



ON CAREERS

How to Answer 10 Tricky Interview Questions

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Does it seem as though some job interview questions are designed to trip you up?

It should, because they are. Here are 10 of the trickiest tricky questions you might be asked at a job interview, with ideas on how to handle them:

[See [the best careers for 2010](#).]

1. "Tell me about yourself."

- **DO:** Talk about the ways that what you know and what you can do are perfectly suited to this job.
- **DON'T:** Tell the interviewer your life story.

2. "Tell me something bad you've heard about our company."

- **DO:** You wouldn't apply for a job at a company you disapproved of, would you? So you should be able to honestly answer that you haven't heard anything negative about this place.
- **DON'T:** Repeat gossip you might have heard.

[See [how to ace the phone interview](#).]

3. "Why should I hire you?"

- **DO:** Impress your interviewer with how much you know about the company's requirements and then describe how you are the best person to meet those requirements.
- **DON'T:** Get tripped up by a lack of prior research.

4. "Where do you see yourself in five years?"

- **DO:** Talk about how your specific abilities, training, and experience will enable you to smoothly integrate with this company.
- **DON'T:** Say that you have no idea.

5. "How would you react if I told you your interview so far was terrible?"

- **DO:** Recognize that this is a test to see if you get flustered. Say, mildly, that you would ask for reasons why.
- **DON'T:** Freak out. Remember, the interviewer said "if."

[See [how to keep your thank-you note out of the trash](#).]

6. "What's the last book you read?"

- **DO:** Mention a book that reflects well on you. Choose something by a reputable author that your interviewer has probably heard of.
- **DON'T:** Name a book you haven't actually read.

7. "Can you work under pressure?"

- **DO:** Say that of course you can, and then relate a brief story about a time you did.
- **DON'T:** Just say, "Yes I can." Provide a specific example.

8. "Who's your hero?"

- **DO:** Name a person who has inspired you and then describe specifically how this inspiration relates to your work.
- **DON'T:** Get caught off-guard by what should really be a softball question. Come prepared with a good answer.

9. "Have you ever considered starting your own business?"

- **DO:** Talk about how you are happiest and do your best work in a company that is amazingly similar to the one you're applying at.
- **DON'T:** Go on and on about how you'd love to be your own boss one day.

10. "If you won the lottery, would you still work?"

- **DO:** Be honest and say you'd be thrilled to win the lottery; then add that even if you did you'd still seek out satisfying work, because work is what makes people happy.
- **DON'T:** Say that you'd never work again (too honest) or that you'd just work for free (too BS-y).

[Video: [How to Ace the Interview](#).]

Bottom line: It pays to think through in advance how you would handle some of the more common trick questions. In general, remember never to badmouth or blame others, especially past employers. Be careful not to betray your nervousness with jittery body language. Don't lie or babble, or show frustration, impatience, disappointment, or anger.

The most important thing to remember is that hiring managers who ask these questions are far more interested in how you answer than what you answer. They just want to see how well you think on your feet. So even if a question completely flummoxes you, keep your cool, smile, and look 'em in the eye.

Karen Burns is the author of the illustrated career advice book [The Amazing Adventures of Working Girl: Real-Life Career Advice You Can Actually Use](#), recently released by Running Press. She blogs at www.karenburnsworkinggirl.com.

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