COMMONLY ASKED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND STRATEGIES FOR ANSWERING THEM

Common interview questions:
1. **“Tell me about yourself”** is the most popular first question you will be asked. To answer this question:
   - Target less 1 & ½ min. to 2 min. max
   - Highlight the match between your skills and how they fit with the employer’s needs.
   - Talk about why you’re an excellent fit for the job.
   - Start where you are today & where you want to go, focus on why you are in the interview seat & what you hope to do, moving forward.
   - Don’t ramble. Choose themes.

   Example:
   “I’m currently completing my Bachelor’s degree in English, and plan to pursue a career in publishing. In addition to my love for reading, writing, and editing, I have been an Editorial Intern for a Children’s Literature Publishing Company and also for Modern Luxury Magazines. I’m the Editor in Chief for hercampus.com as well. I feel strongly that my skills and experiences are compatible with your Editorial position at Simon & Schuster. I’m particularly interested in your organization because…”

2. **Why do you want to work here?**
   - **Bad answers:**
     - It’s a great company and I would love to work there. --- too general
     - Uh, what do you guys do? --- uninformed answer
     - I heard there was an opening, and here I am. --- unenthusiastic answer
   - **Good answers:** Tell the interview(s) about your career goals and how this position fits into your plan
     - Understand your priorities and preferences — which aspects of the company are appealing to you and why?
     - **See this blog for more tips:** https://biginterview.com/blog/2013/03/why-do-you-want-to-work-here.html **See this video clip for a sample answer:** https://youtu.be/tPvCELPh5fk

   Why do employers ask this question? They want to know:
   - What do you know about the company & if you took time to research it.
   - How you fit in with their company culture.
   - Understand your motivations & to see if are you sincerely interested.
   - Are you likely to stay in the role for a while?

3. **What are your greatest strengths?**
   - Highlight skills you have that relate to what they are seeking most in candidates, keeping in mind the job description of what they are seeking in candidates.
   - Think about what sets you apart from other candidates.
   - Watch this video sample answer from The Balance Careers: https://www.thebalancecareers.com/what-is-your-greatest-strength-2061282

4. **What’s your greatest weakness?**
TIPS:
- Always speak positively about yourself.
- Use specific examples to make a point.
- Be careful. Don’t cast any doubt on your ability to do the job.

STRATEGIES FOR ANSWERING:
- Mention skills that aren’t critical to the position.
- Discuss what you have improved upon, turn a negative into a positive
- Focus on the positive aspects of your skills & abilities.
- Let’s listen to some examples:
  - [https://www.thebalancecareers.com/what-is-your-greatest-weakness-2061288](https://www.thebalancecareers.com/what-is-your-greatest-weakness-2061288)

5. **Behavioral Based Interview Questions** are often asked in interviews. Here are examples of behavioral based interview questions & a great strategy for answering these types of questions:

Examples: Behavioral-Based
- *Describe a time when you had to balance/prioritize several tasks within a short period of time.*
- *Tell me about a time when you had to work with an unproductive or uncooperative colleague.*
- *Tell me about how you handled a challenge.*
- *Have you ever made a mistake? How did you handle it?*
- *Give me an example where you found better ways to perform a task.*

STAR METHOD: Situation, Task, Action & Results
Situation – Set up the scene — where did this happen? (ex: name the internship, when it was, & what was the situation?)

Task — What was your role?

Action/Approach — How did you carry out your role? How did you solve the problem or handle the situation?

Results — what was the outcome? Did you have a good turn-out? Did you increase sales? Did you increase the number of likes on social media? For example.

Example of a Behavioral Based Question & Answer

- How do you handle a crisis situation? Or...
- Describe how you have solved problems? Or...
- Tell me about a time you had to make a last minute change?

This sample response works for any of the above questions.

SITUATION:
"In my role as Program Chair for ABC Club at Emory University, this past fall semester I was in charge of a major event, one of our biggest fundraisers of the year. It typically had hundreds of guests and brought in thousands of dollars for the organization."

NOTE: When telling the interviewer the situation, when you set up the scene, don’t just say “at my internship I solved a problem...” and then move to task... that isn’t going to paint a picture for the interviewer...
Instead, give details...
As Program Chair for my club – when was this? Where did this happen? What was the situation?

**TASK:**

“It was my job to plan the event, including securing the venue and guest speaker. Just three days before the event, our keynote speaker became ill and canceled on us. Our speaker is the biggest draw for the event, so not having her was disastrous. If we canceled the event, we would lose thousands of dollars, but if we didn’t have a speaker, we risked angering our audience.”

**NOTE:** The interviewee described what went wrong and how it happened. Was it something avoidable, or was it an unexpected crisis?

**ACTION/APPROACH:**

“I consulted with our planning team, and we discussed our options. Canceling the event was out of the question, we would lose too much money, so our only option was to find a new speaker. I spent the next ten hours on the phone non-stop, calling ever speakers' bureau in the region and sending emails to everyone I knew who could help. It was grueling, but the work paid off.”

**NOTE:** In this part of the answer… Describe not only what action you took, but your rationale behind it and how you identified solutions.

**RESULTS/OUTCOME: What was the outcome?**

“My persistence ended up working. After chasing down one company, I was able to secure a new speaker for the same cost we were going to pay the original one. We sent out a communication letting attendees know about the change and highlighted the achievements of our new speaker. It turned out to be our best event yet; we earned $10,000 more than we did the year prior.”

**NOTE:** Don’t forget to share the outcomes! This helps provide “proof” that you handled the situation like a STAR, with great results.

RESOURCES & more examples, strategies, and tips for acing the interview:

https://www.thebalancecareers.com/ Type in “Interview” and you will find numerous a