

**Document: Elchemie Jobseeker - Interview guidelines**

·A successful person is one who can lay a firm foundation with the bricks that others throw at him or her."

Interviewing can be a harrowing experience for many job seekers. Like taking tests, some people just seem to be innately better at it than others - regardless of how much they know or what relevant skills they possess. As is also the case when taking a test, it helps if you know the questions ahead of time.

While we can't promise that everything you'll be asked is included here, we can tell you that these are some of the questions job seekers frequently face in interviews. So peruse these lists of questions with suggestions on how to respond and start thinking about on how you might answer these questions at the interview

**1. What Are Your Weaknesses?**

This is the most dreaded question of all. Handle it by minimizing your weakness and emphasizing your strengths. Stay away from personal qualities and concentrate on professional traits: "I am always working on improving my communication skills to be a more effective presenter. I recently joined Toastmasters, which I find very helpful."

**2. Why Should We Hire You?**

Summarize your experiences: "With five years' experience working in the financial industry and my proven record of saving the company money, I could make a big difference in your company. I'm confident I would be a great addition to your team."

**3. Why Do You Want to Work Here?**

The interviewer is listening for an answer that indicates you've given this some thought and are not sending out resumes just because there is an opening. For example, "I've selected key companies whose mission statements are in line with my values, where I know I could be excited about what the company does, and this company is very high on my list of desirable choices." Ensure you know what the mission statements are or better specify.

**4. What Are Your Goals?**

Sometimes it's best to talk about short-term and intermediate goals rather than locking yourself into the distant future. For example, "My immediate goal is to get a job in a growth-oriented company. My long-term goal will depend on where the company goes. I hope to eventually grow into a position of responsibility."

**5. Why Did You Leave (Are You Leaving) Your Job?**

If you're unemployed, state your reason for leaving in a positive context: "I managed to survive two rounds of corporate downsizing, but the third round was a 20 percent reduction in the workforce, which included me." If you are employed, focus on what you want in your next job: "After two years, I made the decision to look for a company that is team-focused, where I can add my experience." Again, be specific.

**6. When Were You Most Satisfied in Your Job?**

The interviewer wants to know what motivates you. If you can relate an example of a job or project when you were excited, the interviewer will get an idea of your preferences. "I was very satisfied in my last job, because I worked directly with the customers and their problems; that is an important part of the job for me."

**7. What Can You Do for Us That Other Candidates Can't?**

What makes you unique? This will take an assessment of your experiences, skills and traits. Summarize concisely: "I have a unique combination of strong technical skills, and the ability to build strong customer relationships. This allows me to use my knowledge and break down information to be more user-friendly."

**8. What Are Three Positive Things Your Last Boss Would Say About You?**

It's time to pull out your old performance appraisals and boss's quotes. This is a great way to brag about you through someone else's words: "My boss has told me that I am the best chemist/engineer/designer he has ever had. He knows he can rely on me, and he likes my sense of humor."

**9. What Salary Are You Seeking?**

It is to your advantage if the employer tells you the range first. Prepare by knowing the going rate in your area, and your bottom line or walk-away point. One possible answer would be: "I am sure when the time comes, we can agree on a reasonable amount. In what range do you typically pay someone with my background?"

**10. If You Were an Animal, Which One Would You Want to Be?**

Interviewers use this type of psychological question to see if you can think quickly. If you answer "a bunny," you will make a soft, passive impression. If you answer "a lion," you will be seen as aggressive. What type of personality would it take to get the job done? What impression do you want to make?

No matter how weird or crazy an interview situation gets, it is in your best interest to stay composed. The interview process is a professional experience. You are not there on a social call; you are there to check out a possible job opportunity. Sometimes unprofessional, awkward or embarrassing events occur that can test your ability to handle yourself.

