



More Interview Questions Decoded

The hidden meanings behind more common interview questions.

Although many interview questions may seem straightforward, even simple, in reality they can be quite complex. Remember, their purpose is to weed out everyone but the best candidate for the job. Your task then is to decipher their *real* meaning, answer like a champ, and stay in the game. Here are more frequently asked (and deceptively simple) interview questions to help you prepare.

Q: How did you hear about the position?

Translation: How connected are you to our organization?

What they're looking for: If you were referred by someone at the organization. If you identify with the industry at large. For example, did you hear about the company while at an industry-focused networking event or trade show, or by reading a trade publication?

How to answer: Use this opportunity to express your interest and, with your contact's permission, name-drop your connection. If you found out about the company through a job posting or have always wanted to work for them, convey what appealed most to you about the position as well as your enthusiasm for the role.

Q: What are your greatest strengths?

Translation: Do you have the right skills for us?

What they're looking for: If your skills and qualities align with those essential to the position. How you see yourself and your level of self-awareness.

How to answer: Be accurate, honest, and brag a little (but not too much). Only provide examples of strengths that are relevant to the job and examples of how you have used those assets at work.

Q: Tell me about a challenge you've faced and how you overcame it.

Translation: How do you handle setbacks?

What they're looking for: How you handle conflict and professional challenges. Do you take responsibility and accountability for your actions?

How to answer: Master this question. Choose 1-2 difficulties you've faced. Identify specific actions you took to resolve each issue and explain what each resolution entailed. Keep your response as positive as possible and don't speak poorly of any former co-workers or managers.

Q: Where do you see yourself in five years?

Translation: Are you looking to make a long-term commitment to this company?

What they're looking for: Are you a good investment? What is your grasp of the role and expectations for advancement? Are you dependable? What are your career goals and do you have the right attitude to succeed?

How to answer: Be enthusiastic. Tell the company that you have researched them; are excited about what they do; have strengths that align with their long-term goals; and look forward to contributing for five years or beyond.

Q: Are you interviewing anywhere else?

Translation: How interested are you in this position? How marketable are you?

What they're looking for: If you're really focused on the position and their firm. Are you keen on a specific industry or role or looking to take any job? Are you a "hot commodity," *i.e.*, do they need to move quickly on making you a job offer?

How to answer: Whether you reply that you have interviews at several other companies in the same industry or are still exploring your options, be sure to emphasize what appeals to you most about the specific role and company that you are interviewing for *at that moment*, and how you can best offer your skills. All interviews are opportunities to sell yourself, so you want to impress your interviewer, not alienate them.



i n a nutshell:

Understand what employers are *really* asking and you can:

- **Demonstrate your industry knowledge and commitment**
- **Highlight organization-relevant experience and transferable skills**
- **Validate how your credentials and interests align with the organization's goals and bottom line**
- **Substantiate your marketability as a candidate**
- **Assure the recruiter that you are a good investment**

Sometimes there is no clear right or wrong answer. However, once you know the interviewer's agenda, you can provide the best answer.