Sample Interview Questions

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Sample Questions - Typical, General

- Tell me about yourself.
  - Oftentimes this one is a killer for people. Make sure you have a one minute maximum advertisement about yourself that you can use as a networking tool or as an answer to this question.
- How do you measure or evaluate success?
- Describe your ideal organization.
- What interests you most about this position? Least?
  - Make sure you have done your homework before answering this question!
- What do you think it takes to be successful in a company like ours?
  - Homework is critical for this question, too. Without doing your homework, you will risk characterizing the company in the wrong way.
  - Try to talk with contacts inside the company, those who have left the company or at least someone who should know the company well.
- What have been your major problems in this field (in your career)? Why?
- What three accomplishments have given you the most satisfaction, in rank order? Why?
  - Variation: What have been your strongest achievements to date?
- What is wrong with your present job?
- What have you disliked most about your past jobs?
- If you were starting over now, what would you do differently?
  - Correct answer: Nothing! Be able to explain why.
- What factors have kept you from progressing faster? How could you have improved your career progress?
- Are you more comfortable following or leading? Why?
- Do you work better in a smaller or larger organization? Why?
- Describe the kind of work environment in which you are most comfortable.
  - Do your homework!
- Do you prefer a structured or unstructured work environment? Why?
  - Again, very clearly understand the company’s work environment before you go into the job interview.
- Do you work better as part of a group or alone? Why?
- How do you handle conflict? Tell me about a situation in which you handled a difficult conflict with . . . (a peer, a subordinate, your boss).
- Which is most important to you, money or job satisfaction?
- How long would you stay with us?
- Aren’t you overqualified (or under qualified) for this position?
- Will you be out to take my job?
- What do you really want to do with your life?
- What motivates you to put forth your greatest effort?
- What are you doing to try and overcome your weaknesses?
- Did you ever fail at any job you tried? Why did you fail? Tell me about your greatest nightmare.
  - Variations: greatest failure, greatest disappointment.
What have you learned from your mistakes? Give some examples. Tell about the biggest mistake you have ever made.

Describe a few situations in which your work was criticized. Was it deserved? What did you do about it?

Describe a situation in which your results did not meet expectations.

Tell me about your boss. What are his/her strengths and weaknesses? What would he/she say about you?
  - Expect heavy probing for positives and negatives.

Tell me about the best and worst boss you ever had.

What one person has had the greatest influence on your life? Why?

What, in your opinion, is the key to professional success?

Tell me about your most and least admired person.
  - A variation: if you could be someone else, who would you be?

Tell me about a mistake you made in dealing with people.

Tell me about each time you made a major job change in your career. Why did you change jobs? How did it work out? Describe your responsibilities in detail. What were your major accomplishments? Your greatest failures? What caused you to move from this position?
  - Be prepared to answer this question – you can almost count on being asked it at least once in any series of interviews.

Do you know a lot of people? How strong is your network? Tell me about some of the key people that you know well...

Do you lie? Tell me about a time when you "bent the ethical rules" at work?

Which comes first to you, work or family? Explain. Tell me about a time when you had to choose between the two.

What outside interests do you have? How much time do you spend on them?

What makes you angry (Variations: frustrated, stressed). Tell me about a time when you became angry at . . . (a subordinate, a peer, your boss, yourself).

What negative things have you heard about (X company)?

What was the most difficult part of your last position? Your current position?

Why have you changed jobs so often? Or, conversely . . . Why have you stayed with the same company for so long?
  - Some recruiters feel that changing jobs often is a sign of lack of loyalty, a low "boredom quotient" or an inability to "stick it out" in a tough situation. Conversely, some are concerned that staying with the same company for a long time is a sign of lack of aggressiveness or cause for "inbreeding". Be prepared to overcome these issues.

Tell me two anecdotes about yourself that will convey to me the real essence of who you are as a person (or as a general manager, CEO, etc).

Do you consider yourself to be successful? What makes you say that?

Tell me about a situation where you hired the wrong person.

