

# Common and Difficult Interview Questions

Interviewing can be one of the most stressful parts of the job search. Although there is excitement about being called for an interview, there can also be significant anxiety about the questions you will be asked and how to answer them. Your ability to answer the questions in a clear, concise and convincing manner will go a long way in influencing and persuading the employer that you're the best candidate for the position.

This handout will provide you with some common and difficult interview questions, as well as strategies for how to answer them. Interviews and interviewers are different, so you can never fully prepare for every question you may be asked. But preparing for common and difficult questions will provide you with the confidence you need to succeed.

## Requirements for Success

Interviewing is the opportunity to influence and persuade the employer that you are the best candidate for the position. It requires the three P's – *Preparation, Practice and Performance*.

- **Preparation** – The research and homework you need to do before the actual interview, including becoming familiar with common and difficult interview questions and how to answer them.
- **Practice** – Participate in mock interviews (multiple interviews with different “interviewers”). This will give you an opportunity to become more familiar with the process, and practice your answers to those common and difficult interview questions. Practice builds confidence and helps you relax.
- **Performance** – Influence/Persuade the interviewer that you are the best candidate for the job. This is what you've been working towards, and now it's time to “ace those questions.”

By striving to achieve the three P's you significantly increase your chances to make a good impression for the internship and/or job you desire.

## What Interviewers Look For

In thinking about those common and difficult interview questions, it's important to know what interviewers are looking for in a job candidate.

Interviewers primarily look for two things:

- Your unique qualifications for the position – Are you the best qualified candidate for the job?
- Your organizational fit – Will you fit the personality of the team and the culture of the organization?

## The Three Key Questions of Interviewing

When confronted with something that feels difficult and complex (like interviewing), it is often helpful to break it down into more simple parts. Therefore, in the case of interviewing, consider the three key questions:

- Why this position? – An assessment of your career goals and path.
- Why here? – An assessment of your organizational fit.
- Why you? – An assessment of your unique qualifications for the position.

Almost any question an interviewer will ask you comes back to these key questions. So start your process by reflecting on what answers you would give.

Using these three key questions, we'll now look at specific questions related to each. In addition, we'll add some other questions that you may be asked.

## Opening Question

### Q. Tell me about yourself. What should I know about you?

A. In many interviews, this question (or some version of it) is typically the first question asked. For job candidates it's one of those dreaded "open ended" questions. Where exactly do I go with this? What is the interviewer looking for here?

Interviewers get a wide range of responses to this question – from information about the job candidate's family – to their outside interests – to a recital of facts on their resume – to a litany of broad skills they possess (skills other candidates will also tell the interviewer – such as communication, organization, and time management).

But this is a time to be focused in your response, and to set yourself apart. Consider the following in regard to a response to this question:

- **Give a brief introduction** – "I will be graduating with my MBA in June, with a focus in Human Resources. As you can see from my resume, I've completed two internships (a

total of 400 hours) in the human resources field. This would be my first opportunity out of college, and I'm excited about applying both my academic and practical experience."

- **Express your well-researched and informed career goals** – "Based on my classroom and internship experiences, as well as informational interviews with professionals in the field, I've developed an interest in recruiting. I believe it's a really good fit with my skill set and personality."
- **Touch upon some key qualifications** – "Both of my human resource internships were in recruiting, and my supervisors recognized me 'as a natural' for this type of work. I also excelled (and showed great interest) in my sales and marketing courses in college. I believe that I would bring excellent skills in communication, relating to others, influence and persuasion to this position."
- **Show you're a fit** – "I was attracted to ABC Company because of your great reputation. I know that you were recognized by the Business Review as 'one of the best places to work' in the Capital Region. The values you express in your mission statement – integrity, quality and compassion – are congruent with my own personal values. I think this would be a great place to start my recruiting career."

Be concise, focused and professional in your response. The challenge here is to limit your response to 30 to 40 seconds. This should not be a novel; it is the foreword to the book.

### **"Why This Position" Questions**

#### **Q. Why are you interested in this position?**

- A. The interviewer wants to know if this position is truly aligned with your career goals. Is this position a logical step along your career path? Be ready to talk about your researched and well informed career goals in more detail. Talk about how this position directly connects with your passion, and how it will help you advance your goals in a way that will also benefit the company.

In addition, the interviewer wants to know what value you will bring to this position – and thus the organization. So speak briefly about how your motivated skill set is a good match for what the position needs and requires.

