

Sample Interview Questions and Some Answers

Question "Why are you leaving your job?"

One of the questions that is typically asked in an interview is "Why are you leaving your job?" or "Why did you leave your job?" if you have already moved on. If you were fired from your job, use these answers to respond. If you left of your own accord, review these suggestions on how best to answer and tailor your response to meet your particular situation. Be direct and focus your interview answer on the future, especially if your leaving wasn't under the best of circumstances.

Regardless of why you left, don't speak badly about your previous employer. The interviewer may wonder if you will be bad-mouthing his company next time you're looking for work. I once interviewed a person who told me that her last employer was terrible. They didn't pay her enough, the hours were awful and she hated the job. That company happened to be my company's biggest, and most important, customer. And there is no way I would have hired someone who felt that way, justified or not, about our valuable client. So, she gave up any opportunity of getting the job as soon as she answered the "Why did you leave?" question.

Prepare answers to typical job interview questions, like this one, in advance. Practice your responses so you sound positive, and clear, about your circumstances and your goals for the future.

Sample answers to the interview questions:

Answers for "Why did you leave your job?"

- I found myself bored with the work and looking for more challenges. I am an excellent employee and I didn't want my unhappiness to have any impact on the job I was doing for my employer.
- There isn't room for growth with my current employer and I'm ready to move on to a new challenge.
- I'm looking for a bigger challenge and to grow my career and I couldn't job hunt part time while working. It didn't seem ethical to use my former employer's time.
- I was laid-off from my last position when our department was eliminated due to corporate restructuring.
- I'm relocating to this area due to family circumstances and left my previous position in order to make the move.
- I've decided that is not the direction I want to go in my career and my current employer has no opportunities in the direction I'd like to head.

- After several years in my last position, I'm looking for an company where I can contribute and grow in a team-oriented environment.
- I am interested in a new challenge and an opportunity to use my technical skills and experience in a different capacity than I have in the past.
- I recently received my degree and I want to utilize my educational background in my next position.
- I am interested in a job with more responsibility, and I am very ready for a new challenge.
- I left my last position in order to spend more time with my family. Circumstances have changed and I'm more than ready for full-time employment again.
- I am seeking a position with a stable company with room for growth and opportunity for advancement.
- I was commuting to the city and spending a significant amount of time each day on travel. I would prefer to be closer to home.
- To be honest, I wasn't considering a move, but, I saw this job posting and was intrigued by the position and the company. It sounds like an exciting opportunity and an ideal match with my qualifications.
- This position seemed like an excellent match for my skills and experience and I am not able to fully utilize them in my present job.
- The company was cutting back and, unfortunately, my job was one of those eliminated.

Answers for "Why were you fired?"

Fired from your job? Don't know what to say in an interview? Career expert and author, Joyce Lain Kennedy, shares her twelve best job interview answers to the question "Why were you fired?"

Joyce Lain Kennedy's sample answers to the interview question "Why were you fired?"

- Being cut loose was a blessing in disguise. Now I have an opportunity to explore jobs that better suit my qualifications and interests. My research suggests that such an opportunity may be the one on your table. Would you like to hear more about my skills in working with new technology?
- My competencies were not the right match for my previous employer's needs but it looks like they'd be a good fit in your organization. In addition to marketing and advertising, would skills in promotion be valued here?
- Although circumstances caused me to leave my first job, I was very successful in school and got along well with both students and faculty. Perhaps I didn't fully understand my boss's expectations or why he released me so quickly before I had a chance to prove myself.
- The job wasn't working out so my boss and I agreed that it was time for me to move on to a position that would show a better return for both of us. So here I am, ready to work.

- After thinking about why I left, I realize I should have done some things differently. That job was a learning experience and I think I'm wiser now. I'd like the chance to prove that to you.
- A new manager came in and cleaned house in order to bring in members of his old team. That was his right but it cleared my head to envision better opportunities elsewhere.
- Certain personal problems, which I now have solved, unfortunately upset my work life. These problems no longer exist and I'm up and running strong to exceed expectations in my new job.
- I wanted my career to move in a different direction, and I guess my mental separation set up the conditions that led to my departure. But by contrast, the opportunity we're discussing seems to be made for me and I hope to eventually grow into a position of responsibility.
- I usually hit it off very well with my bosses, but this case was the exception that proved my rule of good relationships. We just didn't get on well. I'm not sure why.
- My job was offshored to India. That's too bad because people familiar with my work say it is superior and fairly priced.
- I outlasted several downsizings but the last one included me. Sign of the times, I guess.
- I was desperate for work and took the wrong job without looking around the corner. I won't make that mistake again. I'd prefer an environment that is congenial, structured and team-oriented, where my best talents can shine and make a substantial contribution.

Kennedy also says, "Practice in advance what you'll say. Then keep it brief, keep it honest and keep it moving." That way, you'll get past the sticky issue of getting fired and can move on to your skills and why you're qualified for the job.

Questions About Work History

- Name of company, position title and description, dates of employment.
- What were your expectations for the job and to what extent were they met?
- What were your starting and final levels of compensation?
- What were your responsibilities?
- What major challenges and problems did you face? How did you handle them?
- Which was most / least rewarding?
- What was the biggest accomplishment / failure in this position?
- Questions about your supervisors and co-workers.
- What was it like working for your supervisor? What were his strengths and shortcomings?
- Who was your best boss and who was the worst?
- Why are you leaving your job?
- What have you been doing since your last job?
- Why were you fired?

Questions About You

- What is your greatest weakness?
- What is your greatest strength?
- Describe a typical work week.
- Do you take work home with you?
- How many hours do you normally work?
- How would you describe the pace at which you work?
- How do you handle stress and pressure?
- What motivates you?
- What are your salary expectations?
- What do you find are the most difficult decisions to make?
- Tell me about yourself.
- What has been the greatest disappointment in your life?
- What are your pet peeves?
- What do people most often criticize about you?
- When was the last time you were angry? What happened?
- If you could relive the last 10 years of your life, what would you do differently?
- If the people who know you were asked why you should be hired, what would they say?
- Do you prefer to work independently or on a team?
- Give some examples of teamwork.
- What type of work environment do you prefer?
- How do you evaluate success?
- If you know your boss is 100% wrong about something how would you handle it?
- Describe a difficult work situation / project and how you overcame it.
- Describe a time when your workload was heavy and how you handled it.
- More job interview questions about your abilities.
- More job interview questions about you.

Questions About the New Job and the Company

- What interests you about this job?
- Why do you want this job?
- What applicable attributes / experience do you have?
- Are you overqualified for this job?
- What can you do for this company?
- Why should we hire you?
- Why are you the best person for the job?
- What do you know about this company?
- Why do you want to work here?
- What challenges are you looking for in a position?
- What can you contribute to this company?
- Are you willing to travel?

- Is there anything I haven't told you about the job or company that you would like to know?

Questions about The Future

- What are you looking for in your next job? What is important to you?
- What are your goals for the next five years / ten years?
- How do you plan to achieve those goals?
- What are your salary requirements - both short-term and long-term?
- Questions about your career goals.
- What will you do if you don't get this position?