

Types of interview questions and strategies for answering them

Behavioural questions

Behavioural questions are used to predict future behaviour by asking about past behaviour. They explore how you acted in particular situations and usually start with "Tell me about a time when...". For example:

- Describe an occasion when you had a number of important tasks to be handled at once. How did you manage this?
- Tell me about a time when you had to go beyond what was ordinarily expected of an employee to get the job done.

Use the STAR format to answer behavioural questions and, where possible, draw on examples that are relevant to the position or organisation:

Situation - Outline the situation or context you were in

Task - Explain what you were trying to achieve

Action - Explain specifically what you did

Result - Provide outcomes, improvements or positive results

Open-ended questions

Open-ended questions allow you to explore issues and provide information and examples to the extent and depth you choose. Your challenge is to answer appropriately without rambling. Keep to the point and answer from the perspective of the employer's requirements. Some examples of open-ended questions:

- What do you enjoy doing away from university?
- What are your short-term goals?
- What supervisory or leadership roles have you had?
- If I asked your friends to describe you, what would they say?
- What are your greatest work and non-work accomplishments?
- What do you see yourself doing in five years' time?

Be Persuasive. Impress the employer with responses that are:

Clear - so the employer understands fully what you have to offer

Relevant - so the employer sees how well you match the position

Adequate - so the employer has enough information to make a decision

Evidenced - so the employer has examples that illustrate you can do the job

Hypothetical

Hypothetical questions present scenarios and require you to demonstrate your judgement. There are no right or wrong answers. Hypothetical questions assess your knowledge of the field, problem-solving skills, awareness of relevant issues and common sense! An example:

"Your immediate supervisor has asked you to complete an important report by the end of the day. Early in the afternoon, the head of department calls you in and asks you to work on an urgent task for her. How would you handle this situation?"

Be Practical. Confidently manage hypothetical questions by:

- Drawing on related experience (e.g., time management used for uni commitments)
- Relating examples of how you've managed similar challenges
- Outlining how you would approach the problem (strategies or processes you would use), even if you aren't familiar with the specific issue