Do not speak to areas that are clearly self-serving – such as you need a job, or the salary is great, or the vacation policy is very appealing. Focus more on your passion for the work and your skill for the position. This is not about you – it's about you in relation to the position and "how you fit like a glove."

#### **Q. If you were hiring someone for this position, what skills/qualities/characteristics would you look for in the successful candidate?**

- A. How well do you know the position? Well, this is one of the tests given to you by the interviewer. Don't be too general here – "I'd look for someone who has good communication skills and who's

a team player.” What position doesn’t require this? This may indicate that you really didn’t do your research and you don’t have any idea what you’re getting yourself into.

Be specific and relate it directly to the position at hand – “Based on the high volume of quantitative work, I would look for someone who is highly analytical, who has a proven track record in attention to detail, and who has mastered Microsoft Excel (including shortcuts and formulas).” By the way, if that’s what you would look for make sure you have it. This is a great opportunity to show you know the position, and then follow that up with a statement about your qualifications for the position.

**Q. How did you happen to choose your college major? Out of all the options available to you, why did you pick (insert name of major)?**

- A. Did you stumble into your major? Were you influenced by what your parents, spouse or some other significant person in your life thought you should do? Do you have some naïve or stereotypical view of the careers this major will lead to that influenced your choice? If any of these apply, the interviewer will most likely not look favorably on your response.

The best major/career choice is one that is researched and informed. It’s one that has shown the path you have followed, and the compass you have used to reach your destination. Perhaps you changed majors multiple times during your college career. That’s fine, as long as you can verbalize a coherent, informed and understandable story about why you ended up in your present major. The interviewer wants to know that this position makes sense for you, based on your career path and choices (including college major).

**Q. I want you to pretend that I’m a sophomore in high school. It’s career day, and you’ve come to my class to talk about (insert name of career). How would you describe this career to me, and what do you think I should know?**

- A. Have you ever had to explain something really complex to someone who had no understanding of the subject matter? It’s not easy. It takes an in-depth knowledge of the subject matter, an ability to break down complex concepts into its simplest parts, and outstanding communication skills. An interviewer can test all of these things, related to your career, with this one simple (yet difficult) question.

**Q. Can you describe the best job you’ve ever had? What made it the best?**

- A. There are different reasons why you may label a certain job as “your best” – the responsibilities of the position, the skills you were required to use, the management style of your supervisor, the personality of the team you were on, and/or the culture of the organization (to name a few). The job you will be interviewing for will have these same components.

From your research of the position you’re interviewing for, and organization you’re interviewing with, make the connection between your “favorite job” and this job. The interviewer is trying to determine if you’re the right fit. If your favorite job is congruent with the type of job you’re interviewing for, then the interviewer may make an assumption that you will be both engaged and productive. It’s like putting together the pieces of a puzzle – the pieces need to fit.

**Q. What do you see yourself doing five to seven years from now?**

- A. The interviewer is probing about your long term career goals. They want to know that you're serious enough about your career that you've taken the time to think long-term, and that you have a well-researched and informed plan for achieving your challenging (yet realistic) goals.

They also want to know that your career goals are compatible with the goals of their position and organization. Are you looking for fast and steady growth in a position the interviewer knows it will not lead to? If that's the case, your personal career goals are not consistent with those of the organization. So this question requires you to research the position and the organization, and to show how your career goals are consistent with both.

**Q. Tell me more about the plan you've put together for achieving these goals.**

- A. Yes ... this is another test. In the previous question you were asked about whether you establish goals for yourself (specifically, career goals). Now the interviewer wants to know that if you set goals for yourself, do you establish an informed, logical and well thought out plan to achieve those goals.

The interviewer may be testing you at two levels here. First, is the position you're interviewing for a logical part of your plan to reach your goals? Does it fit? Second, you will be asked to help set and achieve work goals as part of your job responsibilities. By questioning your career goals, the interviewer can make a reasonable assessment of your willingness and ability to not only set goals – but to put a plan in place to achieve those goals as well.

**Q. Can you describe a time when you set an important goal for yourself, and you achieved it?**

- A. It's one thing to set a goal and make a plan; it's a whole other thing to actually do the work to achieve it. Here, the interviewer is asking for proof of your ability to achieve your goals.

This is a "behavioral-based" interview question. Interviewers believe they can predict future success through past performance (the generation of results). In answering these types of questions, you need to be a story-teller. It requires you to review your inventory of stories from your work and life experiences, and then pick one that's relevant to the situation and where a positive outcome was generated.

