

Questions to Ask at an Interview

At a job interview, you're asked a series of questions by the interviewer to assess if you're the right person for the position and the organization. In most cases, typically at the end of the interview, you're given an opportunity to ask the interviewer questions.

You should always have a list of questions to ask. This is your opportunity to assess if you're the right person for the position and the organization. It's also your opportunity to impress the interviewer with your interest, research and preparation. Asking good questions will go a long way in gaining insight about the position and organization, and positively influencing the interviewer.

Do's and Don'ts of Questions to Ask

- Do prepare more questions than you may be able to ask. In the natural course of the interview, some of your questions may be answered. You don't want to get caught short when it's time for you to ask questions of the interviewer.
- Do ask questions that are curious in nature; questions that will provide relevant information and insight.
- Do know when enough is enough. Don't bombard the interviewer with questions, and look for cues from the interviewer when you've asked enough. Be respectful of their time.
- Don't ask questions where an answer can be easily found on the website or through some other common form of research. This will show a lack of preparation on your part.
- Don't ask questions about salary or benefits. Let the employer raise this issue first. Keep your questions more focused on the position, the organization and you (your qualifications).
- Don't ask questions that are so difficult or complex that they may "show up" the interviewer.

Kinds of Questions to Ask

During an interview, most interview questions you'll be asked relate to the following:

- 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.

The questions you ask the interviewer also should relate to position, organization and you. Below you will find some sample questions for each of these categories, as well as for a category called "next step questions."

This is not a comprehensive list of questions. You may think of others that would be good questions to ask. Use this list, and your own ideas, to compile a list of questions to bring to your next interview.

"Position" Questions

- Can you describe a typical day/week in this position?
- If hired for this position, what will be the three biggest items on my list of "things to do" when I start?
- What has been most satisfying, about the work, for those who have previously occupied this position?
- What are the greatest challenges someone in this position will face?
- What value does this position bring to the organization? How does it fit in regard to advancing the organization's mission?
- How long did the previous person in this position stay? Why did they leave?
- Can you tell me about the person who has been most successful in this position? What made their performance so outstanding?

"Organization" Questions

- What can you tell me about the organization's vision over the next five to ten years?
- What do you think is the greatest opportunity facing this organization in the near future? The biggest threat?
- Who do you consider to be your primary competitors? What separates this organization from them?

- When I was researching your organization I noticed (say something about a new product or service, or something of interest you noted in your research). Can you tell me more about that?
- Can you tell me more about the culture of the department and/or organization? What qualities and characteristics does someone need to not only survive, but to thrive here?
- Who will be my team members? Can you tell me about them? What are their expectations of the person coming into this position?
- Can I meet the people I'd be working with prior to accepting an offer of employment?
- What attracted you to this organization? What keeps you here?
- How would you best describe your management style (if you are being interviewed by the hiring manager)? Can you share your thoughts about how and when we would interact in the performance of my job?

“You” Questions

- Who is your ideal candidate for this position? What skills, qualities and characteristics would they need to possess?
- What types of skills are missing from the team (or organization) that you're looking to fill with the new person in this position?
- How will my performance be measured over the first year? In other words, how will you measure my success?
- Beyond the first year, how will my performance be evaluated? How often? By Whom?
- Can you tell me more about the education, training and professional development opportunities that will be available to the person in this position?
- Is there a formal process for advancement within the company? Where have employees who have previously shown success in this position progressed to?
- Are there any reservations you have about my qualifications for the position, or organizational fit, that I could try to address?
- Is there anything else I could provide you with that would be helpful in evaluating my candidacy?

“Next Step” Questions

- From everything you’ve told me, I believe I can be a great addition to your team. What’s the next step in the hiring process?
- What is your timeline for hiring? When can I expect to hear back from you?
- Would you like a list of my references?
- If hired, when would you like me to start?