

Answering Job Interview Questions

- **Tell me about yourself.** Some employers use this as an icebreaker to get a sense of your personality. Don't rattle on, but don't be too short with your answers, either. When in doubt, stick to a couple of professional interests, your training, and one or two personal notes.
- **What were some of your hobbies or extracurricular activities?** Go over these briefly. If you aren't involved in anything, try to think of something you are interested in and may potentially explore in the future. Maybe mention your family and activities you enjoy with them.
- **Name your greatest strengths.** Employers want to know how you articulate your strengths as related to the job you might be doing. Emphasize strengths that may apply to the job, such as attention to detail, timeliness, ability to work well with others, etc. As a career-tech student, your greatest strength to an employer may be your willingness to learn.
- **What is your greatest weakness?** Believe it or not, the interviewer does not want to hear that you have no weaknesses. You can still be a good employee and have areas for growth. If you don't have a lot of experience or training, don't overemphasize this too much in your answers, but be honest. Choose a weakness that isn't particularly relevant, or pick something that positions you well for the job. For example, impatience. This can seem like a bad trait, but in the workplace it could lead you to success with the ability to get the job done quickly. The best weaknesses are "strengths in disguise."

- **Why do you want to work for us?** The employer is trying to find out why you want that particular job, or why you want to work at that particular shop. Talk about how your skills will fit in with the company. Don't forget about your career goals and how this job will move you in that direction. Here are some common examples. Are these yours?

- I want to learn a profession.
- You are very close to my school and where I live.
- I know I need guidance and mentoring, and you have a great reputation.
- My instructor said you run a very good facility.
- It is time for me to start making an income.

- **Why should I hire you?** Again, the interviewer wants you to tell him or her why you are the best candidate for the job. Use your experiences at school or another part-time job to illustrate the answer to this question. Let the interviewer know that you are willing to learn and accept all assignments in order to work your way up the ranks.

- **What are some of your accomplishments at school and outside of school?** Prepare a few successes so you are ready to answer this question. Emphasize accomplishments that are most relevant to the job. Mention any difficulties you may have had (without being negative) and how you overcame them. For example:

- I very seldom missed class.
- My instructor says I give more than most of the other students.
- I was involved in SkillsUSA, Boy Scouts, athletics, etc.



- **Describe a difficult situation with a teacher or student. How was it resolved?** This may not be a common question, but you need to be prepared for some curve balls. The potential employer is trying to determine your problem-solving abilities. In the workplace, difficult situations arise, and that includes working with customers. Have an example ready and try to show a positive attitude in your answer, focusing on how you resolved the situation rather than how someone else was at fault.



- **Where do you see yourself in 5 years?** An employer is not asking you to look into your crystal ball, and you don't have to give an exact answer. However, they do want to know that the potential job fits into your overall career aspirations. Planning and thinking ahead is a sure-fire way to get an employer's attention. They also want to know if you plan to stay with a company for awhile, and if the training they provide will serve not just you, but also them. Focus your answer on how your career goals align with that particular shop's needs.
- **Tell me about the best/worst teacher or coach you've ever had.** This question focuses on management style and how you might fit within a particular situation. Again, focus on the positive, or how you learned from a negative experience.
- **What kind of compensation/salary are you seeking?** This question probably will not be addressed in a first interview, but it may, so don't be surprised. It's important to be prepared with an answer just in case. You don't want to price yourself out of the game if they are offering slightly less. At the same time, you don't want to shortchange yourself. Ask your instructor what the market is paying. A good answer in an interview is to say that salary is negotiable and that you are looking for a competitive salary and benefits.