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# Knock ‘Em Dead: The Best Job Interview Questions to Ask

By [Anna Helhoski](#) on May 15, 2015 | posted in [NerdWallet Grad](#)



When you near the end of the interview, you’re likely to be asked: “Do you have any questions for me?” The worst thing you can do is shake your head, smile and say “no,” according to experts. Instead, be ready to respond with a few foolproof questions of your own.

Nicole Cox, chief recruitment officer at Decision Toolbox, a nationwide recruitment firm, said one of her team members learned this lesson when he responded “no” to this question during his job interview with the company’s founder.

“The founder says back to him, ‘I think you need to reconsider that response. To be here, you need to be inquisitive. You need to be able to dig in,’” Cox says. “I think a lot of employers are looking for people to be inquisitive and not just have everything handed to them.”

Preparing four to six thoughtful, non-clichéd questions signals to a hiring manager that you’re thinking about the job, the company and how you’ll fit into the organization. Here are a few ways to answer this [common interview question](#).

## Ask about the job

When you ask questions about the job for which you're interviewing, you need to think about the message you're sending, says Jane Sunley, CEO of the software company Purple Cubed and author of the book "It's Never OK to Kiss the Interviewer."

If you want to appear goal-oriented, you could say: "If I was to come here, what would you expect me to achieve in the first three months, and how will I know if I was fulfilling it?" Or, "If I was going to accomplish one key outcome in this role, what would that be?" Sunley suggests. "What you're doing is putting yourself in a situation of being in the company and being successful, and that helps them to think of you in that context."

*Ways to ask:*

- "What sort of attributes and skills are needed to be successful in this position?"
- "How does this position fit into 'X' team or the company?"
- "What kind of challenges would someone expect to face in this position?"
- "How is performance measured in this position?"

*What not to ask:*

Avoid anything that indicates you're not flexible, such as:

- "Will I have to work weekends?"
- "Can I work from home?"
- "How often will I have to work more than 40 hours?"

## Ask about the company

You want to ask questions that demonstrate your genuine eagerness about the company and your knowledge of what they do, says Cathleen Faerber, managing director of The Wellesley Group Inc., an executive search company in Lake Zurich, Illinois.

Come to the interview with the intention of learning more, Faerber suggests. With that mindset, asking the right kinds of questions will come naturally.

The questions you ask enable you to make a powerful statement about how you are as a candidate, says Harold Mann, president of Mann Consulting, a San Francisco-based IT support firm. "Asking a question that's insightful shows you've done your homework and shows you've taken the time to get to know the company and that you really care," he says.

*Ways to ask:*

- “What are some of the big projects that need to be addressed, short-term and long-term?”
- “How does your company view talent?”
- “Can you tell me about your company’s social responsibilities?”
- “What’s the leadership style like here?”
- “What kind of training program do you have?”
- “Do you have a mentoring program?”
- “What long-term opportunities are available?”
- “How would you describe the company culture?”

*What not to ask:* You don’t want to ask anything that makes it obvious you haven’t done your research, such as “What does your company do?” or “Who are your main competitors?”

## Be prepared to be spontaneous

Be ready to throw out your prepared list and ask questions on the fly. Rather than stick to a list, engage your interviewer in a dialogue, experts say. “Don’t sit there with your list if you’re losing the person. You need to be very aware of the person’s interest levels, and you want to be engaged with them and not boring them to death,” Sunley says.

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*Ways to ask:* To engage your interviewer, you might want to ask a general question, then ask a follow-up question that references something you discussed earlier in the interview process, suggests Christie Mohlke, assistant director of career development and internships at Grinnell College in Grinnell, Iowa. From here, you should be able to get a conversation going instead of sticking to a dry question-and-answer format.

*What not to ask:* Don’t ask questions that were already answered earlier in the interview or questions that can be easily answered via the company’s website. Also, avoid asking questions that use a lot of industry jargon or buzzwords, Mohlke says. “I encourage this because you might be in a conversation where you aren’t as knowledgeable as the interviewer. Focus instead on the specific organization’s mission.”

## Ask about next steps

When you've reached your last question, you want to show you're looking forward to the next stage of the process. However, this isn't the time to bring up questions that would be better asked after you're offered the job. For example, avoid questions about salary, health benefits, vacation time and other perks that can wait until you're in [negotiations](#).

*Ways to ask:*

- “What are some next steps in the process?”
- “Who is the best person to follow up with?”
- “When is the company aiming to fill this position?”

*What not to ask:* Experts agree you should never, ever ask “How did I do in this interview?” or “Have I got the job?”

*Anna Helhoski is a staff writer covering personal finance for NerdWallet. Follow her on Twitter [@AnnaHelhoski](#).*