

A FREE GUIDE FROM NEIL BONDRE



25 Interview Questions

You Must Prepare Before Your Next Interview

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Inside this guide

Six sections. Twenty-five questions. The complete starter prep doc.

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A note before you start

Most candidates walk into interviews having reviewed the job description and rehearsed a few answers in their head. That isn't preparation. It's anxiety with extra steps.

These are the 25 questions I see come up across every interview I help my clients prep for. Finance, consulting, tech, MBA admissions, medical school. Different industries ask them in different dialects, but the questions underneath are the same.

"Interviewing is a skill. Skills are built through structured practice with real feedback."

For each question I've included two things: why interviewers ask it, and what a strong answer does. Both matter. If you only know the question and not the intent behind it, you'll prepare an answer that misses what the interviewer is actually listening for.

Use this list as your starting prep doc. Write out an answer for every question. Time yourself. Read your answers out loud. The ones that don't sound natural when spoken are the ones to fix first.

If you want help getting your answers tight before the real interview, I do free 15-minute consultations. Details at the end.

Stay confident, stay positive.

Neil

01

SECTION

The Opening

The first three minutes of any interview set the frame for everything that follows. Get these right and the rest of the conversation gets easier.

3 questions

SECTION 01 • THE OPENING

1

Tell me about yourself.

WHY THEY ASK

This is the first impression and the framing for everything that follows. Most candidates either ramble or recite their resume.

WHAT TO DO

Two minutes maximum. Three beats. Where you started, what you've built, why this role is the next logical step.

2

Walk me through your resume.

WHY THEY ASK

They want to understand the throughline of your career and how each move shaped you. They're listening for whether your story makes sense, not whether you can recite dates.

WHAT TO DO

Three minutes maximum. Move chronologically. Spend more time on the recent and relevant. Connect each move to a clear "why."

3

Why are you looking right now?

WHY THEY ASK

They want to know if you're running from something or running toward something. The latter is a stronger signal.

WHAT TO DO

Lead with what you want next, not what you're leaving. Keep it positive about your current employer. Be specific about what this role offers that yours doesn't.

02

SECTION

Why You, Why This Role, Why Now

These four questions are the make-or-break of most interviews. Generic answers lose. Specific, researched answers win.

4 questions

SECTION 02 • WHY YOU, WHY THIS ROLE, WHY NOW

4 Why this company?

WHY THEY ASK

They want to know whether you've done the work, and whether you'll still want this job a year from now.

WHAT TO DO

Name three specific things that drew you in. The work itself, the team or leadership, the trajectory of the company. Avoid generic praise that could apply to any competitor.

5 Why this role?

WHY THEY ASK

They want to know whether you understand what the role actually involves and whether your skills genuinely fit.

WHAT TO DO

Connect the responsibilities in the job description to specific things you've done before. Show you've read the role carefully and thought about how you'd succeed in it.

6

Why now?

WHY THEY ASK

Timing matters. They want to know whether this is a considered move or a reaction to something at your current job.

WHAT TO DO

Give a clear answer about where you are in your career and why this is the right next step at this point. Avoid vague answers about wanting "growth" or "new challenges."

7

Where do you see yourself in five years?

WHY THEY ASK

They're checking ambition, self-awareness, and fit with their growth trajectory. Also whether you're going to leave in a year.

WHAT TO DO

Be honest about the kind of work you want to be doing. Frame it in a way that makes this role a logical step toward that future, not a holding pattern.

03

SECTION

Behavioral and Story-Based

Most interviews live or die in this section. The candidates who do well have three to five strong stories prepared, and they know which one to pull for which question.

6 questions

SECTION 03 • BEHAVIORAL AND STORY-BASED

8

Tell me about a time you led a team.**WHY THEY ASK**

Leadership is one of the highest-signal traits, even in non-management roles. They want to see how you motivate others, set direction, and handle responsibility.

WHAT TO DO

Pick a story where you owned the outcome, not just contributed to it. Use the SAR structure. Situation, action, result. Quantify the result if you can.

9

Tell me about a time you failed.**WHY THEY ASK**

They're testing self-awareness and growth. The wrong answer is "I worked too hard" or a story where the failure wasn't really yours.

WHAT TO DO

Pick a real failure where you owned the mistake. Spend more time on what you learned and changed than on the failure itself.

10

Tell me about a time you disagreed with a manager.

