life and accomplishments. For this question, that pitch comes in handy.

Interviewers don’t want to know your entire life story, but they do want to know what makes you who you are. If you’re proud of certain accomplishments, now is the time to highlight them.

I’m sure you’ve heard the advice to stay work specific, but don’t be fooled. Unless the job description says the company is searching for a workaholic, you want to let the interviewer know that you have a life outside of work.

You’re a well-rounded individual who can balance work and play. Share your hobbies and interests along with relevant personality traits. Openi­­­ng up in this way allows the interviewer to respond likewise.

Personal connections created here are key if you want to be memorable and land the internship.

#### [Read More](http://www.internships.com/student/resources/interview/prep/how-to-answer-tell-me-about-yourself)

### 2. What are your strengths?

This sample interview question should be answered as truthfully as possible, utilizing a Problem-Action-Result (PAR) story. This technique requires you to speak of a specific incident in which your trait was utilized. Your story should be under a minute, and hit all three points succinctly.

**Here’s an example of a PAR story:**

* Problem: One of my employees seemed visibly upset with me one workday.
* Action: I initiated a sit-down conversation with the employee and discussed any issues she was having.
* Result: We now communicate effectively with each other.

These are easy and memorable ways to share important experiences you’ve had, and back up what you’re telling the interviewer about yourself.

Try your best to stay away from cliché answers that the interviewer has likely heard a million times already. Think outside the box to experiences where your unique abilities helped a situation in ways another person’s could not.

### 3. What are your weaknesses?

Again: stay away from clichés. Perfectionism is not a weakness. The interviewer knows you’re human and wants an accurate picture of you.

As with our question about strengths, PAR stories can be utilized very effectively when responding to this question.

Be honest about your weaknesses, but come to the interview prepared to talk about how you’re improving yourself. Employers want to see that you’re taking action on those attributes you need to work on.

**Remember:**Practice makes perfect! Have a repertoire of PAR stories that you’ve rehearsed and can relate with ease. Whenever you have an important or unique experience, take a minute or two to write it down for future sharing.

#### [Read More](http://www.internships.com/student/resources/interview/prep/handling-the-greatest-weakness-question)

### 4. How would your boss/friends/co-workers describe you?

This can be a difficult question if you haven’t thought about its answer ahead of time. Ponder on feedback you’ve received recently, both positive and negative.

You want to be honest, and now is a time to show more of your personality: Do people laugh at your jokes? Do they turn to you for advice? Are you the life of the party, or a more laidback observer?

Because you won’t have your boss/friends/co-workers beside you while you answer this question, you do have some leeway, but use caution. If you’re hired, your new employer will want to see the sense of humor you talked about in your interview. Any lie or exaggeration you tell will always come to light.

### 5. Where do you see yourself in five years?

If the position you’re interviewing for aligns with your future goals, mention it! Your interviewer is most likely looking for someone with potential for long-term employment.

For any future interns reading this, remember that you broaden your horizons if you leave the company on good terms. Many people return to the company they interned with for their careers after gaining a bit more experience.

**Remember:** Be realistic about where you see yourself, but be sure to show that you’re ambitious. Unless you have legitimate plans to become President of the World by 30. Best to keep that one to yourself.

## How to Answer Interview Questions About Your Previous Experience

These are the questions that bring up past jobs, and can be difficult if you have limited or no work experience. Remember that it’s okay to be new to the workforce, but prepare yourself with an answer to each of these questions before the interview:

### 6. Why are you leaving your current job?

The key to success when answering this question is to stay positive about your previous employers.  The interviewer will understand if you’re an intern or new professional looking to gain experience, but they don’t want to hire someone who will speak ill of them in the future.

Even if you did have a negative experience with your last employer, state your answer in a way that makes it clear you’re excited for new opportunities.

For those who have no previous jobs: Mention that you’re new to the professional world, but are prepared to take on the challenges you expect to face.