What good books have you read lately?
  - Variations: movies, jokes

What kind of tennis (or golf) player are you?
• What are your three greatest strengths in rank order? How about your three greatest weaknesses in rank order?
• What do you feel are the greatest challenges facing our industry (variations: my company, the US today, American management, etc.)? How do you feel you (our company) can (should) address these challenges?
• How would you characterize your management style?
  o Variations: leadership style, negotiating style
• How do you view yourself? How do others (your boss, your subordinates, your peers) view you?
• What are you passionate about?
• What is your favorite color? What three qualities does that color bring to mind? (Variations: tree, car)
• Give me an example of something you have done that has been creative or innovative. How do you foster creativity and innovation in others? Give specific examples.
• What company in our industry do you admire most and why? Which do you admire least and why?
• What has been the most difficult decision you have ever made? Why? By what process did you arrive at your decision? Would you make the same decision again?
• What has been your experience with layoffs? How have you handled them? Tell me about a situation in which you had to make a difficult firing decision.
• If I offered you this position now at X salary, would you accept the job?
• Give me an example of a time when you misjudged a political situation. How would you describe your political skills? Tell me about a time when you used your political skills to bring about an important event.
• Tell me about three times in your life when you were most proud of yourself. What about each of those situations made you most proud?
• Tell me about the greatest business risk you have ever taken. How would you characterize your approach to business risk-taking?
• Give me an example of a time when you had to make an unpopular decision.
Sample Questions - Self Assessment

- Why an MBA?
- Why Darden?
- What makes you want to be a ________ (position interviewing for)?
- What makes you think you will be successful in ____________ (position/industry)?
- Tell me about your oral and written communication skills.
- What do you consider to be your greatest strengths/weaknesses?
- Have you ever failed? What did you learn from it?
- How would you describe yourself? Are you a leader, entrepreneur, creative? (Be prepared to give examples).
- How competitive are you?
- How would a friend or colleague who knows you well describe you?
- How well do you work independently? With others?
- How do you work under pressure?
- What two or three accomplishments have given you the most satisfaction?
- What makes you a good investment?
- What is your single greatest asset?
- What is your definition of leadership?
- What makes an effective communicator?
- Describe yourself in one word.
- Describe the essence of success.
- What is your philosophy of management?
- Which do you prefer, large or small companies?
Sample Questions - Prior Work Experience

- What was your most significant work accomplishment?
- Tell me about a time when you had to analyze or interpret numerical or financial information.
- What did you learn from your work experience?
- What did you do in your job?
- What are the attributes of an ideal job for you?
- Tell me about a boss you especially liked and why.
- How would your most recent boss describe you?
- What was your biggest work problem?
- What did you like least about your last job?
- You seem to have the analytical (financial, technical, etc.) skills. What makes you think you could handle the marketing (line management, leadership, etc.) requirements of the job?
- Give me an example of a good ad campaign (control program, mergers and acquisition plan, etc.). Tell me why it's good.
- Tell me about a recent experience where you had to persuade someone to accept your idea or proposal.
- Describe a situation in which you were able to build team spirit during a time of low morale.
- Why did you leave your last job (or any other jobs that have been left)?
- Describe a successful presentation you have made.
- (Entrepreneurs) Why did your business fail?
- Have you ever hired people before? What do you look for?
- Have you fired people before? Why?
- How do you respond to work under pressure?
- Give me an example of when your assertiveness paid off. One that didn’t.
Sample Questions - Skills Questions

- Why should I select you for this position?
- In what way do you think you can make a contribution to our company?
- What distinguishes you from the other people I am interviewing today?
- What qualifications do you have that make you think you will be successful in your career?
- What do you want me to remember about you?
- What skills are needed to be a successful . . . (consultant)? And give me an example of where you demonstrated these skills.
- What differentiates you from your peers?
- What can you do for us that someone else cannot do?
Sample Questions - Career Direction

- What would you like to accomplish in this job?
- Long term, are you interested in line management or a staff position? Why?
- What are your short- and long-term goals and objectives? Have they changed since you have been out of business school? If so, how?
- Why the career switch?
- What other opportunities are you currently considering?
- What salary are you worth? Why?
- How long would it take you to make a contribution to our company?
- How long would you stay with us?
- Don’t you feel you’d be better off in a different size organization?
- Will you be out to take your boss’ job?
- What’s more important to you: the type of job or the money that it pays?
Sample Questions - Personal Questions

