

Common Types of interview Questions

1. **Credential verification question:**

This type of question includes:

- What was your GPA?
- How long were you at . . .

Its purpose is to place objective measurements on features of your background.

2. **Experience verification questions:**

This type of question includes

- What did you learn in that class?
- What were your responsibilities in that position?

Its purpose is to subjectively evaluate features of your background.

3. **Opinion questions:**

This type of question includes

- What would you do in this situation?
- What are your strengths and weaknesses?

Their purpose is to subjectively analyse how you would respond in a series of scenarios.

4. **Hypothetical and situational questions:**

This type of question includes

- What kind of animal would you like to be?
- What colour best describes you?
- If your colleague made a mistake, what should you do?

Their purpose is to get past your pre-programmed answers to find out if you are capable of an original thought. There is not necessarily a right or wrong answer, since it is used primarily to test your ability to think on your feet.

5. **Math questions:**

This type of question includes

- "What is 1000 divided by 73?"
- "How many ping pong balls could fit in a Volkswagen?"

Its purpose is to evaluate not only your mental math calculation skills, but also your creative ability in formulating the mathematical formula for providing an answer (or estimate, as can often be the case)

6. Case questions:

This type of question includes problem-solving questions ranging from:

- "How many gas stations are there in Europe?"
- "What is your estimate of the global online retail market for books?"

Its purpose is to evaluate your problem-solving abilities and how you would analyze and work through potential case situations.

7. Behavioural questions

This type of question includes

- Can you give me a specific example of how you did that?
- What were the steps you followed to accomplish that task?

Its purpose is to anticipate future behaviours based upon past behaviours.

8. Competency questions

This type of question includes

- "Can you give me a specific example of your leadership skills?"
- "Explain a way in which you sought a creative solution to a problem."

Its purpose is to align your past behaviours with specific competencies which are required for the position.

The above types of interview questions can be broadly categorized into the 3 main types below:

Interviewers often use different methods of questioning in order to assess your abilities. Shown below are the most common methods of questioning currently used.

Note: Regardless of the type or style of question asked, make sure you fully understand the question and query any point about which you may be doubtful. Remember to take the time to think about your answer before you open your mouth. A little bit of planning in your answer is worth the few seconds gap between their question and your answer, as your answer will be so much more coherent.

Open Ended Questions

These are general questions such as "tell me about yourself?" or "why are you interested in this position". These questions are often used as ice-breakers to allow you a chance to relate what you have done in your own words, and to get you talking.

With open ended questions, it is often a good idea to give the interviewers a brief outline starting with the most recent or most pertinent information. Try not to go on and on about any one thing as you don't want to bore the interviewers. If you are worried that you haven't said enough, ask them if they would like you to expand on any of the points that you have made.

For example, if you were asked "what interests you about this position?"

A possible answer could be:

"I have been researching mining companies a lot while I have been applying for graduate positions. During this research Newcrest has stood out to me. I had the opportunity to talk to one of your employees, Sally Smith, at the UNSW Careers Expo in March this year. In this conversation I was made

aware of the full extent of the projects that you are currently carrying out in Indonesia. It's the long term nature of these projects and the potential to travel while working for the company that really appeal to me. In my industrial training last year in Rio Tinto, I had the chance to work in the project management department. It was an excellent opportunity and I got to see first-hand what goes on there. I made full use of the opportunity to become involved and actually made a meaningful contribution to the projects I was working on. This has really spurred my interest in this graduate position; I know this is the position in which I want to start my careers."

Interviewers may sometimes prod you for more information on a particular point you have made. This does not necessarily mean that you have said something wrong; rather it is more likely that you have said something that has sparked their interest and that they want to know more about it.

Behavioural Questions

Behavioural questions ask you to describe previous experiences where you have displayed specific behaviours. An example of such a question would be "Can you give me an example of a time when you had to conduct a difficult negotiation, what did you do, and how did it turn out?" With these questions employers are looking to predict future performance based on how you have responded in the past.

If approached correctly, behavioural questions are reasonably easy to answer. A good acronym to remember here is STAR. It stands for:

Situation or Task

Action

Result

What was the situation or task that you were presented with? What did you do? What was the result and what did you learn from the experience? In answering behavioural questions, it is very important that you have thought about your previous positions/education and how these could be used to display to an employer that you have the skills that they are looking for.

For example, if you were asked to "Describe an occasion when you had difficulties working with a team. What caused the problems? How did you respond? What was the outcome?" A sample answer would be:

"(Situation) I regard the ability to work cooperatively and effectively with others as being important to a successful team. Working for the marketing team for the UNSW Solar Racing Team, for example, (task) I stepped up and offered my help to other team members in times when tight schedules were to be met. (Action) I attended meetings with sponsors on behalf of the team leader and promoted our sponsorship program. I shared my views in ways to promote the project and, in the meantime, made an effort to achieve the common goals in maximising the cost-effectiveness of our marketing campaign. Together, we evaluated our options and were able to reach consensus regarding the most effective way of marketing. (Result) Our promotional campaign was so successful that we were able to attract two new sponsors for the team."

Situational Questions

Situational questions could be the most challenging of all. In these questions, the interviewers seek to gain a better understanding of how you approach problems by presenting you with a hypothetical situation and asking how you would respond if you were put in such a position.

When answering situational questions you can make assumptions when describing your course of action. For example, "assuming A, this is what I would do and why, however, if A were to change then my response to the problem would change in this way". The thing to remember with situational

questions is that there is not necessarily a definitive (right) answer. Most of your points will be gained through the reasoning. It is therefore important that you explain fully the "why" as well as the "what" you would do.

For example, if you were asked "What would you do if you thought your supervisor gave incorrect information in a staff meeting?" Your answer could be:

"In this situation I would consider the magnitude of the error and I would be very careful not to damage my working relationship with my supervisor. If it was a trivial mistake, such as stating slightly inaccurate sales figures, then I think it would be the best not to correct him/her in front of other staff. However, if it was a more serious mistake which would affect the team's next course of action, I would try to tactfully point out the error to save the team wasting time working from the wrong information."