### 7. What accomplishments are you most proud of?

There are a couple of points you’ll want to hit when answering this question:

First, set up the situation that you’ll be describing and include the task given to you (e.g., “In my last job, I was assigned the task of managing the schedule for 20 employees”). After this brief introduction, go into detail about your actions and their results (e.g., “I standardized the process and reduced turnover by 20%”).

This is called the [**Situation-Task-Action-Result (STAR) method**](http://www.internships.com/student/resources/interview/prep/the-star-method). Along with your PAR stories, be sure to practice a couple of these scenarios before the interview.

These methods will also be helpful when answering this next question:

### 8. Tell me about a difficult experience you’ve had while at work, and how you dealt with it.

If you haven’t had any difficult experiences at work, respond as such, but branch out to other areas of your life. For example, if you volunteer and had a challenging experience while doing that, talk about it.

Interviewers want to gauge how you react to difficult circumstances, so make sure you use the STAR method to share an experience of some sort with them. You want to have an answer for almost every question an interviewer throws your way, so think outside the box.

## How to Answer Interview Questions About the Company

At this point in an interview, you’re being tested on how well you know the company. Someone more qualified but who didn’t care enough to do some research will not be hired over someone with less experience who did look into the company.

**Pro tip:** This is one part of the interview where inexperienced applicants can stand apart from the crowd.

### 9. What do you know about our company?

This question is one where you don’t want to respond with an answer along the lines of, “Um, I don’t know.” The interviewer wants to see that you care about your potential employer.

Most companies that are worth working for don’t want to waste their time with people who are uninterested in the work they do. At the very least, research the company so you understand what you are getting yourself into.

Adding personal touches when answering this question can go a long way: something along the lines of, “I appreciate this company’s mission because…” or “I believe in these aims because…” will make you more memorable. You obviously understand what things are important to the company.

### 10. Why did you decide to apply for a position with us?

Never say to the person interviewing you that you’re just looking for something to pay the bills. As far as they’re concerned, you could pay the bills by flipping burgers at any fast food restaurant.

Even if your primary motive for applying for the job was to earn a paycheck, focus on other factors that inspired you to choose that job in particular. Include specific attributes of the company you picked up on while researching it, and highlight how you relate to them as a potential employee.

Interns, almost as a rule, don’t have large amounts of experience in the field they’re trying to break into. If nothing else, say that you applied for the position to gain experience in that specific field of work.

Regardless of how you decide to answer this question, prepare to answer the follow-up question as well:

### 11. Why do you consider this to be a good opportunity?

This question can be mutually beneficial if answered appropriately. Potential employers want to know what you see in them, and they want to know what you’re looking for more specifically.

Answer honestly, and be prepared to smooth out any details you’re unsure of. If you’ve heard that the company is great to their interns and teaches them while they work, mention as much and ask if that information is accurate.

Return to your [**weaknesses**](http://www.internships.com/student/resources/interview/prep/handling-the-greatest-weakness-question) or strengths. Highlight how the company could help change you and vice versa. One of your strengths may coincide with a new project the company is working on. You won’t know until you talk about it.

### 12. Why should we consider you?

This question is similar to the classic: “What makes you the best candidate?”

Draw on your strengths, and respond with attributes or experiences that make you unique. You should have studied the company’s profile prior to the interview, so use that knowledge to tailor your answer.

**Remember:**Highlight characteristics you have that would make you a great fit for the company culture in the particular position you applied for.

## How to Answer Interview Questions About Others

Questions in this category can be among the most informative for potential employers. In today’s world more than ever, interpersonal skills are becoming more and more important. If you don’t have any experience working with others, these interview questions might be the most difficult for you to respond to.

