

1. Why do you want this job/ this future training?

One of the most predictable questions and very important! You need to **demonstrate that you have researched the employer** and tie your knowledge of them into the skills and interests that led you to apply. Try to **find some specific feature on which the employer prides themselves**: their training, their client base, their individuality, their public image, etc. This may not always be possible with very small organisations but you may be able to pick up something of this nature from the interviewer.

2. Why did you choose your degree at university and what factors influenced your choice?

If you had, in fact, no real choice in where you went to University - interview. It derives from what lies beneath: the preparation done beforehand. e.g. if you had to study close to home for financial or family reasons - you can talk about the more general issues you had to consider in coming to University and perhaps lead the question round to your choice of course rather than institution.

3. Describe a situation in which you led a team.

This is an example of a competency-based question. Many graduate positions involve people management, where you will be expected to plan, organise and guide the work of others as well as motivating them to complete tasks. The interviewer needs to assess how well you relate to other people, what role you take in a group and whether you are able to focus on goals and targets.

4. Describe a situation where you worked in a team

Another competency-based question. Most jobs will involve a degree of teamwork. The interviewer needs to assess how well you relate other people, **what role you take in a group** and whether you are able to focus on goals and targets.

5. What are your strengths?

This allows you to put across your "**Unique Selling Points**" - **three or four of your key strengths**. Try to back these points up with **examples of where you have had to use them**.

For example, team work, interpersonal skills, creative problem solving, dependability, reliability, originality, leadership etc., could all be cited as strengths. Work out which is most important for the particular job in question. This question may be phrased in other ways, such as "Tell me about yourself" or "How would a friend describe you?"

6. What are your weaknesses?

The classic answer here is to state a **strength which is disguised as a weakness**, such as "I'm too much of a perfectionist" or "I push myself too hard". This approach has been used so often that, even if these answers really are true they sound clichéd. Also, **interviewers will know this trick**.

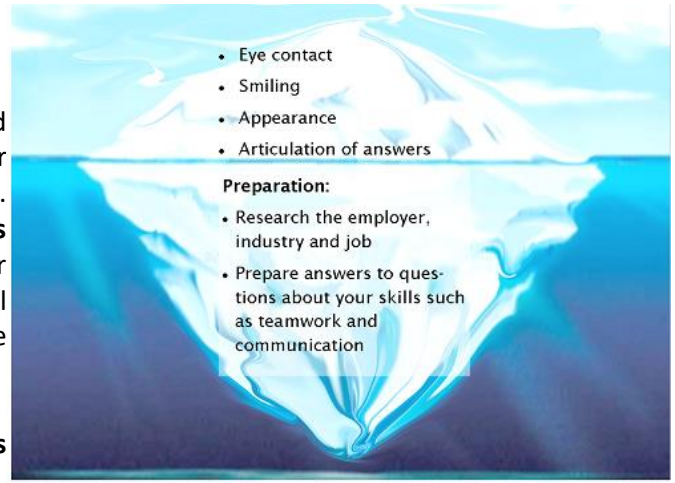
A better strategy, is to **choose a weakness that you have worked on to improve** and describe what action you are taking to remedy the weakness. **Don't deny that you have any weaknesses** - everyone has weaknesses and if you refuse to admit to them the interviewer will mark you down as arrogant, untruthful or lacking in self-awareness. This question may be phrased in other ways, such as "How would your worst enemy describe you?"

7. What has been your greatest achievement?

To say that your greatest achievement was getting to University, or getting your degree, will do nothing to **distinguish you from all the other candidates**. Try to say something different that will make you stand out.

This doesn't have to be an Olympic medal or an act of heroism. Ideally, it should give **evidence of skills relevant to the job** such as communication, initiative, teamwork, organising or determination:

- Organising a sports or fund-raising event
- "Overcoming my fear of heights and learning to abseil" (abseil = *descente en rappel*)
- "Learning enough Spanish in three months to make myself understood when I travelled around Mexico"
- Training for and completing a marathon... or even a 5-kilometre race



Most interview success comes from what the interviewer can't see during the interview. It derives from what lies beneath: the preparation done beforehand.

8. What do you expect to be doing in 5 years time?

Try to avoid vague or general answers such as *"I would hope to grow with the responsibility I am offered and to develop my skills as far as I am able"* or *"I would expect to be in a management role by then"*.

Be specific, but flexible: recruiters want to know you know what you want. Hiring, training and developing staff costs a lot of money, something like £7,000 to recruit a new graduate, so they want to make sure that you are committed to staying with the organisation. *"I'd like to gradually take more and more responsibility and perhaps by then be a brand manager for a major product."*

Emphasise the value you can bring to the organisation and what you can do for it.

You need to show that you are ambitious but also your goals must be realistic - saying you expect to be a senior manager after two years is unlikely to go down well! Use the employer's website or LinkedIn profiles to gain an idea of the career paths followed by past graduates.

Talk about responsibilities you would like to have and expected achievements rather than how much you would expect to be earning in five year time as this will make an employer think you're more interested in the material benefits than the career itself. Talk about your career development: skills you'd like to acquire or you'd like to be using, and professional qualifications you'd like to get.

9. Who else have you applied to/got interviews with?

You are being asked to demonstrate the **consistency of your career aims** as well as your **interest in the job** for which you are being interviewed. What you can certainly say in your favour, however, is that **the present employer is your first choice**.

10. Have you got any questions?

At the end of the interview, it is likely that you will be given the chance to put your own questions to the interviewer.

- Keep them brief: there may be other interviewees waiting.
- **Ask about the work itself, training and career development:** not about holidays, pensions, and season ticket loans!
- **Prepare some questions in advance:** it is OK to write these down and to refer to your notes to remind yourself of what you wanted to ask.

You can also use this opportunity to **tell the interviewer anything about yourself that they have not raised** during the interview but which you feel is important to your application:

Don't feel you have to wait until this point to ask questions - if the chance to ask a question seems to arise naturally in the course of the interview, take it! Remember that a traditional interview is a conversation - with a purpose.

Examples of questions you can ask the interviewer

- Where would I be based - is this job function located only in ...?
- How easy is it for new graduates to find accommodation in this area?
- What is a typical career path in this job function?
- Can you give me more details of your training programme?
- Will I be working in a team?
- What are the possibilities of using my languages?
- What are the travel/mobility requirements of this job?

Other common questions (in rough order of popularity) are:

- Why do you want to join our organisation?
- What would you do if happened? (**hypothetical questions**)
- What other careers have you considered/applied for?
- Why did you choose your degree subject?
- Describe yourself (in one word).
- Are you prepared to be mobile?
- "Describe a situation in which" questions: you used initiative, you solved a problem, you took responsibility, you dealt with confrontation (for example a difficult customer), you influenced or motivated people.
- What are your hobbies?
- What was your biggest setback? (How do you deal with adversity?) (*setback = déboires/échecs/revers*)
- Tell me about your project
- Describe a situation where you had to plan or organise something.
- What computing skills do you have?
- What is your usual role in a team?
- Describe a situation where you had a difficult decision to make.