



What To Ask The Interviewer

INTRODUCTION

Most interviews (of any type) close with an opportunity for you to ask questions. This is not really an “optional” part of the interview for you in that the quality and thoughtfulness of your questions provides additional insight for the interviewer in evaluating your candidacy for the job. As part of your interview preparation, consider also what questions you will ask. If you are conducting an informational interview, then you should be prepared to conduct the interview and ask most of the questions.

- What do you want to know?
- How are you going to ask it?
- What kind of impression do you want to leave?
- What next action do you want the person to take?

ASKING INSIGHTFUL AND MEANINGFUL QUESTIONS

Interviewers don’t like to repeat information that was discussed before. For example, you may want to ask about the training program for permanent employees. If this was a major part of an earlier discussion or a major section of the company homepage, the interviewer will think you are wasting his or her time. That item should have been part of your research, which you could have discovered if you had asked another student who was at the presentation.

Don’t talk about salary, benefits, or bonuses- at least not in the first interview! When an offer of employment is made or being discussed, the recruiter may ask you what you expect to make. To respond, you may want to ask the recruiter: “How much is budgeted for this position?” If you are asked for a figure, don’t go so high that you will eliminate yourself. Do your research.

THE INDUSTRY

- What do you see as the biggest challenges in this industry right now?
- Where is this industry going in the future? What is the growth potential?
- Would you enter this industry again, if you could do it all over again?
- Who do you see as the visionaries/thought leaders in this industry?
- Refer to a relevant article or news item you’ve seen recently and ask for clarification of some aspect of it - I’ve been following the [current event]. What impact do you think this may have on your industry?



THE COMPANY/ORGANIZATION

The questions in the first group are followed by hints to help you organize your answers.

With whom will I work? From the answer, you can develop a sense of the team. Do you seem to like what the interviewer is saying? Do you want to work with these types of people?

Tell me about [current event going on at the company]. All current events are fair game for review, including: lawsuits, staff reductions, mergers, and divestitures. However, be careful with sensitive corporate issues.

If you have done your research properly and you know of an economic or international situation that will affect the company or its businesses, ask! This will show you have done your research well.

Why have people left this position? The answer can give you a sense of progression in the company.

Why do people fail in this position? You will hear about the characteristics of the people who fail. Are you like them?

What are the two greatest challenges the company faces next year? The answer may allow you to assess future prospects of the company.

Other questions:

- What are this organization's greatest assets and challenges?
- Where is this company going in the future?
- Would you enter this company again, if you could do it all over again?
- How many 40+ employees work in your company? What jobs do they hold?
- What do you wish you had known about this company before you came here?
- What kinds of skills/background/experience are you looking for?
- How quickly do people get promoted? How hierarchical is it?
- Is the environment "professional"? Is it very corporate?
- For mission-driven organizations: how are you funded? Who's on the board? What do board members do? Who are your clients and what are their alternative choices (besides your org.) for service?
- Refer to a relevant article or news item you've seen recently and ask for clarification of some aspect of it.



THE INDIVIDUAL

Why do you like XYZ Company? Is what this person is telling you important to you?

- How did you get to where you are today? How do you make decisions?
- What made you decide to work in this industry/company?
- For nonprofits: Where do you lie on the mission delivery food chain? Do you like it there? What's good/bad about being so close to/far away from the mission?
- What do you actually do on a day-to-day basis? What are the best and worst parts of that?
- What do you think is more important for a job candidate: the supervisor you work for or the company you work for?
- How would you describe the culture here?
- How would you describe your leadership style? (eg, authoritative, collaborative, etc.) Is this typical of other managers/leaders/supervisors in this organization?
- If there were one thing you would change about your career path to date, including your experience here, what would it be?
- What has been your career progression here?

FEEDBACK ON YOURSELF

Ask the interviewer if s/he has any more questions for you. You want to leave this interview with no doubts in the interviewer's mind that you are the right person for the job.

- What else can I tell you that would help you in understanding my capabilities and fit with your organization?
- Do you have any concerns about what we've discussed today? What are they?
- How do you see my fit with your organization?
- In what way do you believe I could contribute to your organization?

THE CLOSING

At the end of the interview, if you are interested in the position, ASK FOR IT. Your enthusiasm will make a favourable impression.