### 13. What kinds of people do you find most difficult to work with?

As with every question in an interview, you need to be honest with your answers. But you should also keep in mind that you don’t want to paint yourself in a negative way. There are a few things to remember when answering this type of question:

* Don’t say that you can never get along with a certain type of person. The company wants to know that you can interact professionally with anyone. Using absolutes like “never” or “always” implies that you’re not adaptable.
* Show that you’re a problem solver: Tell of a specific difficult instance you’ve had with another person and what you did to resolve the situation. Remember PAR stories and the STAR method.

### 14. Who was the worst coworker/classmate you have ever worked with?

When answering this question, be cautious:

The company you’re interviewing with doesn’t want to hire someone who is petty. Make it clear that while you did have problems with the coworker/classmate, you don’t hold a grudge. Even if there was no clear resolution, show that you did what you could for the situation and have learned from it.

### 15. What is one of the most difficult conflicts you’ve been able to resolve?

A word of caution:

Try to stay clear of personal stories with this question. Giving too many personal details will give the interviewer a sense that you can’t separate your personal and professional life.

Focus on experiences where you showcased leadership skills in professional settings. If you don’t have much work experience, it’s completely acceptable to respond with instances from school or social encounters.

### 16. How well do you work with other people?

If you love people, this question will be easy for you. But if you’re introverted or shy, an answer to this question may be slightly more difficult.

More likely than not, you’ll be required to work with other people in some sort of team setting. Describe past experiences you’ve had while working as part of a team and how you handled them. If you’re not a natural leader, mention that you enjoy taking on the role of supporter for most situations.

Be sure to make it clear that you’re willing to be either in a given situation, and drive for results regardless of your position in the social hierarchy.

## How to Answer Interview Questions About Your Work Style

Your answers to questions in this category are important because they should show the interviewer how you actually perform on the job. You’ll obviously want to paint yourself in a positive way, but just keep in mind that honesty is always key.

If you respond to these questions in ways you think the interviewer will want to hear, you’ll be doing both yourself and them a disservice.  Remember that there are no wrong answers to these questions, just responses which adhere more closely to what the interviewer is looking for.

### 17. Do you work better under pressure or with time to plan and organize?

Again, you should be as honest as possible during this question. Both parties should have a realistic view of the other’s expectations. If you hate stress, but the job you’re interviewing for is extremely fast-paced, neither party will be happy in the long run.

### 18. Describe how you allocate your time and set your priorities in a typical day.

A response about schoolwork is completely relevant in response to this question. It’s safe to say that the person interviewing you has been through some form of higher education, and can understand the stresses of college life.

Describe how you use your time and determine which tasks receive priority. Be sure to show that your method is universal and could be applied to a workplace setting as well.

### 19. What are you looking for in your ideal position?

**Hint:** Tailor your answer here to the job or internship you’re interviewing for.

Responding with something that follows the lines of the job description is a good idea. But remember: Interviewers are intelligent people. If they realize you’re directly quoting the job description, then it might lower their opinion of your answer.

### 20. What is more important—completing a job on time, or doing it right?

This question can vary based on the industry you’re interviewing in. Focus on the priorities within the job. Those that are time sensitive will expect you to complete the job on time over all else, while others understand sacrificing punctuality for quality.

Be sure to mention that you do your best to ensure all your tasks are completed promptly and correctly. This lets the interviewer know that you rarely have to choose between completing a job on time or doing it right.

### 21. What kinds of decisions are most difficult for you?

There are a multitude of responses to this question, including: decisions involving others, decisions with a large impact, or decisions which involve large sums of money.

It’s acceptable to say that you’re more cautious with any difficult decision, but you want to show the interviewer you’re willing to make difficult decisions (and do so logically). Nobody likes to hold another person’s hand in the workplace, so the person they will hire is someone who they can trust in tough situations.

## Bonus Interview Questions

### 22. How many jelly beans can fit in an 8-inch x 10-inch x 12-inch container?

Questions like this are given to candidates as intentional curve balls. They are the most asked interview questions for STEM related positions. Most of the time, you won’t be expected to give an accurate answer. The interviewer mainly wants to see how you problem solve and think through unique situations.

