



Connecting Students to Global Careers!

Commonly Asked Interview Questions and the QBQ

Employers ask questions in many ways to explore and probe your background and skills. In addition to your stated answer to the questions, an interviewer is also seeking answers to questions which are not ever directly asked. These are the questions-behind-the-questions (QBQ). Let's examine some of the types of questions you might expect in an interview as well as examine what the questions really mean.

Personal questions (objective)

- Tell me a little about yourself.
QBQ = Short bio starting with most recent and going backwards in time.
- Tell me how has your degree helped you (in preparation for your career)?
QBQ = Discuss your training and academic experience.
- Why did you choose the career for which you are preparing?
QBQ = Motivation
- What do you see yourself doing in five years from now?
QBQ = How committed are you?
- How do you plan to achieve your career goals?
QBQ = Long term plans for yourself
- What do you consider to be your greatest strength? Weakness?
QBQ = Self-awareness. Strengths are things about yourself that don't require lots of effort. Weaknesses are things about yourself that require more effort just to be OK at.
- How do you think a friend, classmate, or professor, who knows you well would describe you?
QBQ = What is your personality type?
- What two or three accomplishments have given you the most satisfaction? Why?
QBQ = What do you value and why?

Homework questions (research) - All of these questions relate to "Did you do your homework on us?"

- Tell me what you know about our organization?
- What aspects of our organization are appealing to you?
- What criteria do you use to evaluate any organization for which you want to work for?
- In what ways do you think you can make a contribution to our organization?

Career Services Office

615 N. Wolfe Street, Suite W1600 Baltimore, MD 21205 • 410-955-3034 • <http://www.jhsph.edu/careers>

Work process questions – *All of these questions relate to how you go about getting your work done.*

- When presented with a variety of tasks, how do you prioritize your activities?
- This position requires a great deal of organization and attention to detail. Please describe a situation in which you have organized a project.

Work with others questions – *All of these questions relate to “How to play with others at work”*

- If you had the luxury of creating the ideal work environment, what would it look like to you?
- Describe a time when you came in conflict with someone and how did you handle it?

Qualification questions – *All of these questions relate to “How can I sell myself”*

- Why did you decide to seek a position with our organization?
- Why should I hire you?

Behavioral Interview Questions (Hypothetical) - *Behavioral questions are used to show how previous behaviors can be predictors of your future performance. There are no wrong answers to these questions. The key here is to be specific, but don't get caught up storytelling. Think first internally about what you want the person asking the question to remember from your answer or the point you are trying to make. Then go back through your memory bank to recall a time when it occurred. If you can't come up with one, you can say the following: “While I can't think of it right now, this is what I think I would do...”*

- **Give an example** of a time when you could not participate in a discussion or could not finish a task because you did not have enough information.
- **Give an example** of a time when you had to be relatively quick in coming to a decision.
- **Tell me about a time** when you had to use your spoken communications skills in order to get a point across that was important to you.
- **Give me an example** of a time when you had to use your fact-finding skills to gain information needed to solve a problem; then tell me how you analyzed the information and came to a decision.
- **Give me an example** of an important goal you had set and tell me about your progress in reaching it.
- **Describe the most** significant written document, report, or presentation that you've completed.
- **Give me an example** of a time when you had to go above and beyond the call of duty in order to get the job done.
- **Describe a time** when you felt was necessary to modify or change your actions in order to respond to the needs of another person.
- What did you do in a project or class to contribute toward a teamwork environment? **Be specific.**