

Developing Interview Questions

Develop behavioral interview questions based on the job description, ensuring they are job-related and necessary for evaluating qualifications and skills. Avoid yes/no questions and consider ethical guidelines to prevent discrimination when framing your questions. Use past behavior as a predictor of future performance. You can find examples of behavioral interview questions at the end of this document.

Avoid Common Interviewing Mistakes & Biases

Stereotyping: Forming an opinion about how an individual might think, act, respond or perform on the job based upon their gender, religion, race, appearance or other characteristic.

Inconsistency in questioning: Asking different questions of each candidate leads to a skewed assessment of who would best perform the job. Questions designed to get information about a specific candidate are only appropriate in the context of a core set of questions asked of all candidates.

Being guided by first impressions: Making a judgment about someone based on one's first impression – positive or negative. For example, letting the fact that the candidate is wearing out-of-the-ordinary clothing or has a heavy regional accent take precedence over the applicant's knowledge, skills or abilities.

Negative emphasis: Rejecting a candidate based on a small amount of negative information. Unfortunately, this is a common occurrence; research indicates that interviewers give unfavorable information about twice the weight of favorable information.

Halo/horn effect: The "halo effect" occurs when an interviewer allows one strong point about the candidate to overshadow or influence everything else. For instance, knowing someone went to a particular university might be looked upon favorably. Everything the applicant says during the interview is seen in this light. (e.g., "Well, they left out an important part of the answer to that question, but they must know it; they went to XYZ University"). Conversely, the "horn effect" is allowing one weak point to influence everything else.

Cultural noise: Since the candidate wants the job, she or he will provide the words the interviewer wants to hear, even if those words are not entirely truthful. For example, an applicant might say that he has no problem reporting to someone younger, or working in a team setting when this is not the case. Interviewers should prepare questions that probe for specific examples and stay away from questions that elicit "yes" or "no" answers.

Nonverbal bias: Placing undue emphasis on nonverbal cues that have nothing to do with the job, such as loudness or softness of voice or the type of handshake given.

Contrast effect: Strong(er) candidates who interview after weak(er) ones may appear more qualified than they are because of the contrast between the two. Note-taking during the interview and a reasonable period between interviews may alleviate this.

(Adapted from the Society for Human Resource Management)

Sample Interview Questions

Employment & Education Background

- What is the highest level of education you have received? Where did you earn this degree/diploma?
- Please tell me about any other education or training that is relevant to the position.
- Who is your present or most recent employer?
- What are/were your major responsibilities in that position?
- What did you like best about that position? What did you like least? What was the most difficult part?
- Tell us about the skills required for your current/prior position. What skills have you acquired that will make you more competitive for the position?
- Which accomplishments in your present/most recent prior position are you proud of and why?
- Why are you planning to/did you leave that position?

Teamwork

- How do you go about developing relationships at work?
- We have all had to work with someone who is difficult to get along with. Give me an example of when this has happened to you. Why was that person difficult? How did you handle it? What would you do differently today?
- We all have ways of showing consideration for others. What are some things you've done to show concern or consideration for a co-worker?
- Describe a situation when you wished you had acted differently with someone at work.
- Tell me, specifically, what you have done to be a good team player at .
- Give me some examples of when one of your ideas was opposed in a team discussion/decision. How did you react? Were you able to influence the team to a greater understanding of your point of view?

Communication Skills

When assessing communication skills, it is important to observe the candidates as they respond throughout the interview. Consider if the applicant can express themselves effectively and in a well-organized manner.

- We've all had occasions when we misinterpreted something that someone told us – due date, complicated instructions, etc. Give me a specific example of when this happened to you. What was the situation? Why was there a misinterpretation? What was the outcome? What would you do differently?
- What kind of reports/proposals have you written? What are the most challenging parts of these reports/proposals? Give me an example from

your past working experience where you had to rely on information given to you verbally to get the job done.

- What different approaches do you use when communicating with different people? How do you know you are communicating well?
- What is the worst communication problem you've experienced? How did you handle it?

Analytical Problem Solving

- Give me an example of a time when you used your fact-finding skills to gain information needed to solve a problem. Then tell me how you analyzed the information and came to a decision, if applicable.
- Give me an example that demonstrates your ability to use a variety of approaches in your work.
- Tell me about a time when you were assigned a project for which you had little or no experience. What strategy did you adopt to plan and complete the assignment?
- Tell me about a difficult problem you solved for a customer or colleague.
- Describe a position you have held where your problem-solving skills were regularly tested.
- Tell me about a time when you had to quickly analyze a situation and quickly come to a decision. What were the trade-offs you made and why? What was the result?
- What steps do you follow to study a problem before making a decision? Walk me through a specific example.
- What is the most difficult decision you have ever had to make at work? Why was it so difficult? What process did you go through in order to get to your decision?
- Tell me about a time when you used multiple data sets to determine a solution. What tools and methods did you use?

Leadership

- What leadership skills and experience do you have that would qualify you as an effective leader? Be specific.
- Describe how you have influenced someone to do something new. What were the obstacles? Walk me through how you did it. Was it ultimately successful?
- Explain a situation where you had an opinion that differed from your manager or other leadership within the organization. What happened? Did you ultimately persuade others to agree?
- Tell me about the difference you see in management vs. leadership, provide specific examples of when you have been in each role? What was different? What was the same?
- Tell me about a time when you had to take a firm stand with a colleague.

What was the situation? What was difficult about the colleague? What was the firm stand you had to take? What was the outcome?

