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JOB INTERVIEW FLASHCARDS

**31 COMMON, UNEXPECTED,
& TOUGH QUESTIONS
YOU MUST PREPARE TO
ANSWER**

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Ace that Interview

If any two words can fill us with dread, they are: **job interview**. But when you're hunting for your next career opportunity, they're an inevitable part of the process. And with each one comes another onslaught of **interview questions**.

Some of them you'll hear often—Why are you looking for a new job? What's your biggest strength and your biggest weakness? But others will pop up **when you least expect them**—What's your spirit animal and why?

That's why we've pooled resources to create a **comprehensive list** of the interview questions you should know by heart. We asked **recruiters from big companies**, our **editorial team**, and a few of Career Contessa's **mentors** to tell us their favorites (and their least favorites, too).

Print out these flashcards and weave them into your interview preparation. Each card includes **helpful hints** from the experts on how you should frame your answers, and there's even **room to jot down your talking points** on the back.

Because we don't want you to succeed at just this interview—we want you to **own every interview you do...ever**. Aim high, right?



PRINTING INSTRUCTIONS

Print each page double-sided (choose short-edge binding if your printer includes this option) and cut with scissors or a paper cutter along the dotted line.

If printing double-sided gives you a headache, go old school with scissors and glue.

1

Tell me about yourself.

2

Why do you want to work here?
Or, why are you interested in this job?

3

Why should we hire you?

4

What would you do in your first 30, 60, and 90 days?

Q2 HINT

Research, research, research. And bring it back to how you can benefit them.

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Q1 HINT

Don't get overly detailed. This should be your elevator pitch.

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Q4 HINT

In most cases, the first 30 days should be about learning and watching. Maybe you'd plan to sit down with people on your team to see what they do day-to-day or set meetings with key stakeholders to hear their goals for the company. You want to know what matters before you suggest changes.

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Q3 HINT

Focus on your passion or love for the company, product, and industry.

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5

What's your greatest personal achievement?

6

What's your greatest strength?
What about your biggest weakness?

7

Why are you looking for a new job?

8

Where do you see yourself in [x] years?
What's your [x]-year plan?

Q6 HINT

Have a real weakness (but not one that's so damaging that it'll hurt your chances of being hired), and always end by explaining how you're working to improve or how it might actually be an asset. Maybe your weakness is that you "have trouble coming to a decision," but that's only because you "tend toward being thorough and like to have all the facts first." Get it?

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Q5 HINT

Don't be afraid to brag here. Take proper credit for your work. Back it up with examples.

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Q8 HINT

Make sure it's somewhere that's in line with the job you're applying for, i.e. keep your side hustles or entrepreneurial dreams to yourself.

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Q7 HINT

Don't say anything negative about your old company. Focus the conversation on why you want *this* job, the one you're interviewing for.

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9

What are your
long-term
career goals?

10

What interests
you about
our industry?

11

How do you
evaluate success?

12

Tell me about a time
you failed or
made a mistake.
How did
you recover?

Q10 HINT

Make sure to do your research. Have facts/data/examples.

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Q9 HINT

It's OK to not be super-specific. "Honestly, I'm really excited about learning about this topic at your company. As long as I'm learning, I feel fulfilled."

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Q12 HINT

Failure is a good thing if it means you learned something. So don't be shy.

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Q11 HINT

Clarify if they mean personal success or your team's success. Be prepared to answer both versions.

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13

What gets you out of bed every day?

14

Do you have any questions for me?

15

What are your salary expectations?

16

What do you do in your free time?

Q14 HINT

Customize this to each interview, but you should aim for a minimum of three questions here. And “What’s the timeline for this interview?” doesn’t count.

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Q13 HINT

Make it unique. Don’t say: “To make money.”
Try something altruistic or self-aware:
“The feeling that I’m making a positive impact.”

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Q16 HINT

Use anything that shows that your experience is relevant to this job and company, including your side hustle, volunteer work, professional organizations, etc.

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Q15 HINT

You need to have an answer to this, and it should be honest.
Make sure to research the industry standards. This doesn’t have to be a set number, feel free to give them a range.

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17

What are you currently reading? What publications do you read?

18

Walk me through your resume.

19

What's your work style? How do you manage your time?

20

Tell me about a time you couldn't complete a project on time. How did you deal with it?

Q18 HINT

Should take two minutes or less.

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Q17 HINT

They're expecting you to tell them something that's somewhat relevant to the job you're applying for. It should show you're interested and dedicated.

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Q20 HINT

It happens to all of us, so don't pretend it doesn't. Preferably use an example in which the missed deadline was clearly out of your control.

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Q19 HINT

Use specific examples. You should be honest because it benefits both of you if your styles mesh well.

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21

Tell us about a time you took initiative on a project.

22

(IF APPLICABLE)

Why were you let go/fired? Why are there gaps on your resume?

23

What type of work environment do you prefer?

24

Tell us about a time you disagreed with a decision made at work. How did you handle it?

Q22 HINT

Keep it short and positive (if you can).

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Q21 HINT

You should take ownership but still make sure to give proper credit to the rest of your team.

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Q24 HINT

You can talk about the situation or decision, but avoid saying anything negative about the person who made the decision.

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Q23 HINT

Research their company culture and environment beforehand. Psst: if you don't want to work in that kind of space, you shouldn't be interviewing there.

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25

How do you respond to critical feedback?

26

How do you deal with pressure or stressful situations?

27

Tell me about a time you overcame a challenge without sacrificing your values.

28

What do you think we could do better or differently?

Q26 HINT

Specifically, how do you decompress? Write it down?
Take a lap around the block? Self-care?

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Q25 HINT

Make sure to mention what you DO with that feedback, too.

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Q28 HINT

Use the sandwich method. First start with the things they're
doing well, then have an example ready that shows
you did research, then end with one more compliment.

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Q27 HINT

If you wouldn't talk about it (politics, religion, etc.) at a
holiday gathering, don't bring it up.

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29

How do you balance company interests with customer needs when making decisions?

30

On your very best day of work—the day that you totally love your job—what are you doing?

31

Tell me about a time when a lack of resources led you to a creative solution?

32

(INSERT YOUR QUESTION HERE)

Q30 HINT

Make sure it aligns with the company you're applying to.

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Q29 HINT

Make it clear that you pay close attention to both at all times.

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Q31 HINT

Everyone likes someone who's frugal.

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33

(INSERT YOUR QUESTION HERE)

34

(INSERT YOUR QUESTION HERE)

35

(INSERT YOUR QUESTION HERE)

36

(INSERT YOUR QUESTION HERE)

