



Hints and Tips

Interview Questions



When preparing for an interview it is a good idea to think about the questions you might be asked and prepare your answers in advance. To help we've put together a list of questions that you might be asked and suggest how to respond; don't worry it is unlikely that you'll be asked them all!

Tell us about yourself...

This one looks easy enough but is tricky to answer well. It is often the opening question and the interviewer is looking for a brief but comprehensive account of your education and career history, featuring examples of achievements, motivation, experience and your career ambitions. Try to relate your answer to the job you are applying for and limit your answer to around two minutes.

What do you know about this company?

This is your time to show that you have done some research into the company you are interviewing with. Go in with some facts that you have picked up from your prior research and explain why the company sounds like an interesting opportunity for you. Make reference to the company's ethos, goals and the industry in which it operates. Enthusiasm and a good knowledge of the corporation are essential.

Why Accountancy?

The idea of the question is to determine whether you're dedicated to accountancy, even if it means starting at an entry-level position and working your way up the career ladder. Answer this by listing examples or something that happened which inspired you to pursue this career path and explain why the industry itself particularly interests you. Remember to really explain your passion for the industry.

What do you know about the qualification you will be studying towards?

Make sure you have done some research on the different accountancy qualifications there are, particularly the one you will be studying throughout your Apprenticeship. It is also beneficial to look at the qualifications you can do following on from successfully completing your Apprenticeship to show willingness to continue your studies and progress in the industry.

What are your strengths?

This is often much easier to answer than its counterpart. Answers such as attention to detail, time management, team player etc are always good. Make sure you elaborate on how your strengths will be translated into the Apprenticeship you are applying for.



What are your weaknesses?

This question will throw candidates who have not prepared thoroughly enough for the interview. The trick is to give your answer a positive spin. Instead of: "I'm fussy about details", use: "Some people find me a perfectionist. I'm working to improve how I work with people who don't have the same attention to detail". A positive quality is here made to look like a negative one and "working to improve" highlights your adaptability.

Describe your biggest success so far.

This is something employers often ask. It may be something in your personal life or you may have done work experience and have something you are particularly proud of. Whatever you choose as your answer ensure it relates somehow to the position. For example, it may be your academic achievements and how you excelled above expectations.

Describe your biggest challenge to date and how you overcame this.

This may relate to something personal or your academic/working life. Think of something where you felt a sense of achievement by getting past it and expand on this.

What do you feel is the most important thing you have learned during your time in school or college?

This could be anything from academic to something more personal. Ensure your answer transpires to something that you are able to take away with you into employment and something that you can demonstrate at the company you are applying to.

You have been given a task and have been shown what is expected of you, you are still unsure how to proceed. What would you do in this situation?

Honesty is always the best policy so ask again. Companies want to see someone who isn't afraid to speak up if they are unsure. Not everything sinks in first time for everyone. It is far better to ask again than to sit there unsure and struggling. Never be afraid to ask for help. Employers want to see someone who is comfortable doing this – we all need a little help from time to time.

How well do you feel you work when deadlines are in place?

All companies have deadlines to meet and this is inevitably something that you will have to contribute to at some point in the future. Explain a time when you have had to work to a tight deadline and been successful.

How would you handle working and studying at the same time?

Answer this with a well prepared and well thought out answer. Employers want to see someone who is confident that they will be able to manage their time efficiently in order to complete work and spend enough time on their studies throughout their Apprenticeship.

How well do you handle criticism?

The obvious answer for this question is to say that you handle criticism well. However, the interviewer will be looking for you to expand on this. Make sure you relate criticism to personal and professional growth and provide an example of this happening in your past.

How well do you work within a team?

Employers want to know if you are a team player or not and if you will fit into their team. They may ask for specific examples of how you have made a contribution when working within a team previously or how you have coped when someone hasn't been pulling their weight. Whatever the question, be prepared for questions around being a team player.

Where do you see yourself in five years?

There are many reasons why you may be asked about your future plans: to assess how long you will stay with the company, whether you have achievable goals and if you are driven and motivated. When talking about where you see yourself in five or ten years' time, be realistic but not too specific. Focus on your skills and how you would like to develop them to the mutual advantage of you and your employer. Whatever you do, don't admit to aspirations of being in your interviewer's job or retiring to a yacht in the Caribbean.



How would you overcome a conflict of personality in the workplace?

Be realistic. An interviewer is unlikely to believe that you will never have any issues because you are so sociable. A good answer could suggest maintaining a professional and civil attitude at all times and perhaps refer to situations when this has happened. Don't go into personal details though; the interviewer wants to hear about your solutions, not your problems.

Why will you be good in this position?

The purpose of this question is to discover whether or not you possess the characteristics needed for the role/industry, for example, being highly organised and efficient are key traits of a successful accountant.

Answer this by highlighting ways you will stay organised within the workplace and emphasise the personal traits you have that make the finance industry a perfect fit for you.

Why should we hire you?

This question gives you the ideal opportunity to sell your achievements and merits to the interviewer. Don't be shy about promoting yourself. If you are given some kind of time limit like 'tell me why... in 30 seconds', make sure you collect your thoughts first. A moment to consider will stop you babbling and allow you to give a good, concise answer.

Do you have any questions for them?

Most interviewers will ask if you have any questions for them. It is always best to have a couple of things prepared rather than saying nothing here. Easy questions to ask are things like 'what do you enjoy about accountancy?', 'why did you choose to work for this company?', 'where can I expect to be in 6 months' time?', 'what type of work will I be doing in my first couple of weeks?'.

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