- Do you have a geographical preference? Why?
- Will you relocate?
- Does relocation bother you?
- Are you willing to travel?
- How do you keep abreast of current events?
- What do you do for fun?
- If you could have lunch with anyone living or dead, who would it be and why?
- What do you read?
- What excites you?
- How would your friends describe you?
- What are the three most important decisions in your life?
- How would your colleagues group describe you?
- What do you look for in a mentor?
- We do drug screening during final round interviews, do you have any problem with that?
- What was the last book you read? Why did you choose that book?
- What were the last professionally enhancing books you read on your own?
- Describe your personality.
- What’s your purpose in life?
- Just for a moment, let’s pretend it is the 15th century. How do you convince the pope that the earth is round?
- If it rained music, what would grow?
Sample Questions - Consulting

- So, tell me about yourself or walk me through your resume.
- Why do you think your background would make you a good consultant?
- What have you read lately about our firm other than the recruiting material?
- How do you foresee the future of the consulting industry?
- Why did you pursue an MBA?
- What do you perceive comprises the job of a consultant?
- How do you think the consulting industry is structured?
- What are some differences among consulting firms that are important to you?
- Are you competitive?
- Tell me about the best job you’ve ever had.
- Tell me about the worst job you’ve ever had.
- How do you go about making important decisions? Give me an example.
- What’s the biggest mistake you’ve ever made in choosing a job?
- Do you prefer to work by yourself or with others?
- What are your biggest weaknesses when it comes to business and what are you currently doing to improve them?
- What are your three greatest assets or strengths?
- What are your three biggest weaknesses?
- Give me an example of the most significant contribution you’ve ever made to an organization?
- Based on what you know about our industry, what do you like the least about it?
- What kind of people do you find it most difficult to work with and why?
- What do you do when you’re not at work?
- Name the biggest mistake you’ve ever made on-the-job. What have you done to ensure that it wouldn’t happen again?
- Say a team member tells you to do something in a way that you know is dead wrong. What do you do?
- Why should I recommend to the rest of the recruiting team that you are the best person for this position?
- Do you consider yourself an organized person?
- Do you manage your time well?
- With whom are you interviewing and how have you fared?
- If given an offer, how will you decide whether or not to accept it?
- Say your supervising manager leaves an assignment in your "in box" and leaves town for a week. You can’t reach him/her and you don’t fully understand the assignment. What do you do?
- Give me an example from your current work that demonstrates your ability to think strategically or analytically.
- Give me an example from your current work that demonstrates your leadership ability.
- How would your last boss describe you?
• Give me an example of a time when you had to resolve conflict with a co-worker……
• Say you’re on a boat in the middle of a fresh water lake and you throw a rock over the side. What happens to the lake?
• Tell me about a time when you had to convince a group of people to do something…..
• How many barbers are there in Atlanta?
• Without any time to do background research, I put you on a plane to visit with a client who manufactures golf balls. Your client is waiting to pick you up and wants to know the answer to these two questions: What’s the annual market size for golf balls in the US? And What factors drive demand? You’ve got 15 minutes before the plane lands. How would you go about answering your client’s questions?
Sample Questions - Finance/Banking

- So, tell me about yourself…...or……Walk me through your resume………..
- Why do you think your background would make you a good investment banker?
- What have you read lately about our firm other than the recruiting material?
- How do you see the future of investment banking? What action do you think our industry leaders should take?
- Do you think the industry has been represented fairly (on ethics and investment banking)?
- Why an MBA and why Darden?
- Tell me about the best job you’ve ever had……
- What kind of work environment are you most comfortable in?
- What’s more important to you: money or the type of job?
- If Investment Banking didn’t exist, what would you do?
- Where do you want to be five years from now? Ten years?
- How do you go about making important decisions?……….give me an example.
- How long of a commitment do you intend to make me?
- Give me an example of a job you had to do under extreme pressure……how did you handle it?
- Name the top firms and what they are known for.
- Who else are you interviewing with?
- Describe your work ethic……..
- What motivates you?
- How can you add value on day one?
- For sales: Sell me this "pen."
- Tell me about a time when you had to sell something to someone……what was the result?
- How competitive are you?
- What are your greatest weaknesses when it comes to business……and what are you currently doing to improve them?
- Tell me about a time when you had to analyze or interpret financial information……
- What are your three biggest weaknesses?
- Give me an example of the most significant contribution you’ve ever made to an organization?
- Based on what you know about Wall Street, what do you like the least about it?
- Give me an example of a time that you had to resolve an issue with an external or internal customer…………what was the result?
- What kind of people do you find it most difficult to work with and why?
- Describe deferred taxes……
- Describe mergers and acquisitions and why companies do them………..
- Say a team member tells you to do something in a way that you know is dead wrong….what do you do?
• Why should I recommend to the rest of the recruiting team that you are the best person for this position?
• Do you consider yourself an organized person?
• Who do you admire and why?
• Say your supervising manager leaves an assignment in your "in box" and leaves town for a week. You can’t reach him/her and you don’t fully understand the assignment. What do you do?
• Give me an example from work that demonstrates your ability to think analytically.
• Describe a situation in which you were able to build team spirit during a time of low morale.
• Give me an example of a time when you had to resolve conflict with a co-worker.
• Say you’re on a boat in the middle of a fresh water lake and you throw a rock over the side. What happens to the lake?
• What stocks do you recommend and why?
• Should I buy stock in Netscape?
Sample Questions - Marketing

