

Ross Career Services Guide to:

# Sample Interview Questions

## Career Search Steps

1. Self-Assess and Determine Focus
2. Develop Resume and Online Brand
3. Conduct networking
4. Prepare and Interview
5. Decide and Negotiate

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The best interviews are a two-way street -- you should be just as interested in learning about the job and the company as they are in learning about you. To that end, this guide is divided into two main sections. The first section contains sample questions you may be asked during an interview, and the second section contains sample questions you may want to ask the interviewer about the job and the company.

## Section 1: Questions You May Be Asked

The following is a sample of commonly asked interview questions categorized by question type. This is not an exhaustive list and students should be prepared to answer a variety of behavioral and technical interview questions.

### FIT & BACKGROUND QUESTIONS

#### General

- Tell me about yourself.
- Walk me through your resume.
- What do you do in your free time?
- What is your favorite website/book/movie?
- How would you spend \$1,000,000, besides investing it?
- What does success mean to you?
- What person, living or not, do you admire most and why?

#### Education

- Why are you pursuing X ? (X = degree)
- Why did you choose Michigan Ross?
- What courses are you taking?
- What is your favorite/least favorite class?
- Do you feel your grades accurately reflect your abilities?

#### Career

- Why are you interested in X? (X = function)
- What are your career goals?
- Where do you see yourself in 5/10 years?
- Describe your ideal job.
- Why do you want to work at X? (X = company)
- What is the most important thing you look for in an employer?
- What concerns you about our company?
- Tell me more about your summer (internship).
- Tell me more about this bullet on your resume.

## BEHAVIORAL & SITUATIONAL QUESTIONS

### Multi-tasking/Handling Pressure

- Describe a time when you had to complete multiple projects in a short time period. How did you meet your deadlines while maintaining quality work?
- Do you have a system for managing your time?
- Describe a time when you had to work under high pressure.
- What is the most difficult (work-related) decision you have ever made? What happened? What did you learn?

### Leadership

- How do you define leadership?
- Describe a time when your leadership made a difference.
- Describe a situation when you had to provide negative feedback to a team member or co-worker.
- Describe a time when your leadership was challenged. How did you respond to it?
- Discuss a situation where you had to persuade someone to agree with your point of view.

### Initiative

- Describe a time when your initiative made the difference in achieving a personal or group goal.
- Describe a time when you took the initiative to create or improve something.

### Teamwork

- What role(s) do you typically find yourself playing in a team?
- Do you like to work independently or as part of a group?
- Describe a time when you worked on a dysfunctional team. What did you do to get the team on track to reach its goal?
- How would your classmates or co-workers describe you?
- Describe a time when you had a conflict with a team member. How did you resolve it?
- What types of people frustrate you?

### Strengths/Achievement

- What is your greatest achievement to date?
- What are your greatest strengths?
- Why should we hire you?
- What makes you different from the other candidates I'll see today?

### Weakness/Failure

- What is your most significant weakness?
- Tell me a time when you failed at something.
- What is the biggest mistake you have made?
- What is your biggest disappointment in life?

### Learning/Intellect

- Describe a time when you had to learn something that was difficult for you. How did you approach learning it?
- Discuss a project which best demonstrates your analytical skills.
- Tell me about a time when you had to analyze or interpret financial information.

### Ethics/Character

- Tell me about a time you faced an ethical dilemma.
- Who do you admire? Why?
- What do you think is more important, intelligence or hard work?

### Strategy/Decision Making/Innovation

- Give an example of a time when you developed a strategy and executed it.
- How do you generally make decisions?
- Describe a time when you had to make a decision without complete information.
- Describe a time when you challenged or changed the status quo.

The following is a sample of commonly asked technical interview questions categorized by industry. This is not an exhaustive list and students should consult with industry-specific student clubs for additional interview preparation advice.

## TECHNICAL & INDUSTRY QUESTIONS *(excluding case questions)*

### Accounting

- If you were able to increase capitalized interest by \$100M, what would happen to EBITA?
- If a company makes a capital expenditure of \$100M, what would be the effect on the three financial statements?
- Which is the most important financial statement?
- How do you find the change in net working capital?
- What is depreciation and amortization?

### Consulting

- How many golf balls can fit into a Boeing 747?
- Why are soda cans tapered on the top and bottom?
- You are in a boat on a lake with a rock in your hand. You throw the rock into the lake. What happens to the water level?
- Estimate how many shoes are sold in the U.S. each year.