Your story, to be effective, must have three components – the situation, the action, and the result. Briefly describe the situation (not too much detail – you're simply setting the stage here), describe the action you took (what you did to contribute value), and end with the positive outcome (quantitative or qualitative results). Your result is the most important part of your story, yet it's the part that's most overlooked by the storyteller. A positive result or outcome will show the interviewer that you have achieved success in an area of importance to them. It will be an indication that your past performance will most likely lead to future success.

Interviewers will be looking for evidence of what you say you can do, and of the things that you will be required to do on the job. So make a list of both and think about the stories you would tell if questioned about them. Make sure each story has a situation, action, and result. Choose stories from a variety of experiences. Using stories from the same experience over and over again may indicate that your experiences are limited.

## **“Why Here” Questions**

### **Q. What do you know about our organization?**

- A. Research, research, and more research! The number one complaint about job candidates is that they have not taken the time to really find out about the organization. Employers want to know that you know about them, and that there are specific reasons why you want to work for them (beyond the fact that they have a job opening!).

At a minimum, review the employer’s website. Get information about them on LinkedIn. Google the company name and see what pops up in terms of recent news stories. Request a copy of their most recent annual report. Find out if you have connections at the organization, and conduct an informational interview for “inside information.” Use as many sources as you can to research the organization and learn more about them.

The depth of your knowledge about the organization will truly make a difference. The interviewer will be impressed that you took both the time and effort to learn more about them.

### **Q. Why do you want to work here?**

- A. You’ve done your due diligence in terms of research. You’ve learned as much as you can about the organization. Now it’s time to connect what you know about the organization to your skills, abilities, characteristics and traits. Find something – or multiple things – that indicate you and the organization would make a good match. Maybe it’s their vision or mission, or the products and services they provide, or their ranking and reputation within their industry, or something else – find specific things that indicate your interest in working for the organization

This is about “organizational fit.” This is about two separate puzzle pieces coming together to form a clear picture that makes sense.

### **Q. What’s the mission of our organization? What value do you think you can contribute in helping us realize this mission?**

- A. Every organization has a mission and it’s important for you to know it – it’s part of your research. The employees of the organization, in an ideal world, come together in the performance of their responsibilities to help the organization achieve their mission. What value will you bring to this process? What will be your contribution? How do your talents, skills, and abilities directly connect to the mission of the organization?

**Q. Can you tell me the name of our President/CEO?**

A. A question like this is simply “fact checking.” Did you do your research? Did you retain the information you researched. It’s not a trick question – it’s a simple test of the extent of your preparation regarding the organization.

**Q. Are you more comfortable working alone, or as part of a team?**

A. Most jobs require both, but more and more organizations are functioning in team-based environments. You should analyze the position and organization, and determine which (independent work or team work) will be more prevalent. Focus your response to the situation at hand, while also maintaining your integrity in how you respond. You don’t want to represent yourself as someone you’re not.

Working alone requires focus, dedication, initiative, self-discipline, good judgment and other related characteristics. Working as part of a team requires good skills in communication, relating to others, conflict resolution, consensus decision making, and other related characteristics. Remember to focus on the skills, traits, and characteristics that you possess which will also match the environment in which you’ll be working.

**Q. Tell me about a time when you had to work as part of a team, and you were able to achieve a successful outcome.**

A. This is another “behavioral-based” interview question, so keep in mind what has been discussed previously in the goal-setting question under “why you?”

Identify a relevant story from your work and/or life experiences, and remember to tell your story in three parts that are clearly and coherently woven together:

1. Situation – Describe a situation where you worked as part of a successful team.
2. Action – Describe your specific role as part of that team. What did you do to contribute to the success?
3. Result – Describe the quantitative or qualitative result of your team’s work together.

Remember to be clear, concise and specific – and to always end with a positive result.

**Q. If you could design your perfect work environment what would it be like?**

A. This is just another way of the interviewer determining if you will be a good fit for the organizational culture. If you’ve done your research, found things out about the organization that really appeal to you, and can clearly communicate that to the interviewer as components of your “perfect work environment – then you’re doing a good job of answering this question.

If, on the other hand, the organization is not a good fit then the description of your “perfect work environment” will not match. This will lead the interviewer to determine that you are not a fit.

**Q. Are you a risk taker, or do you prefer to play it safe?**

- A. How you answer this question will mostly depend on the culture of the organization. Most organizations today are looking for employees with an innovative and creative mind – in essence, someone with an entrepreneurial spirit who is willing to take risks. But some organizations are looking for employees who will strictly adhere to company policies and procedures, and not veer “off-course” – or in other words, play it safe. With that said, if you truly like to play it safe and the employer is looking for a risk taker it may be time to reassess your appropriateness for the organization.

