

Acing the Interview – Four Tough Interview Questions and Answers

You know a little bit about what to expect in an interview, but you're not sure the answers you've prepared are the **right** answers. Well, here are a few examples of tough interview questions, how to answer them, and how to **not** answer them.

Question 1: What are your goals?

Flawed Answer:

! “I am seeking a job where I can utilize my skills to the best of my ability.”

This vague answer doesn't tell the interviewer anything about what you really want to accomplish. How can the interviewer know if the job fits your goals when you haven't even acknowledged you have any real goals?

Better Answer:

! “I like to think of goals in the long-term and the short-term. My short-term goal is to find a company where I can use my *marketing skills/laboratory experience/writing skills* and contribute to the success of the company. In the long-term, I want to grow and take on more responsibility within the company.”

Question 2: You don't seem to have any experience in this field.

Flawed Answer:

! “No, I don't, really.”

Never admit you don't have any experience; the interviewer will feel like you are wasting her time. However, you don't want to lie about your experience, either.

Better Answer:

! “My *experience* is with a similar system. In fact, I learned how to use the computer programs I am currently using within two weeks. New things come to me quickly. I can learn your system in record time.”

Question 3: What is your greatest weakness?

Flawed Answer:

“My weakness is memory. I have to put post-it notes on everything to remind myself what I need to do.”

The interviewer will imagine all the projects that will sit unfinished and cost his company money because of your poor memory.

Better Answer:

“I usually have a wonderful memory for details, but sometimes when I am in the middle of several tasks, I have to stop and organize myself and prioritize what has to be done. I make lists and spreadsheets so I don't miss anything. This really helps me work efficiently.”

Question 4: What is your salary expectation?

Flawed Answer:

“I make \$500 a week waiting tables, and now I'm a college graduate, so I want to make \$40,000 a year.”

The candidate should never be the first one to bring up a dollar amount. Don't mention money until the interviewer brings it up.

Better Answer:

“When the time comes to talk money, I am sure we can come up with a mutually beneficial amount. Could you tell me the range budgeted for the position?”