### Finance

- When should a company issue stock instead of debt?
- Why do companies merge?
- How do you value a company?
- Walk me through the DCF, CAPM.
- How do you calculate free cash flow from net income?
- Which is higher, levered or unlevered Beta?
- If I gave you a dollar a day for the rest of your life, what is it worth today?
- If a client had \$5 million in cash and wanted to know whether to pay dividends, how would you advise him or her?
- How do you pitch a bond?
- Why does a high yield bond not really have a higher yield?
- Pitch me a stock.
- Should I buy stock in X? (X = a company)
- If I gave you a million dollars to invest, how would you develop a portfolio?
- Name an industry you would recommend investing in. Why?
- What are the current levels of the DJ? NASDAQ? S&P 500?

### General Management

- What do you know about this company?
- If you were CEO of our company, which two industry trends would you find to be most significant?
- What are the top three skills needed to be a general manager?
- What do you think is the most difficult thing about being a manager or executive?

### Marketing

- Give me an example of a well-marketed product.
- Name our major products.
- How would you describe the personality of Brand X? Brand Y?
- If you were a manufacturer of ping pong balls and the game ceased to exist, what are 10 alternate things you could do with the balls?
- What technologies or techniques would you leverage to productively reach consumers?
- Given a particular product, how will you identify your target market and how will you find them?

## PRESSURE QUESTIONS

- Why should I hire you?
- Why shouldn't I hire you?
- What other companies are you interviewing with?
- If I were to make you an offer right now, would you accept?
- If you received an offer from us and also from Company X, which one would you take?
- Tell me a joke.
- Sell me this pen.
- What is the name of our CFO?
- What is our stock trading at today?
- You don't look like an X to me. (X = functional role)

## LOGISTICAL QUESTIONS

- What are your salary requirements?
- When would you be available to start?
- Are you willing to relocate to X? (X = location)
- Are you authorized to work in X? (X = country)
- Are you willing and able to travel four days per week?

## ILLEGAL (US) QUESTIONS

- How old are you?
- Your last name is X. What kind of name is that?
- Do you have a boyfriend / girlfriend?
- Are you currently married?
- What is your sexual orientation?
- How many kids do you have?
- Do you have a physical disability?
- Do you have any health problems?
- Do you drink?
- How much do you weigh?
- What religion do you practice?
- Are you a U.S. citizen?

## “ODDBALL” INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

While there are a number of questions typically asked in an interview, some companies have come up with “oddball” questions that prove interviewees should be prepared for anything. Get ready to take on these quirky questions with this list of Glassdoor's Top 25 Oddball Interview Questions for 2014.

- "If you could throw a parade of any caliber through the Zappos office what type of parade would it be?"
- "How lucky are you and why?"
- "If you were a pizza deliveryman how would you benefit from scissors?"
- "If you could sing one song on American Idol, what would it be?"
- "Are you more of a hunter or a gatherer?"
- "Question was asked: "If you were on an island and could only bring 3 things, what would you bring?""
- "If you were a box of cereal, what would you be and why?"
- "Do you believe in Big Foot?"

*If you have come across any questions that are not on this list, but you feel should be, please feel free to email [RossCareerServices@umich.edu](mailto:RossCareerServices@umich.edu) your suggestions.*

**“ODDBALL” INTERVIEW QUESTIONS (continued)**

- "Why is a tennis ball fuzzy?"
- "What is your least favorite thing about humanity?"
- "How would you use Yelp to find the number of businesses in the US?"
- "How honest are you?"
- "How many square feet of pizza are eaten in the US each year?"
- "Can you instruct someone how to make an origami "cootie catcher" with just words?"
- "If you were 80 years old, what would you tell your children?"
- "You're a new addition to the crayon box, what color would you be and why?"
- "How does the internet work?"
- "If there was a movie produced about your life, who would play you, and why?"
- "What's the color of money???. . ."
- "What was the last gift you gave someone?"
- "What is the funniest thing that has happened to you recently?"
- "How many snow shovels sold in the US last year?"
- "It's Thursday, we're staffing you on a telecommunications project in Calgary, Canada on Monday. Your flight and hotel are booked; your visa is ready. What are the top five things you do before you leave?"
- "Most unexpected question: Describe to me the process and benefits of wearing a seatbelt."
- "Have you ever been on a boat? (Creative Open-ended question)"