**“Why You” Questions**

**Q. What is your overall GPA? Do you think it reflects your true ability? Why or why not?**

- A. In today’s competitive job market, current students and recent graduates should have a 3.5 GPA or better. A high GPA is reflective of academic achievement, and thus can be a reflection of your true ability.

If your GPA is lower than a 3.5, it’s fair to admit that it may not be a reflection of your true ability. This is not a time to make excuses or blame others. Instead, explain the circumstances that led to a lower GPA, take full responsibility, and explain what you’re doing to improve it (or what you’ve already done that clearly shows improvement over time).

Regardless of your GPA, this is also a time to talk about your focus on things outside of academics – such as school clubs/organizations/sports, community service activities, internships and part-time/full-time jobs. Most employers look for job candidates who are well-rounded, and not just someone focused solely on academics.

**Q. Can you walk me through your resume?**

- A. The major purpose of a resume is to get you a job interview, but it also can be a “talking point” during the interview itself. As a result, you must be able to explain and tell stories about what’s on your resume.

Your response to this type of question should reflect a clear, concise and coherent review of what’s on your resume. Remember, with this question, interviewers are trying to find out more about what’s on your resume (including the stories behind the words), catch any inconsistencies from what you verbalize to what’s on paper, find an opportunity to “dig deeper” and ask more detailed questions, and evaluate how your education and experience directly relate to the position you’re interviewing for.

**Q. Have you ever been fired from a job? If so, what were the circumstances?**

- A. If you have ever been fired from a job, you’re not alone. You share this experience with many others, so don’t treat this question with guilt, shame or embarrassment. This is not a time to hide the fact you were fired, or to misrepresent the facts, or to blame others for being fired.

Any answer you give should be honest, reflect a willingness to take responsibility, offer a clear analysis of what went wrong, and outline what you have done (and perhaps continue to do) to make sure it doesn't happen again. Being fired should be viewed as an opportunity for learning and growth.

**Q. If I were to talk with your previous supervisors, what do you think they'd say about you?**

- A. Essentially, the interviewer wants to know what they'll hear when they check your references. Will there be inconsistencies in what you said, and what your previous supervisor tells them?

If you have a good relationship with your previous supervisor, and you left your position on good terms, you can always ask them what they will say when contacted as a reference. Or if you have a letter of recommendation from them, you have a fairly good idea of what they may say to your interviewer.

If your relationship with your previous supervisor was less than stellar, you need to be honest with what you think they will say. This is not a time to lay blame or become defensive. It's an opportunity to identify what went wrong, take responsibility for your part in what happened between you and your previous supervisor, and outline what you learned from the situation.

**Q. Describe a time when you disagreed with someone in authority, and how you dealt with it?**

- A. This is another "behavioral-based" interview question, so keep in mind what has been discussed previously in the goal-setting question under "why you?"

Identify a relevant story from your work and/or life experiences, and remember to tell your story in three parts that are clearly and coherently woven together:

1. Situation – Describe a situation where you were in conflict with a supervisor, professor or someone else of authority. All conflict is not bad, so choose a situation where there was a "healthy disagreement" about a specific issue.
2. Action – Describe the action you took in that situation – specifically how you contributed to resolving that conflict in a calm, rational and constructive manner.
3. Result – Describe the quantitative or qualitative result of the resolution of the conflict.

Remember to be clear, concise and specific – and to always end with a positive result.

**Q. Can you describe a time when you were asked to show leadership?**

- A. This is another "behavioral-based" interview question, so keep in mind what has been discussed previously in the goal-setting question under "why you?"

Identify a relevant story from your work and/or life experiences, and remember to tell your story in three parts that are clearly and coherently woven together:

1. Situation – Describe a situation where you were required to show leadership. Remember, leadership can be by title or by situation.
2. Action – Describe the action you took in that situation – specifically how you showed leadership.
3. Result – Describe the quantitative or qualitative result of the leadership you displayed.

Remember to be clear, concise and specific – and to always end with a positive result.

**Q. Who do you admire most as a leader? Why?**

- A. All of us are expected to show leadership in our positions and careers. A leader is not simply someone with the title of leader. Instead, leadership is situational. We may be called upon at any moment to display leadership in a role, working on a project, or working as part of a team.

So what kind of leader will you be? What do you consider to be the characteristics of a good leader? The person who you admire most as a leader can give the interviewer a glimpse of what you consider to be the characteristics of a good leader.

