

# TWENTY QUESTIONS EMPLOYERS MAY ASK

**1. “Tell me about yourself.”**

- a. Employer Motivation: To see how well you can communicate and structure your thoughts.
- b. Strategy: Prepare for this question in advance. Pretend that the employer said “Tell me about yourself and why you are interested in this job?” You might answer this question by quickly mentioning your relevant background, experience and skills, 3 strengths and then explaining why you believe the job would be the next logical step for you.
  - i. You can learn your strengths by taking a [career assessment](#).

**2. “What are your greatest work and non-work accomplishments?”**

- a. Employer Motivation: To know what you care about and what motivates you.
- b. Strategy: Choose something about which you are passionate. Do not say “Getting into UT Tyler.” as this is an accomplishment common to everyone attending this University, so you may want to think of other undertakings.

**3. “Describe three things that have been most important to you in a job.”**

- a. Employer Motivation: To find out about your work-related values.
- b. Strategy: Be truthful about what matters to you professionally rather than personally.
  - i. You can assess your values by taking the [Focus 2 Career Assessment](#).

**4. “How did you prepare for this interview?”**

- a. Employer Motivation: To see if you have made an effort to research the company, which shows your interest and initiative.
- b. Strategy: Talk about any research you have done through the company website, news articles, employees of the company, students who have interned with them already.

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## 5. “What do you know about this organization?”

- a. Employer Motivation: Similar to the previous question, the employer is checking your knowledge base and interest.
- b. Strategy: Provide an answer that indicates that you have researched the company before the interview. Example: “I’ve talked with some of your employees and they feel that this a good company to work for because...” “I have been reading that your company is really growing fast, planning two new branches this year. I want to work for your company because the future looks promising.”

## 6. “What is your biggest strength and your biggest weakness?”

- a. Employer Motivation: To find out if your strengths would be used in the position. To find out if you are aware of the areas where you need improvement and that you have a plan to work around it.
- b. Strategy: You can give examples of your strengths if you wish (e.g. “I’m an excellent writer. Most of my teachers have commented on my ability to organize my thoughts and communicate with a variety of audiences.”) With your weaknesses, explain how you work around them or try to strengthen them. Avoid sharing a weakness that directly relates to the job’s requirements.

## 7. “Describe your ideal supervisor.”

- a. Employer Motivation: To see if you would be effective working for the supervisor.
- b. Strategy: It is much easier to answer this question if you already know the supervisor and his/her style. If not, you may want to state broad preferences, or consider mentioning how you would be a good supervisee.

## 8. “Why did you choose your major?”

- a. Employer Motivation: To find out your interests and preferences and then see if they fit with the job and the company culture.
- b. Strategy: If your major is unrelated to the industry, consider what aspects of your interests are most relevant to the job and focus on that side (e.g. your love of independent quantitative analysis vs. your love of team projects.)

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**9. “Tell me about a time when you worked as part of a team.”**

- a. Employer Motivation: To assess your teamwork, interpersonal and leadership skills.
- b. Strategy: Pick a specific example that has a “happy ending” and about which you are proud.

**10. “What does diversity mean to you and how can it impact teams and results?”**

- a. Employer Motivation: To assess your knowledge and commitment to diversity and to examine your understanding of effective interpersonal and team dynamics.
- b. Strategy: Describe your definition of diversity and how it might be a fit for the organizational structure, keeping in mind any organizational research or literature you may have seen on this issue.

**11. “What have you learned from your past job or internship?”**

- a. Employer Motivation: To see if you can learn from your experiences.
- b. Strategy: Highlight some skills that you have gleaned from each of your major job/internship experiences and perhaps how you have refined those skills in subsequent positions.

**12. “What specific skills have you acquired or used in previous jobs that relate to this position?”**

- a. Employer Motivation: To see if you have a clear idea of the skills needed for the position that is advertised.
- b. Strategy: Be sure to have thought about your skills before the interview. A good way to do this is to highlight the skills mentioned in the job description and then think about how you might be able to prove each of those skills.

**13. “What did you like least about your previous job or internship?”**

- a. Employer Motivation: To gauge how you deal with obstacles and/or conflict and to assess your performance in a work setting.
- b. Strategy: Definitely give this question some thought prior to any interview. Try to balance anything negative with something positive.

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**14. “Tell me about a time when you disappointed a supervisor?”**

- a. Employer Motivation: To see how honest you are about your mistakes.
- b. Strategy: Pick something small to discuss (e.g. one day being late or making an error early in your training). Be sure to explain how you learned from the experience. Never speak negative about your co-workers or superiors.

**15. “How would you motivate a co-worker who was performing poorly on a team project?”**

- a. Employer Motivation: To see how you relate to others and perhaps how you can think outside the box.
- b. Strategy: Draw upon your teamwork experiences, both school- and work-related, to present a thoughtful and logical approach.

**16. “Tell me about an unpopular decision you made. How did you make the decision? In retrospect, how do you think you handled it?”**

- a. Employer Motivation: To see how you make decisions and how you handle differences of opinion.
- b. Strategy: Include all aspects of the decision-making process as well as your analysis of the decision after the fact.

**17. “How would your best friend describe you?”**

- a. Employer Motivation: To see if you can confidently state your strengths.
- b. Strategy: A popular variation of this question is to state three adjectives that describe you -- short but informative.

**18. “How will employment with us contribute to your career plans?”**

- a. Employer Motivation: To gauge what your long-term career goals are and how they fit with his/her particular organization.
- b. Strategy: Provide an outline of what your career goals are at that time, but you don't necessarily have to have a concrete timeline for the next twenty years in mind.

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## 19. “Why should we hire you?”

- a. Employer Motivation: To see if you can concisely sell your strengths.
- b. Strategy: You may want to say something like “I think there are three main reasons you should hire me. First...” Three main selling points will stick in the interviewer's mind. Structuring your answer with numbers will keep you focused. This is not the time for many details. This question is best answered with a summary of your major assertions.

## 20. “What salary do you expect?”

- a. Employer Motivation: To see if your expectations are in line with his/hers.
- b. Strategy: Never state a flat dollar amount unless you know what the job pays. Provide a range. Try a neutral statement: “I would expect to be paid what other persons in this position/area are paid”.