

11 tips for perfect job interview questions



A job interview is not supposed to be one-sided. In order to portray yourself successfully during an interview, you have to ask the important questions and show you've done your research into the company. However, you have to make sure that the questions you ask aren't bland or give off the wrong impression.

John VanderSande, a consultant at Waltham staffing firm Winter, Wyman, provides the following advice as to what questions to ask - and what to avoid - during a job interview.

1. Don't ask about salary and benefits right away

It's important to sound more interested in the the company itself and less in the position and its benefits during the first round of interviews "Diving right in to questions about salary, benefits, flexible schedules, work-from-home, vacation policy, maternity policy etc. can be off-putting and eliminate you from consideration immediately," said VanderSande.

While these things are important to ask, as a candidate, you should wait until there is a mutual interest or the company brings it up first.

2. No questions about job security

You deserve to know about the stability of the future company you will be working for but there is no need to inquire right away. However, if you feel the need to really question the company's stability, "maybe you shouldn't be talking to them at all," VanderSande said.

3. Focus on your current role

Many people get into certain businesses looking for a way to climb up the company hierarchy. However, ask questions based solely on the position you are interviewing for and not about future. "The hiring manager may think you're not really interested in the role you are applying for," VanderSande said. "Ambition is good, be careful not to come across as looking for the next great thing.

4. Avoid generic questions

One or two "generic" questions – such as "How many employees do you have?" or any questions about the history of the company – are OK during an interview, but you have to make sure to follow up with something more thought-provoking. These kind of bland questions can mostly be answered with a little research, and asking them shows that you didn't prepare to the best of your ability.

5. Ask thought provoking and open-ended questions

Ask questions that show you did your research. Lead in by saying something like "I read this article that said that" to show that you put thought into them. Also make sure the questions you ask are open-ended because you will not only get the information you need but your effort will also not go unnoticed.

VanderSande suggests asking questions such as: "How do you plan on handling the hiring that will need to take place?" and "How does the organization plan on improving the product to handle the added demand?"

6. Focus on the interviewer

Much of the interview will be focusing on your experience and tentative plans for the company, but it pays to become the interviewer too. Do research into who is interviewing you and ask them questions that target their past experience and are relevant to the role and the company. This will show that you've done your homework and will give you more information about the company.

One question that VanderSande recommends is: "I notice that you were at XYZ Company before coming to ABC - why did you decide to come to ABC and what do you enjoy most about the work here?"

7. Research the competition

It pays to research the company's competitors and then inquire about them during the interview, according to VanderSande. Ask about what sets this company apart from their competitor and how their products or services compete. "Consider your audience but don't be afraid to ask some tough questions," said VanderSande.

8. Question how a company works

Ask questions about the company's internal processes in order to get a feel as to how the company functions and to see how you may possibly fit. You can ask questions about the flow of information between teams and how they interact and, depending on the company, what products and services are most requested by customers.

9. Question how the company will accommodate growth

You can ask questions, depending on the size of the company of course, about how that particular company will work toward growing and accommodating a larger clientele. Asking these questions show you are doing your research but also will give you a good idea about the company's goals and if it has its act together.

VanderSande recommends a question like: "I understand that you are currently getting 5,000 unique visitors per month and your goal is to double that user base. Is there a plan in place to get to that scale?"

10. Ask about your potential role

You are the one who will have to perform the duties required by the position, so it pays to know the details of it. Questions such as: "What would I be working on during the first three to six months in this role?" and "What is life like day-to-day?" can show exactly what to expect and help you to make a better decision when choosing a job.

11. Prepare in advance

Make sure to prepare a few insightful questions beforehand but don't take extensive notes during the interview. Simply refer to them as the hiring manager asks you questions.

"Let the interviewer control the flow of the interview," VanderSande recommends. "Follow his or her lead and when it comes time, hit them with a few very detailed, well thought-out, poignant questions."