- 1. Preparation** – Prepare by researching the sector and company (corporate brochures and industry magazines and the company website are good starting points.) If possible, research the interviewer as well: male female; how old; a company veteran or new to the position? Discuss with your recruitment consultant. A contact inside the company would also be a good source.
- 2. Recruiter's questions** – Often used stock questions include: "What are your strengths and weaknesses?" and "There are 10 applicants, so why should I select you?" They may also throw in oddball questions like "Do you think prostitution should be legalized?" or "How would you react if your sister said she was going to marry someone from a different race group?"
- 3.** Write down a set of possible questions and get a friend or relative to engage in role-play, firing the questions at you.
- 4.** Ensure you can answer questions about your current and previous jobs in detail, show that you don't just do your job but that you are involved in your company. Practice answering a question like "Tell us about yourself" or "Tell us about your career history". Concentrate on your work history, be logical and don't ramble. Always think of how will any of your experiences benefit the company.
- 5.** Avoid monosyllabic responses. For instance, if asked if you are punctual, instead of just saying "Yes", provide information to prove the point. For example: "Yes, I often open up the office/factory in the morning."
- 6.** At the interview, expect some questions for which you did not prepare. Be honest, be yourself.
- 7. Presentation** – to create a professional impression carry a folder: open it, allowing the interviewer to see headings like "Interview Objectives" and "Key Issues." Bring a copy of your cv, original or certified copies of certificates, diplomas, reference letters – ensure that you can find all these papers easily when needed, so you don't need to rummage in your folder. Tick off points as they are covered. Try not to cling to your folder out of nervousness.
- 8.** If you feel very nervous, you might want to say to the interviewer that you do, tell them this is your first interview in years, you are confirming your stable work history.
- 9.** When asked if you have any queries, preface your question with an item of information that shows that you have knowledge of the company and the industry. Tell them that you have read their brochure, website etc. You might like clarity on the company's management style and expansion plans. You also need to know exactly what is required of you.
- 10.** Do not mumble. Speak clearly and confidently. Sit up straight. Look the interviewer in the eye; don't fidget. Turn your cell phone off. In a panel interview, if you are answering a long question, try and look at all interviewers in turn.
- 11. Dress** – Men are advised to wear dark blues and charcoals, no bottle greens and chocolate brown, no white socks, no grey shoes, no slip-ons, black brogues are the safest. Wear socks that are quite long so that hairy legs won't be visible should you cross your legs. No excessive jewellery, no earrings, no pony-tails (unless it's an ad agency job). Short, smart hair is the safest. Women are advised not to carry a handbag if you have a tendency to rummage in it when nervous. Simply carry a folder. If wearing trousers, wear a matching jacket. If wearing a skirt, wear stockings and shoes with a heel. A business suit creates a good impression, no excessive jewellery. A miniskirt is permissible, but it should not be too short. You wish to look businesslike and professional.
- 12.** If the interview is after lunch, ensure that there are no food stains on your tie. Do not eat garlic or drink alcohol.
- 13.** Have an early night before a morning interview.
- 14.** Wear glasses instead of contact lenses if the lenses make you squint, no dark glasses
- 15.** Do not smoke and never chew gum, decline drinks if you are nervous (your hand may shake). Give a firm handshake.
- 16.** Discuss personal dress and presentation code with your recruitment consultant. They should know the company and the interviewer they send you to and should therefore be able to give you the correct advice.
- 17. Do not criticize other people** – If asked how you get along with other people or what type of people you find it difficult to work with, this is how you should answer "Generally I get on with everybody, but I could not get on with someone who does not care for the company, is lazy or does not care about the standard of their work"

**18. The illegal questions! Sex, Religion, Race, Your medical history, Family planning, etc.**

Answer this by asking politely, "Can I ask why you need to know that?"

If he persists-refuse to answer or answer anyway

**Interviewers' Pet Peeves**

You sit facing the interviewer, feeling like things are moving along nicely when all of a sudden the interview takes a drastic turn for the worse. What just happened? You may have hit one of the interviewer's pet peeves, one of those things that automatically triggers a negative response. Here are seven of the most common peeves provided by experienced interviewers, along with some tips on how to avoid them:

**1. Smells: Too Much of a Good Smell Can Be Bad**

Don't douse yourself in perfume or cologne 5 minutes before the interview. It can be overpowering and not to the interviewers taste.

**2. Communication: Too Little Leaves Interviewers Exasperated**

Be prepared to answer questions and talk about yourself

**3. Communication: Too Much Can Be Too Much**

Candidates should stay focused, and answer the question asked -- in less than two to three minutes.

**4. Lack of Focus: Results in Losing the Interviewer**

Relating the answer given to one question back with another -- and asking clarifying or follow-up questions -- shows that the candidate is confident and [thinking about the whole picture](#) instead of enduring an interrogation

**5. Averting Your Eyes: One Way to Avert an Offer**

If you are [uncomfortable looking](#) into someone's eyes, look at his "third eye," just above and between the person's two eyes.

**6. Slang and Street Speak: Leave Them on the Street**

Slang words and street speak just don't have a place in most business environments. Also, candidates who say 'um,' 'like' and 'uh' between every other word may lose the interviewer's attention very quickly

**7. Deception: Little Lies Leave a Big Impression**

One major complaint among recruiters is when a candidate is not completely truthful; small lies are all too common in the world of recruitment. This includes not being completely forthcoming with relevant information, embellishing accomplishments, hiding jobs or leading the process on with no intention of ever following through. Building trust during the interview is key to getting an offer.