- So, tell me about yourself……or…….Walk me through your resume…………
- What is it about marketing that most interests you? Least interests you?
- In your opinion, what does it take to be effective in marketing?
- How do you interact with people around you?
- Why an MBA and why Darden?
- How do you define success? Failure?
- What personal factors do you consider most important when evaluating yourself?
- What kind of work environment are you most comfortable in? Least comfortable?
- Describe your leadership style…………
- How do you motivate people that do not directly report to you?
- Tell me about the worst job you’ve ever had….    
- Where do you want to be five years from now? Tens years from now?
- How do you go about making important decisions?…….give me an example.
- How do you sell your ideas?
- What are you looking for in a consumer goods company?
- Should grades be used as an indicator of future career potential when an organization is considering a college candidate?
- Give me an example of a job you had to do under extreme pressure……how did you handle it?
- What are three different ways to improve the marketing image of paperclips?
- Give an example of an innovative solution to a business problem.
- Give me an example of your approach to problem solving.
- For you, what are some of the pro’s and con’s of working on a team project?
- Who was the most difficult person you ever dealt with and how did you respond?
- Are you creative? I’m writing a book entitled "101 Everyday Uses for the Common Red Brick." Can you give me five uses for the common red brick?
- Tell me about an advertising campaign that you think is particularly effective/ineffective.
- Who else are you interviewing with in your career search?
- What are your greatest weaknesses when it comes to business……and what are you currently doing to improve them?
- Tell me about a time when you had to analyze or interpret information……
- What are your three biggest weaknesses? Strengths?
- Give me an example of the most significant contribution you’ve ever made to an organization……..    
- What experiences did you have when meeting deadlines for project completion?
- Give me an example of a time that you had to resolve an issue with an external or internal customer…………what was the result?
- What kind of people do you find it most difficult to work with and why?
- What do you do when you’re not at work?
- When comparing one company offer to another, what factors will be important to you besides compensation?
• Have you ever quit a job? Why?
• Why should I recommend to the rest of the recruiting team that you are the best person for this position?
• Describe your ideal job……...
• If I had an elephant in this room, how would you hide it?
• Say your supervising manager leaves an assignment in your "in box" and leaves town for a week. You can’t reach him/her and you don’t fully understand the assignment. What do you do?
• Give me an example that demonstrates your ability to think analytically……...
• Describe a situation in which you were able to build team spirit during a time of low morale……
• Give me an example of a time when you had to resolve conflict with a co-worker……
• What qualities do you feel are important in a supervisor?
• If asked as a group, how would your colleagues describe you?
Sample Questions - General Management

- Walk me through your resume………..
- What is it about our firm that most interests you? Least interests you?
- In your opinion, what does it take to be effective in business?
- How do you interact with people around you?
- Why an MBA and why Darden?
- How do you define success? Failure?
- What personal factors do you consider most important when evaluating yourself?
- Which do you prefer, large or small companies?
- Describe your leadership philosophy………..
- Tell me about the worst job you’ve ever had….
- Where do you want to be five years from now? Tens years from now?
- How do you go about making important decisions?……….give me an example.
- How do you feel about working in a structured environment?
- Describe your ________________ skills? (financial, managerial, marketing)
- How would you compare our firm with the others you are interested in?
- For you, what are some of the pro’s and con’s of working on a team project?
- Who was the most difficult person you ever dealt with and how did you respond?
- How would a former supervisor describe you?
- Who else are you interviewing with in your career search?
- What are your greatest weaknesses when it comes to business……….and what are you currently doing to improve them?
- Tell me about a time when you had to analyze or interpret information…….
- What are your three biggest weaknesses? Strengths?
- Give me an example of the most significant contribution you’ve ever made to an organization………..
- What experiences did you have when meeting deadlines for project completion?
- Give me an example of a time that you had to resolve an issue with an external or internal customer…………what was the result?
- What kind of people do you find it most difficult to work with and why?
- What do you do when you’re not at work?
- When comparing one company offer to another, what factors will be important to you besides compensation?
- Have you ever quit a job? Why?
- Why should I recommend to the rest of the recruiting team that you are the best person for this position?
- Describe your ideal job………..
- Who do you admire and why?
- Say your supervising manager leaves an assignment in your "in box" and leaves town for a week. You can’t reach him/her and you don’t fully understand the assignment. What do you do?
- Give me an example from that demonstrates your ability to think analytically………..
• Describe a situation in which you were able to build team spirit during a time of low morale.

