

# GENERAL PRACTICE INTERVIEW FEEDBACK GUIDELINES

**Mock Interview Prep:** You will have the chance to practice answering several of the following questions during your mock interview. Please review the guidelines below so you can practice giving your best answers during your appointment.

Questions to Ask	What Employer Is Often Assessing	Things to Avoid	Things to Do/Say
<p><b>1. Tell me/us a little about yourself.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ What you could bring to the job table, or what value you would bring to their company or organization</li> <li>▪ Your vision/passion for their company and/or this position</li> <li>▪ How well you understand and resonate with their bottom line and how you intend to contribute to it</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Don't give a life history, travel log, or share irrelevant or inappropriate personal information               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Don't offer answers to questions that are illegal for them to ask (i.e., age, marital/family status, ethnicity, gender orientation, hidden disabilities, etc.)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Articulate how your work experience, education, strengths, vision, skills, and/or intended contributions will meet the top needs of the company for this position               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ One way you could do this is to make a relevant claim and back it up w/a powerful example</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Keep it to 30-60 seconds, unless they specify a specific amount of time that you should take</li> <li>▪ Typically Include personal info only as it is relevant to the job</li> </ul>
<p><b>2. Why do you want to work for our company/organization?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Do you really want to work for their company and in this specific position? Or are you just looking for any job that you can get?</li> <li>▪ Have you taken the time to research their company?</li> <li>▪ Have you assessed how well you would fit and the specific, unique value that you could bring to the organization?</li> </ul>	<p><b>Avoid Me-Centered Answers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ “I need a job to pay for school”</li> <li>▪ “I need to get experience”</li> <li>▪ “You seem like you'd be a good company to work for”</li> <li>▪ I want to work for an industry leader” (without including your intended contributions)</li> <li>▪ “I would learn a lot from this job”</li> <li>▪” I would have fun here”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Show them you've done your research and that you are here to meet their needs by saying something like... (only if it is true, of course)</li> </ul> <p>“I know that you value _____, and that is exactly in line with what I want to do in my career. I have experience in _____ and feel I could make a significant contribution to your company's efforts in this area.”</p> <p><b>OR</b></p> <p>“I thrive in organizations that value and invest in _____. For example, in my past work experiences I was able to _____. These are the kinds of contributions I would like to make with your company.”</p>

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<b>3. What appeal to you about this position?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Are you serious about this job? Are you motivated by the right things? Are you self-centered or contribution-centered?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Avoid me-centered, vague answers that do not show your knowledge of the position/company</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Discuss the unique contributions that you intend to make—in the context of what appeals to you—that are relevant to this position and the audience’s top priorities.</li> </ul>
<b>4. Where do you see yourself in 5-10 years?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ What are your longevity intentions? How seriously are you taking this position?</li> <li>▪ Do you just see this as a holdover job?</li> <li>▪ Will this job help you progress toward your career aspirations?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Do not give unrealistic, naïve or vague answers</li> <li>▪ Do not talk about your family plans. (Answer with the assumption that you will be working for the next 5-10 years.)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Show the company how this job would enable you to meet their needs as well as your current job/career aspirations</li> <li>▪ Show them how it ties in with your long-term goals while contributing to the fulfillment of their goals and mission</li> </ul>
<b>5. What is your greatest strength?</b>  <b>OR</b>  <b>What would your coworkers say is your greatest strength?</b>  <b>OR</b>  <b>What do other people like about you?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Fit                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Are your strengths a good fit for this job? (Is your top strength what they need the most? Will it help take them in the direction they are trying to go? Or do they already have enough of it and need something else?)</li> <li>○ Will you fit in with their company and department culture?</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Self-Awareness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Starting a strength without giving an example and result</li> <li>▪ Giving a low-level strength or example when you could give high-level ones</li> <li>▪ Not showing how your strength is relevant to and will benefit them</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Before the Interview:</b> Do your research on what is most important to the company and assess how you are uniquely qualified to meet their needs</li> <li>▪ <b>During the Interview:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Explain your strength in ‘power statement’ form (claim, example, result)</li> <li>○ Articulate how your greatest strength can meet their top needs</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

