

Acing the Interview

Step 3: Ask the Right Questions

The meat and potatoes of any interview is answering questions. In Chapters Twenty-Four to Twenty-Six I go more in-depth about how to answer questions effectively, but the five steps I highlight in these chapters cover the other parts of the interview that are commonly overlooked.

At the end of an interview, you'll be asked if you have any questions. Take the opportunity to ask thoughtful, win-win questions that show preparation and interest. Win-win questions are ones that make the interviewer feel good and help them perceive you positively. Lose-lose questions cast you in a negative light and make the interviewer feel uncomfortable, possibly even defensive. Avoid those completely!

**Asking strong questions will set you apart
from other candidates.**

My son's friend made the mistake of asking lose-lose questions and destroyed multiple job prospects as a result. For example, he asked, "Why

Acing the Interview

has your stock price been going down?” and “I read that your CEO had some personal issues. Can you tell me about that?” These are legitimate concerns, but the time to ask about them is not during a first interview. This young man could have asked these questions in an appropriate and professional manner after receiving an offer. Asking them from the outset made him appear disinterested and put the interviewer in an uncomfortable position. He went on nine interviews with zero offers, even though he had a very strong resume and credentials. Once we planned win-win questions instead, he got the next job he interviewed for!

It is completely appropriate to bring questions you wrote down ahead of time to your interview; share with the interviewer that in preparation you wrote a few questions down, and then take out your notes and choose four to six to ask. What are some strong win-win questions? See below.

1. How will you measure success in this role?
2. If I accomplish all the goals set forth for me, what would a career path here look like?
3. What would I have to accomplish to be considered an overachiever?
4. Can you outline the onboarding process?
5. What could keep me from being successful in this role?
6. What do you like best about working for the company?
7. Is there anything that I can be doing now from a research or reading perspective that might allow me to add value right away?
8. What goals would you have for me in the first thirty days? Ninety? The first year?
9. How would you describe the company culture?
10. A year from now, what will I have had to accomplish for you to feel I was one of the best hires you’ve made?

I put the questions I feel are strongest first on this list. They will give you insight into the company and more importantly showcase your positive qualities. I encourage you to rephrase the questions in a way

that feels comfortable and natural to you. Asking strong questions will set you apart from other candidates, and you always want to take advantage of the opportunity to ask them.

COURTNEY COMMENT

When I interviewed for my first teaching job, I asked a few of these questions (specifically numbers seven and ten), and the interviewers were blown away. They even told me that they had never been asked such thoughtful questions before, and they really appreciated them.

I believe these questions are one reason I stood out as a candidate because they allowed me to appear personal, prepared, and professional.

Be ready to follow through on the answers, though. When I asked what I could be doing over the summer so that I would have a quick start come September, I was given book lists and resources. That was a busy summer!