

20 Common Interview Questions

A reference guide with guidance on how to answer each question confidently.

ABOUT YOU

Q: Tell me about yourself.

How to answer: Start with your qualification and background, then highlight 2–3 key skills relevant to the role. End with why you're excited about this specific opportunity. Keep it to 90 seconds.

Q: What are your strengths?

How to answer: Name 3 strengths that are relevant to the job. Give a brief example for each. Avoid generic answers like 'I'm a hard worker' — be specific.

Q: What is your greatest weakness?

How to answer: Choose a genuine weakness that is not critical to the role. Show you are actively working to improve it. Example: 'I used to struggle with delegating tasks, so I've been practising...'

Q: Where do you see yourself in 5 years?

How to answer: Show ambition but keep it realistic and aligned with the company. Focus on growth within the industry. Avoid mentioning you plan to start your own business.

MOTIVATION & FIT

Q: Why do you want to work here?

How to answer: Mention something specific about the company — its values, culture, projects, or reputation. Avoid saying 'for the salary' or being too vague.

Q: Why should we hire you?

How to answer: Summarise your top 3 qualifications and how they match the job description. Be confident and direct — this is your 30-second pitch.

Q: What do you know about our company?

How to answer: Research the company before the interview. Mention their industry, key services/products, recent news, and any values that align with yours.

Q: What motivates you?

How to answer: Be honest and specific. Connect your answer to the role — e.g. 'I'm motivated by solving complex problems' or 'by helping people achieve their goals'.

EXPERIENCE & SKILLS

Q: Describe a challenge you faced and how you overcame it.

How to answer: Use the STAR method. Choose a professional or academic challenge. Focus on your actions and what you learned.

Q: Give an example of working in a team.

How to answer: Describe your specific role in the team, how you collaborated, and the outcome. Highlight communication and problem-solving.

Q: Tell me about a time you showed leadership.

How to answer: You don't need a formal leadership title. Leading a project, mentoring a peer, or taking initiative counts.

Q: Describe a time you made a mistake. What did you do?

How to answer: Be honest. Show accountability, what you did to fix it, and what you learned. Don't deflect blame.

Q: How do you manage your time and prioritise tasks?

How to answer: Mention a specific tool or method (to-do lists, calendars). Give an example of managing competing deadlines.

Q: Give an example of going above and beyond.

How to answer: Choose a real example that shows initiative. Quantify the impact where possible.

SITUATIONAL QUESTIONS

Q: How would you handle a conflict with a colleague?

How to answer: Stay calm and professional. Focus on communication — addressing the issue directly and privately before escalating.

Q: What would you do if you disagreed with your manager?

How to answer: Respect the hierarchy but show you can express your view professionally. Choose the right time and place to raise concerns respectfully.

Q: How do you handle pressure and tight deadlines?

How to answer: Give a specific example. Show you stay focused, communicate proactively, and deliver quality work even under pressure.

CLOSING QUESTIONS

Q: Do you have any questions for us?

How to answer: Always ask at least 2 questions. Good options: 'What does success look like in this role in the first 90 days?' or 'How would you describe the team culture?'

Q: When are you available to start?

How to answer: Be honest. If you have a notice period, state it clearly. If you're available immediately, say so.

Q: What is your salary expectation?

How to answer: Research the market rate for the role in South Africa. Give a confident range rather than a specific number. It's okay to ask about the budget first.