Find these questions on Glassdoor's website at:

[http://www.glassdoor.com/Top-25-Oddball-Interview-Questions-LST\\_KQ0,34.htm?utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=newsletter&utm\\_campaign=ODDBL14&utm\\_content=list](http://www.glassdoor.com/Top-25-Oddball-Interview-Questions-LST_KQ0,34.htm?utm_medium=email&utm_source=newsletter&utm_campaign=ODDBL14&utm_content=list)

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## Section 2: Questions You May Want To Ask

There are two reasons you need to prepare good questions to ask during an interview:

1. It demonstrates to the interviewer that you're truly interested in the job.
2. It's a critical to get complete information about the job and the company before you accept an offer.

We strongly recommend that you prepare your questions in advance. When you're under pressure and wanting or even desperate to get an offer, it's difficult to remember that you're interviewing the company too. In addition, you'll usually have limited time to ask questions, so you need to prioritize to get your most important questions answered first. The list of questions below is not exhaustive or presented as a cookbook. Instead, it's meant to provide examples and provoke ideas about questions you need to ask to decide whether the job and the company are a good fit for you.

### The Job

Make sure you have a handle on exactly what the day-to-day responsibilities of the job will be—both now and in the future.

- Could you describe a typical day or week in this position? The typical client or customer I would be dealing with?
- What are the day-to-day responsibilities of this job?
- What would you consider to be the most important aspects of this job?
- What are some challenges that will face the person filling this position?
- What are the most immediate challenges of the position that need to be addressed in the first three months?
- How does \_\_\_\_\_ (something you read in a recent article) affect this job?
- Can you show me examples of projects I'd be working on?
- What are the most immediate projects that need to be addressed?
- What are the qualities, attributes, skills and experiences you're looking for in an ideal candidate?
- What are some of the skills and abilities necessary for someone to succeed in this job?
- What attributes does someone need to have in order to be really successful in this position?
- What would you say are the three most important skills needed to excel in this position?
- Can you describe an ideal employee?
- What types of skills is the team missing that you're looking to fill with a new hire?
- What are the biggest challenges that someone in this position would face?
- What sort of budget would I be working with?
- Do you expect the main responsibilities for this position to change in the next six months to a year?
- How does upper management view the role and importance of this department and this position?
- What kind of work can I expect to be doing the first year?
- What percentage of routine, detailed work will I encounter?
- How much opportunity is there to see the end result of my efforts?
- What particular computer equipment and software do you use?
- How much opportunity will I have for decision-making in my first assignment?
- What is the single largest problem facing your staff, and would I be in a position to help you solve this problem?
- How do you see this position contributing to the success of the organization?
- Are you most interested in a candidate who works independently, on a team, cross-functionally, or through a combination of them all? Can you give me an example?

### The Position's History

Asking about why the position is vacant can provide insight into the company and the potential for advancement.

- Is this a new position, or did someone leave? If someone left, why did they leave or what did they go on to do?
- Where have successful employees previously in this position progressed to internally?
- How has this position evolved since it was created? If it is a new position - How do you see this position evolving over time?
- What were the major strengths and weaknesses of the last person who held this job?

## The Team

The people you work with day in and day out can really make or break your work life. Ask some questions to uncover whether it's the right team for you.

- Who would be my manager, and will I have the opportunity to meet him or her?
- Who will I report to directly?
- Can you tell me about the team I'll be working with?
- Who will I work with most closely?
- Can you tell me about my direct reports? What are their strengths and the team's biggest challenges?
- How does \_\_\_\_\_ (something you read in a recent article) affect this team?

## The Department

Asking about your department's workers and role in the company can help you understand more about the company's culture and hierarchy.

- What is the overall structure of the company and how does your department fit the structure?
- Do you expect to hire more people in this department in the next six months?
- Which other departments work most closely with this one?
- What are the common career paths in this department?
- What have been the department's successes in the last couple of years?
- How do you view your group/division/department?
- How does \_\_\_\_\_ (something you read in a recent article) affect this department?

## The Company

Because you're not just working for one boss or one department, you're working for the company as a whole.