So choose someone whose characteristics you admire; who you are most like or would choose to be like. Then talk about those characteristics in regard to your admiration for them.

**Q. Can you tell me about a time when you had to go “above and beyond the call of duty” to complete a project, or to get something done?**

- A. This is another “behavioral-based” interview question, so keep in mind what has been discussed previously in the goal-setting question under “why you?”

Identify a relevant story from your work and/or life experiences, and remember to tell your story in three parts that are clearly and coherently woven together:

1. Situation – Describe a situation where you were required to go “above and beyond” what was expected of you. The interviewer is asking you this question to determine if you’re willing and able to “go the extra mile,” that when things get tough they can depend on you to do what’s needed.
2. Action – Describe the action you took in that situation – what was different and extraordinary about your actions?
3. Result – Describe the quantitative or qualitative result of going “above and beyond.”

Remember to be clear, concise and specific – and to always end with a positive result.

**Q. What are your strengths? What do you do well?**

- A. We all have things we're good at. So start by doing an inventory of your skills. Use our Motivated Skills Inventory to help with this process. Now, analyze the job posting and/or job description for the position you'll be interviewing for. What skills are the employer looking for in their ideal candidate?

Once you have these two lists, look for commonalities. What skills does the employer want/need that you possess? Focus on these skills in your response to this question. Have at least three skills that you can talk about. In addition, be prepared to provide evidence (a story with a positive outcome) in regard to how you successfully used these skills to add value to a project, task or area of responsibility.

**Q. Tell me about a time when you had to use (insert name of skill/ability) to help solve a problem, or to get something done.**

- A. This is another "behavioral-based" interview question, so keep in mind what has been discussed previously in the goal-setting question under "why you?" You've indicated your strengths; now the employer can follow that up with seeking evidence or proof of a particular strength you mentioned.

Identify a relevant story from your work and/or life experiences, and remember to tell your story in three parts that are clearly and coherently woven together:

1. Situation – Describe a situation where you were required to use the skill in question.
2. Action – Describe the action you took in that situation – how you used that skill to solve a problem or get something done.
3. Result – Describe the quantitative or qualitative result of using that skill.

Remember to be clear, concise and specific – and to always end with a positive result.

**Q. What are your weaknesses?**

- A. Who likes to talk about their weaknesses? Not very many of us! But we all have them, so have at least three you can talk about. If it makes it easier, think about them as "areas for improvement" – things that you can do but want to get better at.

When coming up with your list, don't make them so glaring that they'll be viewed as a red flag regarding the position – "I'm the biggest procrastinator that you'll ever run into. I always wait until the last minute to get something done." In addition, don't use a weakness that can be viewed as a positive – "I guess you could say that I'm a real perfectionist. It may take me a little more time but I always get it right." Most employers can see right through this kind of response.

Be honest about your weaknesses, and be strategic in regard to the ones you choose to talk about. The key to this question is being able to tell the employer what you're doing right now (the concrete steps you're taking) to improve in those areas. Most employers will respect your self-awareness in recognizing your weaknesses, your initiative in finding ways to improve them, and your action in taking the necessary steps to get better.

**Q. If you could change one thing about your personality, what would it be?**

- A. This is simply another version of the “weakness” question. See the answer above. Be prepared for an interviewer to ask you similar questions, or the same question in a different way. This gives them an opportunity to look for inconsistencies in your answers, which would obviously raise a “red flag” for them.

**Q. Can you give me an example of a time when you had to make a “split second” decision?**

- A. This is another “behavioral-based” interview question, so keep in mind what has been discussed previously in the goal-setting question under “why you?”

Identify a relevant story from your work and/or life experiences, and remember to tell your story in three parts that are clearly and coherently woven together:

1. Situation – Describe a situation when you had to make a split second decision.
2. Action – Describe the action you took in that situation – the decision you made and why you made it.
3. Result – Describe the quantitative or qualitative result of that decision.

Remember to be clear, concise and specific – and to always end with a positive result.

**Q. What is your definition of success?**

- A. Your response to this question should be a balance of professional and personal. If you make it strictly “job-related” the employer will not get a full and complete view of what makes you tick.

For example, consider the following: “Success to me is giving 100% in satisfying each and every customer who walks through the door. I have made this a priority in all the jobs I have held, and my performance record reflects success. Beyond my work life, success is also about making a difference in the lives of others. I have the opportunity to achieve this success through my volunteer work with multiple charitable organizations. Whether it’s at work or in the community, success is about adding value to the lives of others.”