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<p><b>6. What is your greatest weakness?</b></p> <p><b>OR</b></p> <p><b>What would your current co-workers say is your greatest weakness?</b></p> <p><b>OR</b></p> <p><b>What do other people not like about you?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Red Flags</li> <li>▪ Self-awareness</li> <li>▪ Cultural fit</li> <li>▪ Ability to successfully handle specific challenges you might face in this position</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Do not berate or criticize yourself</li> <li>▪ Do not beat around the bush or give a vague or flowery answer that doesn't really answer the question</li> <li>▪ Do not lie or stretch the truth</li> <li>▪ Do not give cliché answer or try to disguise a weakness as a strength</li> </ul> <p><b>Ex:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ I'm a perfectionist</li> <li>○ I work too hard.</li> <li>○ I care too much.</li> <li>○ I can be too invested in my job.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ One way to help alleviate the anxiety that this question can trigger is to help students see that employers are not expecting them to be flawless. They know that all employees have weaknesses. (All weaknesses are side effects of strengths and vice versa.)</li> <li>▪ Be honest about your weaknesses, while still sharing the whole picture with the employer.</li> <li>▪ Example:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ “The side effects of my ability to see the details and exceed customer expectations are that I might take longer to complete a project and I've often been hesitant to delegate my work. I've realized that this has made it difficult for me to have balance in my life and has also caused me to miss out on the strengths and insights that my colleagues could contribute if I had delegated.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>I have spent the last several months making conscious efforts to create systematic ways to delegate effectively and obtain valuable input from my colleagues. I still have room for growth in this area but delegating and collaborating have helped me to simplify and have lightened my load, decreased turnaround time on projects, and increased the quality of services.”</p>

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<p><b>7. Behavior-based questions</b></p> <p>-Tell me about a time when...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ You had a conflict with a co-worker/supervisor?</li> <li>○ You had a conflict with a customer?</li> <li>○ You worked well under pressure?</li> <li>○ You missed a deadline?</li> <li>○ You were creative in solving a problem?</li> </ul> <p>The company is assuming that past behavior is the best predictor of future behavior and wants to see how you will likely to perform in certain situations.</p> <p>Many employers will assume that you will eventually view them the same way you viewed past employers, co-workers, etc.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Red flags</li> <li>▪ Self-awareness</li> <li>▪ Ability to successfully handle the topics-specific challenges that the candidate would face in this position</li> <li>▪ Cultural fit               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Attitudes about people (Do you blame others? Do you take responsibility and own your stuff?)</li> <li>○ Your understanding of, experiences with, and roles in the specific topic, etc.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>Ex:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ How do you view conflict? Are (conflict averse, see it as something that can lead to improvements in the workplace, etc.)</li> <li>○ Can you handle conflict effectively?</li> <li>○ Can you make good judgment calls under pressure?</li> <li>○ What role do you play in workplace conflict?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Giving vague answers that don't show the significance or relevance of the story, don't illustrate your role and the impact you had, and that leave the issue unresolved in the minds of the interviewer(s)</li> <li>▪ Giving TMI details</li> <li>▪ Blaming or criticizing others involved in the scenario</li> <li>▪ Providing an example of you at your worst</li> <li>▪ Providing an example of you performing at a very low level of the skill/topic they are assessing</li> </ul> <p style="margin-left: 40px;">Ex: Giving a very basic example of conflict when you have a more relevant, appealing, and/or high-level scenario that you could share</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Give specific answers that show the significance or relevance of the story, illustrate your role and the impact you had, and that show the positive results</li> <li>▪ Be concise (review examples before the interview so they are fresh in your mind and have already been filtered for conciseness)</li> <li>▪ Focus more on the resolution and how it was resolved more than the problem</li> </ul> <p><b>General Life and Career Advice:</b> Learn to view conflicts with others as a result of one or more person's needs not being met, rather than focusing on whose fault it is. (The book "Leadership &amp; Self-Deception" by Arbinger is a great book for teaching someone how to do this).</p>

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<p><b>8. On a scale from 1 to 10, how would you rate yourself when it comes to...?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Working well under pressure?</li> <li>○ Resolving conflicts in productive ways?</li> <li>○ Managing your time?</li> <li>○ Being well organized?</li> <li>○ Communicating well with others?</li> </ul>	<p>This is another way that companies and organizations assess past behavior in order to predict future behavior. The guidelines for answer “tell me about a time when...” questions are applicable here as well.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Do not lie or exaggerate, but do not sell yourself short either</li> <li>▪ Do not give yourself a high number and back it up with a weak example</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ It is a good idea to review the areas in which you are weak and think of times when you have been strong in these areas. Have these examples fresh in your head so that you can offer a positive example to the employer</li> <li>▪ Be able to back up whatever number you list off with one or more examples</li> </ul>
<p><b>9. In your opinion, what makes a successful (or an effective) _____?</b></p> <p>(Name a position or something pertinent to the position like customer service provider, teacher, leader, accountant, manager, salesman, social worker, etc.)</p>	<p>The company may want to see if your opinion/way of thinking matches with their values/ways of doing business. This could also be a way for them to assess how much you have thought about issue(s) you would be confronted with in this field.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Do not answer in a way that belittles or criticizes anyone else. Tell what it is, NOT what is isn't.</li> </ul> <p><b>Do Not Say Something Like:</b>            “A good leader doesn't demoralize or act hypocritically. I once had a boss who [insert all of the bad things s/he did] ...”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ This is another time to prove you have done your research on the company's priorities and research of the position. In a non-self-centered fashion, relate yourself and your skills to this question.</li> <li>▪ Answer in positives, not negatives</li> <li>▪ This is a ponder question. Think about this ahead of time. And make sure to share with them your honest/sincere answer on what makes a good sales person, teacher, manager, accountant, etc.</li> </ul>