- Describe a time when you had to establish/re-establish the mission and values of an organization? What was going on at the time? How did you formulate the need to take action? How did you do it?
- Tell me about a time when you failed? What was happening? What were your mistakes? What was the organizational impact? What did you learn from it?
- Walk me through your approach to strategic planning. What scope of programs have you worked on? Who do you include? What major steps do you take? How do you implement a strategic plan effectively?

Motivation

- Give me an example of when you worked the hardest and felt the greatest sense of achievement.
- Tell me about the most boring job or task you have had. Why was it boring? What did you do about it? How did you handle the boredom?
- Tell me about a time when the duties and responsibilities available in a specific position overlapped with duties and responsibilities that brought you personal satisfaction.
- Why did you choose this [career/type of work]?
- What job values are important to you?
- What was the most useful feedback you ever received?
- How do you like to be recognized for doing good work? Tell me about a time you appreciated it most.

Initiative

- Please tell me about a project or idea (not necessarily your own) that was carried out successfully primarily because of your efforts.
- What new ideas or suggestions have you come up with at work? What problem were you solving?
- What things do you do to make your job easier or more rewarding?
- Tell me about a time when you recognized a problem before your supervisor or others at the organization. How did you handle it?
- How do you know if you are doing a good job?
- What career accomplishments are you most proud of?
- What risks did you take in your last position?

Planning & Organization

- How do you organize your day?
- How do you establish priorities in scheduling your time? Give specific examples.
- Tell me how you establish a course of action to accomplish specific short

and long-term goals.

- Do you postpone tasks, decisions, conversation, etc.? What are good reasons to postpone things? How do you manage the impact to others?
- How do you catch up on an accumulated backlog of work after a vacation or conference?
- What did you do to prepare for this interview?

Technical and/or Position-Specific

- What training have you received in ?
- On a scale of one to ten, ten being you are a perfect technical match for this position, where would you rank yourself? Why? Please give examples.
- What would you add to or subtract from your technical background to make you more qualified for this position?
- Describe how _____ process can best be performed. Have you discovered any efficiencies? How do they work?
- Walk me through the procedures you would follow to _____.
- Do you consider your technical abilities basic, intermediate or advanced? Why?

Work Standard

- What are your standards of success in your job? What have you done to meet those standards?
- What do you consider the most important contribution your department has made to the organization? What was your role?
- What factors, other than pay, do you consider most important in evaluating yourself or your success?
- Tell me about a time when you weren't very pleased with your work performance. Why were you disappointed with your performance? What did you do to turn around your performance?
- When judging the performance of others, what factors or characteristics are most important to you?

Mission Alignment

- How would you describe the mission of Whitworth?
- How would you integrate Whitworth's mission into your work?

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

General Questions

- What does it mean for you to have a commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion? How have you demonstrated that commitment in your professional life, scholarship or teaching, and how would you see yourself demonstrating that commitment at Whitworth University?
- How have the themes of diversity, equity, inclusion and/or justice shaped your life, teaching and professional aspirations?

- Read Whitworth's diversity statement, then ask: How will you contribute to our mission regarding the importance of diversity, equity and inclusion in your work? If possible, give examples of how that would play out in your pedagogy, curriculum design, student mentorship, etc.

Student-Focused Questions

- As a professor, how have you adapted your teaching style to meet the different learning styles and cultural backgrounds of the students in your classroom?
- What is your understanding of some of the common challenges faced by many first-generation college students, students of color, or students from historically underrepresented groups in higher education? How have you worked to address those challenges as a professional?

Professional Work Environment-Focused Questions

- Discuss the relationship between a diverse faculty and staff and educational excellence.
- Suppose that you encounter a pervasive belief that diversity and excellence are somehow in conflict. How do you conceptualize the relationship between diversity and excellence? What kinds of leadership efforts would you undertake to encourage a commitment to excellence through diversity? (Rochester Institute of Technology, n.d., question 25)
- In what ways have you contributed to helping the institutions you have served in the past pursue and achieve greater faculty and staff diversity? How would you contribute toward those efforts at Whitworth University?
- What expertise would you bring to Whitworth University regarding cultural competency and the integration of diverse identities, cultures and perspectives in curricular and co-curricular contexts?
- What does an inclusive university community look like to you? How would you contribute to the flourishing of all faculty, staff and students?

More Questions to Consider

- Describe a time when you were able to adapt your communication approach so you could interact more effectively with a person who came from a perspective, background or culture that was very different from your own. What did you do to find common ground?
- Sometimes there is a belief that a commitment to diversity conflicts with a commitment to excellence (i.e. we will have to lower our standards to achieve or accommodate diversity). How would you describe the relationship between diversity and excellence? What kinds of leadership efforts would you undertake to encourage a commitment to excellence through diversity?
- Could you please share a project or situation from your own work history that you found challenging because of competing interests, viewpoints and priorities for constituent groups? Describe how you managed the situation, including the specific options and strategies you chose to use? What factors did you consider when weighing the various diverse and conflicting viewpoints and priorities?
- Provide an example of what you have done in a higher educational setting to improve success for students of color and economically disadvantaged students. Please provide an example of how you do this in your daily work.
- Whitworth University values employees with diverse viewpoints and backgrounds. What has been your experience in working with people of culturally, ethnically or other diverse backgrounds?
- How has your [education/previous work experience] prepared you for [working with/teaching] a diverse population?

- How has your background and experience prepared you to be effective in an environment [that values diversity/is committed to inclusion] [where we see awareness of and respect for diversity as an important value]?
- What is your past experience or training in [working with/teaching] _____ populations?
- What specific experiences have you had addressing concerns of diverse communities/students/ populations at your current or previous institution? What role have you taken in addressing those concerns?
- Please tell us about an instance when you have demonstrated leadership or commitment to equity in your work.