**Q. Tell me about a time when you failed at something.**

- A. From success to failure – quite a leap! This question gives the interviewer an opportunity to find out more about mistakes and bad decisions (we’ve all made them). Like weaknesses, we’re just not too thrilled to talk about them. Any answer you give should be honest, reflect a willingness to take responsibility (no blaming others), offer a clear analysis of what went wrong, and outline what you have done (and perhaps continue to do) to make sure it doesn’t happen again. Each failure should be viewed as an opportunity for learning and growth.

**Q. How do you handle change?**

- A. In today’s workplace things are changing constantly, and businesses need to change in order to remain competitive. As a result, they are looking for employees who will be flexible, agile and open to changing with them. So it is important to talk about change from a positive perspective. If you can, choose an example of a difficult change you faced where there was a positive result. Show that you not only dealt with the change, but flourished as well.

**Q. How proficient are you with computers and technology?**

- A. Technology is essential to just about any position today, from a position in a manufacturing plant to a high-level management position. Be prepared to discuss what technology you are familiar with (from hardware to software), the level of your familiarity, and what you’re presently doing to “get up to speed” with technology you don’t know (but may need to know for the position you’re interviewing for).

In addition, be ready to “back-up” what you say you can do. In an actual interview situation, a job candidate spoke about his proficiency with Microsoft Excel. The interviewer, sitting with her computer in front of her, pulled up an Excel report she’d been working on, turned her computer around so the job candidate could see it, and instructed the candidate to use specific formulas and shortcuts to make changes to the report. You need to be able to “walk the talk” at any given moment.

**Q. Why should I hire you?**

- A. Often one of the last questions an interviewer may ask you, this is your opportunity to tell the employer why you’re uniquely qualified for the position. Don’t talk in generalities here; be specific. Think of an attorney’s “closing comment” in the courtroom – this is your closing comment. Leave them with something that will make them remember you when you walk out the door.

**Q. What are your salary requirements?**

- A. Provide your requirements in the form of a salary range (based on your previous research of typical salaries for the position in the region and your financial need). State that your salary is negotiable (particularly when considering total compensation – salary plus fringe benefits), and that you look forward to discussing it after the interviewer has had the opportunity to discover the unique value you can bring to the position and organization.

## Miscellaneous Questions

### **Q. What book is on your night stand right now?**

- A. This may seem like an odd question and unrelated to the job, but the books we read reflect our interests. So this is a way for the interviewer to find out more about your outside interests, and who you really are. Have the answer be interesting, and something that reflects your unique personality.

Try to stay away from textbooks here. If you say the book is your Accounting Principles textbook, the interviewer may think that you're solely focused on academics – and thus don't have a life outside of the classroom. Once again, choose a book that will reflect a passionate interest and/or a unique aspect of your personality.

### **Q. If you were an animal, what would you be?**

- A. This question may seem even more odd. But, once again, there is a reason for the interviewer asking this question. Animals have certain characteristics, and the animal you choose will speak to those specific characteristics in you.

For example, you may choose a lion because you admire those who have strength and courage – particularly in times of adversity. Or you may choose a Golden Retriever because they are dependable and loyal.

So choose a characteristic that you possess and/or admire, and then identify an animal that projects that characteristic. This is another opportunity to market who you are to the interviewer.

### **Q. How many ping pong balls would you need to fill a Boeing 747 plane?**

- A. You may view this question as beyond odd. Once again though, it does serve a purpose for the interviewer. They really don't expect you to come up with the answer. What they're assessing here is your problem solving capability. It's not about the answer; it's about the process you would use to come up with the answer.

So, in addressing this type of question, talk out loud about the step-by-step process you would use to come up with the answer. Use logic and good judgment in your process, showing the interviewer that you have the mind of a problem-solver. The actual answer is a distant second to what they're actually looking for.

### **Q. Do you have any questions for me?**

- A. Yes you do – or at least should have. Reference our handout on "Questions to Ask at an Interview" for much more about how to address this question.

## Closing Comments

In closing, it's nearly impossible to prepare for every question you may be asked at an interview. Interviews and interviewers are different, so what they want to know and the questions they'll ask may be different as well. But this handout will get you started in preparing for common and difficult interview questions.

For an extensive database of other commonly asked interview questions, along with sample excellent responses, go to the following site: [www.quintcareers.com/interview\\_question\\_database/](http://www.quintcareers.com/interview_question_database/). Remember the three P's – Preparation, Practice and Performance.