

The Most Common Interview Questions for Irish Candidates

A job interview can be nerve-wracking – so much depends on the outcome; but you can reduce the stress by preparing yourself thoroughly for the occasion.

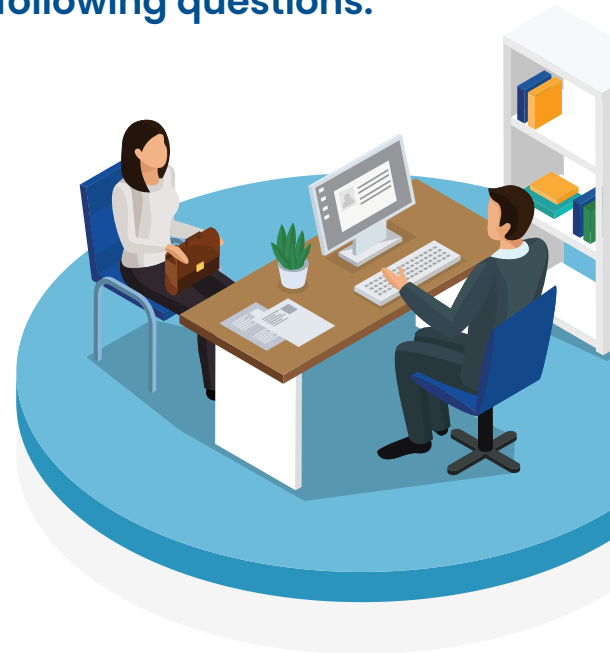
Although no two interviews are exactly the same, some questions are almost universal, and others (in one variation or another) recur again and again.

So, it is definitely a good idea to anticipate the following questions:

1 Why are you applying for this job?
Some version of this question is inevitable. Bearing in mind that most of the subsequent questions will be about your current job, this one is a good opportunity to express your enthusiasm for the company – based, of course, on careful research. Without going too far into your personal history, it's also a chance to give some relevant information about yourself.

2 How did you learn about the opening?
This innocent-sounding question will give the interviewer some important information about your habits! Whom do you talk to, what do you read, do you spend your working hours researching possible career moves? Bear this in mind when preparing for this question.

3 Why do you want to leave your current job?
It's never a good idea to criticise your present employers, managers, or colleagues too freely. Any negative statements you make may be seen as giving clues to your own character and attitudes. To say that you feel that you have progressed as far as you can in your present position is much less risky – and here, again, you can be positive about the company for which you are applying.



4 What kind of work environment do you like best?

Your research should have given you an idea of the working environment in the job you are applying for, and obviously your answer won't stray too far from this. Remember though that that every company considers its workplace to be lively and collaborative!

5 What are your biggest weaknesses?

The many possible corny answers to this question should be avoided – they are all too well known. Statements such as 'I'm too much of a perfectionist' or 'I tend to work too hard' do not answer the question; they will rightly be seen as "humble bragging". Instead, say something honest about yourself, but also use the opportunity to explain how you are taking action to remedy the weakness.

6 What are your biggest strengths?

Remember that the interviewer is not looking for a perfect human being; they just want to know how your skills align with the needs of the job. So, think of the abilities you have that fit the job description, and be ready with some examples from your experience.

7 Where do you see yourself in five years?

This is a difficult question, with more potential to harm your chances than to help them. You do not want to suggest that this job would merely be a stepping-stone on your way to something better; equally, a lack of ambition is going to mark you down. The safest course might be to talk about the experience you would like to have gained, and the skills you hope to develop.

8 How would your colleagues describe you?

Remember that the interviewer will be forming their own view of you, and if this differs radically from your answer, they will have doubts about your self-awareness. It might help to seek advice from a trusted friend with this one. Remember too that the qualities being sought are likely to relate to approachability, teamwork and reliability rather than anything approaching arrogance.

9 Tell me about a time you made a mistake

What kind of mistake? It needs to be a real one, but not something that calls your judgement seriously into question. Your answer needs to show that you recognised your mistake, rectified it, and learned from the experience. Narratives such as 'I underestimated the importance of...' or 'I tried for too long to hold on to our old way of doing...' let you show how you were able to make changes that were beneficial in the long run.



10 Tell me about the hardest decision you had to make in the last six months

Your answer to this question needs to be as specific as the question is. You need to demonstrate that you faced up to a difficult situation in a level-headed and thoughtful manner; whether your decision was the correct one is not something you should have to defend – it's the process that is important.

11 What do you feel I need to know that we haven't discussed?

If you have strengths or achievements which have not been discussed so far, don't be shy about mentioning them here. If you have played a part in a project which has become well known, don't miss this opportunity to discuss it; and be specific – 'I drafted the action plan for...' works better than 'I was part of the team that...'

12 What questions do you have for me?

This is another opportunity to demonstrate your interest in the company; you should already be well acquainted with its public face, but some appropriate enquiries about its current activities, and its plans for the future, show that you understand the climate in which it operates. The amount of time the interviewer is prepared to give you at this point may also be a clue to your success so far!



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