• Give me an example of a time when you had to resolve conflict with a co-worker.

• What qualities do you feel are important in a supervisor?

• If asked as a group, how would your colleagues describe you?
Sample Questions - Venture Capital

- Why Venture Capital?
- Why an MBA and why Darden?
- How do you define success? Failure?
- What personal factors do you consider most important when evaluating yourself?
- What kind of work environment are you most comfortable in? Least comfortable?
- What particular strengths do you have for this industry?
- What do you think a venture capitalist does?
- How do you motivate others?
- Have you interacted with a variety of people from all levels from CEO to technician? What were the results?
- How strong is your grasp of technology?
- What operations exposure/management experiences have you had?
- Where do you think VC money should be going?
- How and what do your regularly read on the industry?
- Do you think the emphasis should be on raising money and putting it to work, or the human capital?
- What do you look for in a venture?
- What is more important, the product, or the people behind a particular venture?
- Describe your interpersonal and analytical skills.
- Do you have a high energy level?
- Have you had to deal with failure in a professional context?
- Are you a good team player?
- What motivates you?
Sample Questions - Health Care Management

- Why have you focused on the health care industry?
- Why an MBA and why Darden?
- Why did you not obtain a masters in Health Care Administration?
- What are the attributes of management success in the health care industry?
- Where and how have you developed those attributes?
- What are the current trends/issues in the health care industry?
- What motivates you?
- How do you motivate others?
- How do you define success? Failure?
- What personal factors do you consider most important when evaluating yourself?
- What kind of work environment are you most comfortable in? Least comfortable?
- Describe your leadership style..........
- How do you motivate people that do not directly report to you?
- Tell me about the worst job you've ever had....
- How do you function in a group?
- Are you a team player?
- What is the most important thing you have learned about people from your previous work experience?
- What do you look for in a job? In a boss?
- Did you ever think of pursuing a career in medicine as a health services professional?
- How would you address one of the current "hot" issues in this industry?
- What functional skills will you bring to this type of environment?
- What are your long and short term goals?
Sample Questions - Illegal/Inappropriate Questions

Contrary to popular belief, US Federal law only prohibits the asking of two questions. However, there are inappropriate questions which border on discrimination which can get an employer into deep trouble if asked. Inappropriate questions set up employers for potential discrimination suits and range from civil rights violations to privacy issues. Under Title VII, employment law prohibits employers from asking the inappropriate questions that are discriminatory in nature.

Illegal / Inappropriate Questions

- Have you ever been arrested?
- Do you have any health problems?
- What religion are you?
- Are you married, divorced, or separated?
- How many children do you have?
- Are you planning on having children?
- What is your sexual orientation?
- What does your father or mother do for a living?
- How much do you weigh?
- How old are you?
- Are you planning on getting married?
- Do you have a boyfriend/girlfriend?
- Do you drink?
- What are your outstanding debts?
- What political parties are you affiliated with?

Handling a potentially discriminatory or illegal question can be tricky. In general, you do not have to answer the question and should redirect the interviewer back into your business qualifications. The example below demonstrates this:

Interviewer:
Do you have a boyfriend/husband, and what does he think about you changing jobs / relocating / etc.?

You:
I don’t feel that specific details of my personal life would be appropriate to discuss here. They don’t affect my ability to do this work. I’m looking forward to working in this industry/city and can’t wait to tell you more about my qualifications for this position. Do you want to hear more about my quantitative skills?