These are common among jobs that require creative thinking, so be prepared to show your brain power. If you’re blindsided by one of these questions, do your best to stay calm and formulate a best-guess answer instead of just saying, “I don’t know.”

### 23. Do you have any children at home?

Any question that relates to your family, race, religion, gender, or age are **illegal**. The interviewer should know not to ask these questions, but if you get them, you should know how to respond.

You’re not required to answer, and can steer the conversation in a different direction: “I’m not comfortable discussing that topic, but I do have a question about your management structure. Can we discuss that further?”

If they pressure you for an answer, then that company is not somewhere you want to work. If they can’t be honest in the interview process, there are probably more things they handle illegally as well!

**Final Thoughts**

Interviews are important. The above questions are the most popular interview questions for 2017 that will be asked by hiring managers. If you want to truly stand out from the crowd and get that job or internship, remember to follow this basic advice: Be honest and think through your answers before you get to the interview.

Be confident and remember: You’ve got this!

# Sample Internship Interview Questions

## **How to Prepare for an Internship Interview**

Source: <https://www.thebalance.com/sample-internship-interview-questions-1986917>

By [Penny Loretto](https://www.thebalance.com/penny-loretto-1986273)

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As you prepare for your [internship interview](https://www.thebalance.com/using-linkedin-to-search-for-internships-1986491), be ready to address your key skills and accomplishments that you have listed on your [resume](https://www.thebalance.com/how-to-create-a-great-resume-1987061). You will want to not only know your resume well but be able to speak about it and tell stories that will illustrate your strengths and let the organization know what you have to offer them as a potential new employee (which could very well happen if you excel at your internship).

In an interview, you will want to start and end strong. It only takes 60 seconds to make a [positive first impression](https://www.thebalance.com/questions-to-ask-an-employer-during-an-interview-1986907) so starting off strong is crucial to having a successful interview. At the end of an interview, you want to make yourself a memorable candidate by also leaving on a strong note. In these two instances, it’s important to take the lead with a strong handshake, a smile, and thank the interviewer for taking the time to meet with you.

I’ve listed some of the standard interview questions that are generally asked below along with more specific and behavioral questions as well.

General Interview Questions

1. Tell me a little bit about yourself.
2. What are your strengths and weaknesses?
3. What accomplishments are you most proud of?
4. Do you work better under pressure or with time to plan and organize?
5. Why are you interested in this internship?
6. Why should we consider you for this internship?
7. What do you know about this industry/company?
8. How would your faculty/friends/co-workers describe you?
9. What three words would you choose to best describe yourself?
10. Why did you choose your major?

[Behavioral Interview Questions](https://www.thebalance.com/behavioral-job-interviews-2058575)

1. Give an example of how you’ve dealt with a conflict with another person.
2. Tell me a story either personal or professional that paints a picture of you.
3. Describe a situation where your judgment proved to be an invaluable contribution to a team.
4. How do you handle meeting tight deadlines?
5. Give an example of how you set goals and achieve them.
6. What do you do when your schedule is interrupted? Give an example of how you handle this.
7. Give an example of how you work on a team.
8. Can you remember a time when you handled a difficult situation with another student or co-worker? What did you do?
9. Share an example of how you’ve been able to motivate team members.
10. Describe how you would handle a difficult relationship that you felt was holding you back on the job.

When interviewing for an internship, candidates should not only be prepared to answer questions similar to those above; but will also want to be prepared for questions that are [less conventional](https://www.thebalance.com/unusual-job-interview-questions-help-select-the-best-1918487) than those that are normally asked.

For example, interviewers sometimes will ask questions where the answer doesn’t really matter. In these types of questions, the interviewer is looking to see the interviewee thought process rather than a specific answer. For example, “*how many chocolate chip cookies would it take to go from the Empire State Building to Central Park*?” Or, “*if you were producing a movie who would be your main actors and what roles would they play*?” As you’ve probably figured out there is no right answer to either of these questions so there’s no sense in getting flustered if you “think” you’ve answered these questions incorrectly.