- I've read about the company's founding, but can you tell me more about \_\_\_\_?
- Where do you see this company in the next few years?
- What can you tell me about your new products or plans for growth?
- What are the current goals that the company is focused on, and how does this team work to support hitting those goals?
- What are some of the goals for the company in both the short and long term?
- What gets you most excited about the company's future?
- What are the organization's/company's strengths and weaknesses compared to its competition?
- How do you rate your competition?
- What do you think distinguishes this company from its competitors, both from a public and employee perspective?
- Could you explain your organizational structure?
- How do you see the future for this industry?
- What do you consider to be your firm's most important assets?
- How does \_\_\_\_\_ (something you read in a recent article) affect this company?

## Training and Professional Development

Think of each new job not just as a job, but as the next step on your path to career success. Will this position help you get there?

- How will I be trained?
- What training programs are available to your employees?
- What is the company's policy on providing seminars, workshops, and training so employees can keep up their skills or acquire new ones?
- Are there opportunities for advancement or professional development?
- Would I be able to represent the company at industry conferences?
- Are there specific professional organizations employees have been encouraged to join?
- Where have successful employees previously in this position progressed to within the company?

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*Section 2: Questions You May Want to Ask (continued)*

### **Training and Professional Development (continued)**

- How much guidance or assistance is made available to individuals in developing career goals?
- What is the typical career trajectory for a person in this position?

### **Performance Management**

Make sure you're setting yourself up for success by learning up front the goals of the position and how your work will be evaluated.

- What are the most important things you'd like to see someone accomplish in the first 30, 60, and 90 days on the job?
- What are the performance expectations of this position over the first 12 months?
- What is the performance review process like here? How often would I be formally reviewed?
- What metrics or goals will my performance be evaluated against?
- How will my leadership responsibilities and performance be measured? By whom?
- How and by whom will my performance be reviewed? Are there specific criteria upon which I would be evaluated? And how frequently is formal and informal review given to new employees?
- What particular achievements would equate to success at this job? What would success look like?

### **Interviewer**

Asking questions of the interviewer shows that you're interested in him or her as a person—and that's a great way to build rapport.

- How long have you been with the company?
- Has your role changed since you've been here?
- What did you do before this?
- Why did you come to this company?
- What's your favorite part about working here?
- Why do you like working here?
- If the interviewer will be your supervisor: What is your ideal communication style with your staff? Do you meet regularly with your team, rely heavily on e-mail, use status reports or work primarily through other means?

### **The Culture**

Is the office buttoned-up conservative or a fly-by-the-seat-of-your-pants kind of place? Learn the subtle, but oh-so-important, aspects of company culture.

- How would you describe the work environment here—is the work typically collaborative or more independent?
- Can you tell me about the last team event you did together?
- Is there a formal mission statement or company values? (Note: Make sure this isn't Google-able!)
- What's your favorite office tradition?
- What do you and the team usually do for lunch?
- Does anyone on the team hang out outside the office?
- Do you ever do joint events with other companies or departments?
- What's different about working here than anywhere else you've worked?
- How has the company changed since you joined?
- Would you describe your company's management style and the type of employee who fits well with it?
- How do decisions get made here?
- What are the various ways employees communicate with one another to carry out their work?
- How would you describe the company's culture and leadership philosophy?

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*Section 2: Questions You May Want to Ask (continued)*

### Next Steps

Before you leave, make sure the interviewer has all of the information he or she needs and that you're clear on the next steps by asking these questions.

- Is there anything that concerns you about my background being a fit for this role?
- How do you see me as a candidate for the job in comparison with an ideal candidate?
- Do you have any concerns about me or about my qualifications that may prevent you from selecting me for the job?
- Is there anything else I can provide you with that would be helpful?
- Can I answer any final questions for you?
- What are the next steps in the interview process?
- What is the next step? When do you think you will be making a decision?

### Additional Tips

- Bring a portfolio or notepad and writing implement to every interview so you can take notes. Even if you have an eidetic memory, you want to demonstrate to the interviewer that the information is important to you.
- Never ask for information you could have easily found with a quick Google search
- Wait until after you've received an offer to inquire about pay, time off, benefits, transfers to other offices/cities, timing of promotions, etc.
- "Good questions" are those you ask
  - after you've done your research on a company
  - when you are honestly curious
  - to help you judge whether you'd like the work and the environment
- "Bad questions" are those you ask
  - when you're trying to impress the company rep, recruiter, or interviewer
  - when you're trying to be profound and/or original
  - when you don't care about the answer