

## Questions updated on Jan 2025

### Types of Questions

Interviewers use five different types of questions - directive, non-directive, hypothetical, behaviour descriptive, and stress. Being aware of the different types can help you in the preparation stage as you build your skills inventory. It may also help you focus in on exactly what is being asked and what the employer is looking for in specific questions.

### Directive Questions

The interviewer determines the focus of your answer. The information that the interviewer wants is very clear. If you have completed the research on yourself, this type of question should be easy to answer.

**Example:** *"What skills do you have that relate to this position?"*

*"I have very good communication and interpersonal skills that I have refined through several summer and part-time jobs working with the public. In addition, I am fluent in both English and French."*

### Non-Directive Questions

You determine the focus of your answer. The interviewer asks a general question and does not ask for specific information. The most common non-directive question is

*"Tell me about yourself."*

When answering the question, keep in mind that the employer is interested in knowing how your background and personality qualify you for the job. In your answer, you should cover four areas: your education, related experience, skills and abilities, and personal attributes. As you talk about these areas, relate them to the job you are seeking. Decide what your response will be before starting to speak, this helps to keep responses concise.

**Example:** *"Tell me about yourself."*

*"I have a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Psychology, and have recently completed the course*

*in Volunteer Management through the Volunteer Center of Winnipeg. These have given me a strong background in many of the principles of human behaviour and the recruitment, training, and supervision of volunteers. I have experience in working with young adults in a helping capacity, both through my position as a Peer Advisor at the University of Manitoba, and as a camp counsellor at a camp for behaviourally troubled adolescents. Both of these positions involved individual counselling, facilitating discussion groups, and teaching young people about health issues - all of which relate directly to the services which I would be training volunteers to provide within your organization. In addition, I thoroughly enjoy working with young people, and can establish rapport with them easily."*

### Hypothetical or Scenario Questions

When asking a hypothetical question, the interviewer describes a situation, which you may encounter in the position and asks how you would react in a similar situation. This is a good way to test problem-solving

abilities. When answering this type of question, try applying a simple problem-solving model to it – gather information, evaluate the information, prioritize the information, seek advice, weigh the alternatives, make a decision, communicate the decision, monitor the results and modify if necessary.

**Example:** *"Suppose you are working your first day in our laboratory, and a fire at a nearby work station breaks out. What would you do?"*

*"Before I start working in any laboratory, I always locate the emergency equipment, such as eye washes, fire blankets and alarms. I would also review the safety protocols. So, in this situation, I would be aware of these. As soon as I noticed the fire, I would shut down my experiment and if the fire is significant, I would pull the fire alarm and help to evacuate the lab. In the case of very small flame, I would ask the staff member at the station what I could do to help, which would vary with the type of substances involved."*

### **Behaviour Descriptive or Behavioural Questions**

This type of question is becoming increasingly popular in interview situations. It asks what you did in a particular situation rather than what you would do. Situations chosen usually follow the job description fairly closely. Some employers feel that examples of past performance will help them to predict future performance in similar situations. There is no right or wrong answer to this type of question, but keep in mind that you should relate the answer to the position. If you are interviewing for a research position, talk about a research project you completed.

**Example:** *"Give me an example of a work situation in which you were proud of your performance."*

*"While working as a sales representative for XYZ Company for the summer, I called on prospective clients and persuaded them of the ecological and economic benefits of Recycling. I also followed up on clients to ensure that they were satisfied with the service they received. This involved both telephone and in-person contacts. I increased sales 34% over the same period in the previous year."*

When preparing for this type of questioning, it is crucial that you review the skills and qualities that the position would require and identify specific examples from your past which demonstrated those traits.

### **Stress Questions**

Some questions will surprise you and possibly make you feel uncomfortable during an interview. For

**Example:** *"Which do you prefer, fruits or vegetables?"* There are many reasons why an interviewer might ask such questions. They may want to see how you react in difficult situations, or they may simply be trying to test your sense of humour. Such questions may directly challenge an opinion that you have just stated or say something negative about you or a reference. Sometimes they ask seemingly irrelevant questions such as,

*"If you were an animal, what type of animal would you be?"*

The best way to deal with this type of question is to recognize what is happening. The interviewer is trying to elicit a reaction from you. Stay calm, and do not become defensive. If humour comes naturally to you, you might try using it in your response, but it is important to respond to the question. What you say is not nearly as important as maintaining your composure.

**Example:** *"Which do you like better, Lions or Tigers?"*

*"Oh, lions definitely. They appear so majestic and are very sociable. To be honest, I think that seeing The Lion King four times has probably contributed to this!"*

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