

Top 6 Questions you should ask during the Interview Process: Here are six must-ask questions and why you should know the answers.

1. What happened to the person who previously did this job? (If a new position: How has this job been performed in the past?)

Why You Need to Ask: You need to know any problems or past history associated with this position. For instance, was your predecessor fired or promoted? Is this a temporary position or brand new? The answer will tell you about management's expectations and how the company is gearing to grow.

2. Why did you choose to work here? What keeps you here?

Why You Need to Ask: Although you may like this company, you're an outsider. You need to find out what an insider has to say about working there. Who better to ask than your interviewer? This also forces the interviewer to step out of their official corporate role and answer personally as an employee and potential coworker.

3. What is the first problem the person you hire must attend to?

Why You Need to Ask: You need to be on the same page as your new manager, as well as be clear on what the initial expectations are and that you can deliver. What you don't want is to allow yourself to be misled about the job's requirements and end up overwhelmed and over your head after the first week on the job.

4. What can you tell me about the individual to whom I would report?

Why You Need to Ask: It doesn't matter how wonderful the company might be; your time will be spent working for a specific manager. You need to find out who this person is and what kind of manager he is -- earlier rather than later, before personality clashes develop. If you're an independent type used to working through solutions on your own, for instance, you'll chafe when you find you're being supervised by a micromanager.

5. What are the company's five-year sales and profit projections?

Why You Need to Ask: You need to know about the future of the company you plan to spend several years of your life working for. It doesn't have to be this exact question. For example, you might want to ask about the company's future plans for new products and services or any planned market expansion. Of course, you've done your own research, but nothing can beat an insider's observations and insights. This also shows you've done your homework and are serious about this company.

6. What's our next step?

Why You Need to Ask: This is your closing and the most important question to ask at the end of the interview. You need to know what happens after this point. Many books advise asking for the job now, but most people may feel too intimidated to bluntly do so. And with more candidates already scheduled for interviews, the company is not likely to make you an offer yet. You may also need to do some additional research on the company, making it too early to ask for the job.

A good compromise: Take the lead and set a plan for follow-up. You'll also be able to gauge the company's enthusiasm with the answer. Don't forget to ask for your interviewer's direct phone number and the best time to call.

What to Remember

As a job seeker, the key to a good interview is to find out as much about your potential employer as possible. Asking these six questions will not only make you appear more committed as a candidate, but will also give you better insight into both the challenges and opportunities that may lie ahead for you.