25 DIFFICULT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
ANSWER KEY

1. Tell me about yourself.

   Be on guard against interviewers who give you free rein. Don't spend too much time answering one particular question (1 1/2 to 2 minutes a question should suffice). Be careful not to ramble. Relate your answer to the job opening. You can also ask what more or what additional information would they like to know more about. The interviewer can ask specific questions after your initial response.

2. What do you know about our organization?

   Discuss the products and services offered by the company and any other details you have learned during your preparation for the interview.

3. Why should I hire you?

   Discuss your maturity, problem solving ability, ability to relate to others, and link your responses to the responsibilities of the job for which you are interviewing and the needs of the company. Make sure you let them know that you meet their qualifications and are ready to work with them.

4. How long would it take for you to make a meaningful contribution to our firm?

   It usually takes 3 to 6 months to understand the expectations of the boss, the organization structure and culture, and your peers. Keep this fact in mind when answering this question. However, if you have all the pertinent experience and skills for the job, you may start making meaningful contributions sooner. Be realistic.

5. How long would you stay with us?

   As long as I am challenged, have an opportunity to grow and am treated fairly.

6. Why are you leaving your present job?

   Do not say anything negative about your former employer. Do not indicate that your former employer has a negative opinion of you. You can answer that you are not actively looking for a job but that this opportunity caught your eye so you decided to get more information. You can also indicate that you believe this opportunity will offer you a better potential for career growth than your current position.

7. Describe what you feel would be an ideal working environment.

   An environment where you are challenged, have an opportunity to grow as a person and as a member, and are treated fairly.

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ANSWER KEY (continued)

8. What do your co-workers think of you?

   Describe your interaction with peers and subordinates. You should have a co-worker as part of your reference list. You can also indicate that they consider you a hard worker, friendly, reliable, etc.

9. Please describe a situation where your work was criticized.

   Pick a situation and describe it very briefly. Then explain how you corrected and learned from the situation with your boss's guidance.

10. If I spoke with your previous boss, what would he/she say are your greatest strengths and weaknesses?

    Describe a few of your strengths. Try to identify a weakness that can be turned into a positive. For example, "When assigned a new task, I often ask a lot of questions. However, I want to be sure that I perform the task correctly the first time, not learn from my mistakes."

11. How well do you perform under pressure or with tight deadlines?

    Give a specific example where you had to produce under a tight deadline and how well the project turned out.

12. If you had your choice of jobs and companies, where would you work?

    You are interviewing with this company because you feel that the job and company are a good match for your skills and career objectives and their needs.

13. Why aren't you earning more money at your age?

    Be acquainted with the differences in pay scales between industries and companies within an industry. Also, you can say that salary is not the only thing that is important to you when considering a job. The nature of the work, the work environment, the benefits and potential growth within the company and industry are also important. Another possible response (depending upon your work experience) could be "I tend to stay with good companies (do not job hop) so my raises are within a percentage range of my salary, which has limited my salary growth."

14. What do you feel this position should pay?

    Know what similar jobs in the industry are paying before going on the interview. This information is available from industry resources. You can also anonymously call companies and ask for salary ranges of similar jobs.

25 DIFFICULT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
ANSWER KEY (continued)

15. What kind of salary are you worth?

    Similar to previous question. Know the compensation being paid in your industry prior to going on an interview.

16. Do you have any objections to taking psychological tests?

    Many companies give psychological tests. Be open to taking these tests.

17. Why do you want to work for us?

    Explain that the job, work environment and career opportunities offered by this company fit into your career objectives.

18. What other types of jobs and companies are you considering?

    Do not name any specific companies. Explain that you are looking at firms that are offering a challenging position with career growth potential. That is why you are interviewing for this position.

19. What was the last book you read? What was the last movie you watched?

    Do not pick a controversial book or movie, even if that was the last book you read or movie you saw.

20. Give me an example of your creativity.

    Give a specific example of your creativity. If possible, give an example that relates to the position for which you are interviewing.

21. What are your goals? What position do you expect to have in two years?

    These questions are really: How do your goals relate to this job, and do your long-term goals include this company? Answer the questions they really mean, not the ones they asked.

22. What are your strengths?

    Give strengths that can be utilized in the job you are interviewing for.

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ANSWER KEY (continued)

23. What are your weaknesses?

    Use an example that can be turned into a positive or a weakness that helps you screen for the job. For example, if you do not want to travel you can say a weakness is that you have a lifestyle that limits how much you can travel at work. Here, this will only be perceived as a weakness if the job will involve travel and that is a job you do not want anyway.

24. How did you do in school?

    Summarize as favorably and straightforward as you can.

25. How do you feel about minority groups? Would you object to working for a woman?

    You should have no objections. If you had a manager who was a minority or woman you can mention that you have worked for minority/women in the past and the experience was very positive. However, there is no need to prove you have minority or woman friends.