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<p><b>10. What kind of salary are you looking for?</b></p> <p>*Exception: If no salary has been posted, you have reason to believe that this position may not pay what you need, and the interview process may take a substantial amount of time and money on your part or the company’s part, you may want to discuss generalities sooner. You could say something like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ “I am highly interested in interviewing with you. To make the best use of everyone’s time and resources, could you tell me at what point in your process the salary and benefit information will be made available?”</li> <li>○ “Thank you for the invitation. Could I find out some more information about the salary and compensation plan so that I can come prepared to discuss this with you?”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Are you affordable?</li> </ul> <p>(They want to hire the best talent for the lowest price)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Asking about salary before they bring it up or before an offer is made*</li> <li>▪ Not researching marketable wages for this type of job/industry/company</li> <li>▪ Giving a specific amount</li> </ul> <p>(If you go too high you may be screened out. If you go too low, you may leave money on the table.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Saying things like:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ “I just want the experience. I don’t really care about the pay.”</li> <li>○ “I just need enough to provide for my family.”</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Phrases like this could cost you thousands of dollars and can start a ‘take advantage of me’ pattern with you and this company.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Know What You are Worth:</b> Research marketable wages for this type of job/industry/company before the interview. Use sites like glassdoor.com and payscale.com. LinkedIn also has a salary feature.</li> <li>▪ Whenever possible and feasible*, avoid talking details until you have been offered the job.</li> <li>▪ Say things like:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ That is negotiable, and I am confident it is within the range you have posted.</li> <li>○ That is negotiable, and I am willing to entertain any reasonable offer.</li> <li>○ I am willing to entertain any reasonable offer. If you decide to hire me, I can give you a more detailed answer once we have had the chance to discuss what you typically pay someone with my qualifications for a position like this.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

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<p><b>11. Why should we hire you over other applicants?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ How seriously are you taking this position?</li> <li>▪ Self-knowledge (how you can uniquely contribute)</li> <li>▪ They want you to convince them that you are exactly what they need</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Do not give vague answers that do not show your knowledge of what is needed or how you can contribute</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Answering this question in a powerful way requires the applicant to thoroughly understand what is required and what s/he has to offer</li> <li>▪ Know every detail about this job that you can find</li> <li>▪ Visualize yourself in all facts of this job. As you do this, the ideas will come.</li> <li>▪ Show them how you can meet their specific bottom line.</li> <li>▪ <b>Ex:</b> Although I do not know the other candidates applying for this position, I can tell you how I plan to exceed your exactions [or the unique contributions I intend to make]. Then explain.</li> <li>▪ <b>Ex:</b> I know that a colleague of mine has applied and that s/he has global experience in _____. But I have _____, which is highly pertinent to the goals you have mentioned for this coming year. And I believe I can accomplish these things in a shorter timeframe with less resources.</li> </ul>

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<p><b>12. Do you have any questions for me?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The employer wants to help candidates more fully understand the company and what the position entails.</li> <li>▪ Although the purpose is to inform the candidate, employers may also use this as a chance to assess:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ How much research the candidate has done</li> <li>○ How much the candidate has visualized themselves in the position and assessed the contributions they can make</li> <li>○ If the candidate is “me-centered” or “contribution-centered”</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Do not say</b> “No” or “I don’t have any questions”</li> <li>▪ <b>Do not ask</b> questions that can be easily answered through research</li> <li>▪ <b>Do no ask</b> questions in ‘me-centered’ ways or in ways that provoke concerns in the interviewer(s):               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ How much does this job pay?</li> <li>○ How often will I get pay raises?</li> <li>○ How long before I will be able to take vacation time?</li> <li>○ What is hard about this job?</li> <li>○ What don’t you like about your job?</li> <li>○ Do you have a high turnover rate with your employees?</li> <li>○ Do you press charges? (Just checking to see if you are paying attention, dear reader. 😊)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Bring five or more thoughtful questions to ask about the position and/or the company. These questions should reflect the depth of audience-specific knowledge, the kind of employee you tend to be, and/or the kinds of contributions you intend to make.</li> </ul> <p><b>Examples:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ “Exceeding your expectations is important to me. If you were to hire me, can you tell me how the onboarding, training, and evaluation processes work?”</li> <li>▪ Exceeding your expectations is important to me. Can you tell me how success* is measured in this position, department, and by the company as a whole?”</li> <li>▪ What are some of the toughest challenges you would need me to tackle if you were to hire me of this position?”</li> <li>▪ “In a recent article I read about [name of company], I noticed _____. Can you tell me _____?”</li> </ul> <p>*Or use wording that gets at company’s bottom line</p>

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