The key is to remain composed and confident and quickly move on to the next question.

Tricky interview questions may be asked to see how much you know about the company culture as well as what are your [personal values](https://www.thebalance.com/top-work-values-employers-look-for-1986763)? Although you don’t want to change who you are when answering interview questions, you will want to do due diligence when researching the company before your interview and be thoughtful to your answers when answering questions that portray your personal value system, i.e., favorite musical artist, favorite movie, favorite TV show, or even favorite video game or social networking site. The answers you provide to these questions could help the interviewer decide if you are a good fit for the company.

# 12 Tricky Interview Questions For Interns

Source: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/jacquelynsmith/2013/02/22/12-tricky-interview-questions-for-interns/#6852b8065d18>

Internship seekers should prepare for common interview questions like “What are your strengths,” or “What are your weaknesses,” but they can also expect less conventional queries.

UBS is asking candidates why manholes are round, and Google wants to know how many barbers there are in Delhi. And it gets weirder. Some intern applicants are asked what song they’d sing on American Idol, while others were challenged to name five things you could use a gallon of water and a Styrofoam cup for that don't involve holding water.

[Glassdoor.com](http://www.glassdoor.com/index.htm), the online jobs and career community where people share information about their workplaces, gathered some of the most unconventional questions that intern candidates were asked during interviews. Luckily for applicants, employers aren’t looking for the most brilliant answers. They are trying to get a sense of would-be interns’ thought processes and how they perform under pressure.

[**In Photos: 12 Tricky Interview Questions For Interns**](http://www.forbes.com/pictures/efkk45efkmk/how-many-new-cars-on-average-are-bought-in-the-us-each-year#gallerycontent)

“I sometimes ask candidates to tell a clean joke,” says [Internships.com](http://www.internships.com/) CEO Robin Richards. “Seven out of ten can’t recall a clean joke, and others have a tough time with delivery. I like to see that they can think on their feet.” He says he focuses 100% on the interviewee’s reaction, rather than on the actual joke.

Richards adds that the employer wants to see how the candidate will respond to high-pressure situations. “Oddball questions are asked to see who people are from a personal perspective and how they deal with the unexpected."

It’s difficult to prepare for oddball questions, but the most important thing to do is stay calm throughout the interview. “Relax,” Richards says. “Internship candidates need to understand that they have power, too.”

He says researching the company culture can help when you’re faced with an oddball question.

“I ask candidates, ‘Who is the most important person to you?’ and if they say Madonna, I’ll get an idea of their values. Internships.com is a family-oriented company, so we’re looking for candidates who value family.”

That doesn’t mean you should give the employer the answer you think they want to hear. It’s still important to be yourself--and candidates need to understand that interviews are a two-way street, Richards says. “It’s an opportunity for you to see if you’re a good fit at the company,” he says.

The bottom line is that there is no way to anticipate a question like, “How many cars did BMW sell last year?” But remember to do your homework, stay relaxed, and show the employer you can think on your feet.

Not all questions interns are asked during interviews are so out of the ordinary. Glassdoor also compiled a list of the most common questions.  There’s no excuse for choking on these.

Here are ten common interview questions for internship candidates:

1. Why do you want to intern here?

2. Which classes do you like the most and least?

3. What do you expect this position to be like?

4. Why should we hire you?

5. What’s your goal with this internship?

6. Tell me about some of your school involvements and how they relate to this job.

7. What are your salary expectations?

8. What are your plans after graduation?

9. Why did you pick your school/major/minor?

10. What do you know about this specific industry and what are some trends that occurred in the past few years?

**Click**[**here**](http://www.forbes.com/pictures/efkk45efkmk/how-many-new-cars-on-average-are-bought-in-the-us-each-year#gallerycontent)**for the full list of the trickiest questions interns were asked during interviews**