You've landed an interview with your ideal employer—congratulations! Now it's time to prepare for the interview.

The 10 questions below provide opportunities to present your best self and place the focus on your skills, your energy and the value you would bring to the employer.

It's a good idea to practice your responses, either with friends or family or by yourself in front of a mirror. It will help put you at ease during the actual interview.

AARP's Work Resources Web page, www.aarp.org/WorkResources, has great tools and tips on managing your job search. In the meantime, read on for tips on handling tough interview questions.

1. “Tell me about yourself.”

Make your answer short and sweet. Stick to skills and experience that relate to the specific job for which you’re applying. Resist the impulse to stress your years of experience. It’s more important to talk about your skills and achievements that show you can deliver. Emphasize your flexibility and positive, work-related attitude.

2. “Why are you looking for a job?”

Keep it brief. A straightforward answer is best. For example, “My organization was forced to downsize.” Avoid negative statements about yourself, your work or your ability to get along with others. Never criticize former employers or coworkers.

3. “You haven’t worked for a long time. Why not?”

You may have gaps in employment for many reasons. Be honest. Speak confidently about the experience you gained during the gaps that could transfer to on-the-job skills. For instance, if you were a caregiver, you likely managed complex personal finance issues. As a volunteer, you might have worked with diverse groups and managed challenging schedules.

4. “What are you looking for?”

It takes a lot of thinking to be ready for this question. Avoid speaking in generalities. Be prepared to talk about the kind of work you're interested in doing and how your skills translate to the employer's needs.

5. “Aren’t you overqualified for this position?”

Even though “overqualified” can be shorthand for “old” or “expensive,” it’s important to stay positive. Express your enthusiasm for the job and pride in your qualifications. Explain what makes you interested in this position at this point in your career—such as wanting to apply your skills to a new field, not wanting any management responsibilities, or to achieve more flexibility and work-life balance.

6. “We have state-of-the-art technology. Would you be able to jump right in?”

Show you are adaptable and tech-savvy. Provide specific examples of projects you've done that required computer skills, computer programs
you know, and your familiarity with social media. Emphasize any training you’ve had to keep your skills up to date.

7. “We don’t have many employees who are your age. Would that bother you?”

Explain that you believe your age would be an asset, you are eager to learn and it doesn’t matter who helps you. Describe recent experiences, whether at work or in other situations, where age diversity has been an asset.

Federal law bars employers from considering age in employment decisions. Though it’s not illegal to be asked your age, the question could be a red flag about the employer’s commitment to age diversity. Know your rights under the Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA). Also, read AARP’s Age Discrimination Fact Sheet.

8. “What’s your biggest weakness?”

This is a reverse invitation to promote your skills. Do it with an answer that puts you in a good light. For example, “I tend to be too detail-oriented, but I work hard to control that.” Keep it simple—and smile.

9. “What are your salary requirements?”

Try to postpone this question until you receive a job offer. Prepare by knowing the going rate in your area. A good resource is the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. If you don’t know the range and the interviewer persists, reply, “What salary range are you working with?” The interviewer may very well tell you.

10. Do you have any questions?”

Show your interest and initiative by asking specific questions about the organization and what you can expect in the job. Use your questions to demonstrate how your skills can contribute to the organization. Answering “no” to this question says you’re not really interested in the job.

Take Action!

- Prepare your answers to potential questions to help put yourself at ease during the interview.
- Always spin positive—highlight your skills and experiences at every opportunity.
- Research the salary range for the given job, but try not to have the salary discussion at this early stage.
- Find more help with your job search at www.aarp.org/WorkResources.

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