WHY THEY ASK

They want to see whether you can push back constructively without being difficult. They're also screening for ego.

WHAT TO DO

Pick a disagreement where you respected the manager and had a substantive point. Show how you raised it, what the conversation looked like, and how you handled the outcome whether you won the argument or not.

11

Tell me about a time you delivered under pressure.

WHY THEY ASK

Most jobs have high-pressure moments. They want to see how you function when the stakes are real.

WHAT TO DO

Pick a story with a tight deadline, a high-stakes outcome, or both. Show the specific actions you took to manage the pressure. End with what you delivered.

12

Tell me about a project you're proud of.

WHY THEY ASK

This is your chance to control the narrative. They want to see what you value and what kind of work motivates you.

WHAT TO DO

Pick something where your contribution was clear and the outcome mattered. Tell the story like you'd tell a friend, not like you're reciting a resume bullet.

13

Tell me about a difficult colleague.

WHY THEY ASK

Collaboration is most jobs. They want to see whether you can navigate friction without making it everyone else's problem.

WHAT TO DO

Pick a real situation. Avoid blaming the other person. Focus on what you did to make the working relationship functional and the project successful.

04

SECTION

Strengths and Self-Assessment

These four questions are about self-awareness. Vague answers signal lack of reflection. Specific answers signal maturity.

4 questions

SECTION 04 • STRENGTHS AND SELF-ASSESSMENT

14

What's your greatest strength?

WHY THEY ASK

They want to see whether you can articulate what you're actually good at, and whether what you say matches what they need.

WHAT TO DO

Pick one strength relevant to the role. Back it with a brief story or example. Avoid listing five strengths. One strong answer beats a list every time.

15

What's your biggest weakness?

WHY THEY ASK

Same as above, plus they're testing self-awareness. The wrong move is to disguise a strength as a weakness.

WHAT TO DO

Pick a real weakness. Show that you're aware of it. Show what you've done to manage or improve it. End with where you are now.

16

What would your last manager say about you?

WHY THEY ASK

They're checking how you see yourself and whether your view aligns with how others see you.

WHAT TO DO

Lead with two specific things your manager actually said or would say. Include both a strength and a development area. Tell the truth. They may check.

17

What's an area you've worked on improving?

WHY THEY ASK

Growth mindset. They want to see whether you actively work on yourself.

WHAT TO DO

Pick something concrete. Describe the gap, the work you put in, and the change. Be specific about how you'd describe yourself before and after.

05

SECTION

Hard and Curveball Questions

These are the questions that catch most candidates off guard. The ones who handle them well stand out.

4 questions

SECTION 05 • HARD AND CURVEBALL QUESTIONS

18

Why should we hire you over the other candidates?

WHY THEY ASK

They want to see how you make a case for yourself without sounding arrogant or generic.

WHAT TO DO

Don't compare yourself to the other candidates. Make a clear, confident case for what you uniquely bring. Tie it directly to the role and the team.

19

What's the worst thing about your current job?

WHY THEY ASK

They're screening for whether you'll badmouth a current employer, and whether your reasons for leaving align with what they offer.

WHAT TO DO

Stay measured. Pick something structural rather than personal. Frame it as a constraint of the role or company stage, not a complaint about people.

20

What would you do in your first 90 days here?

WHY THEY ASK

They want to see whether you've thought about how to actually do the job, not just whether you want it.

WHAT TO DO

Lead with listening and learning. Then specific actions you'd take based on what you learned. Avoid claiming you'd transform anything in 90 days.

21

Are you interviewing anywhere else?

WHY THEY ASK

They want to gauge urgency and how serious the competition is for you. They may also be testing for honesty.

WHAT TO DO

Be honest but brief. If you are, say so without naming companies. If you have an offer or timeline, share enough to create urgency without being aggressive.

06

SECTION

Closing Questions

The last five minutes of an interview matter more than most candidates realize. Strong closing questions can shift the interviewer's overall impression of you.

4 questions

SECTION 06 • CLOSING QUESTIONS

22

Do you have any questions for us?

WHY THEY ASK

Candidates who don't ask good questions look unprepared or uninterested. Candidates who ask thoughtful questions look senior.

WHAT TO DO

Have at least five prepared. Mix questions about the role, the team, the company's direction, and the interviewer's own experience. Avoid anything you could have answered with a Google search.

23

What concerns do you have about this role?

WHY THEY ASK

They want to see whether you can be direct about gaps or risks, or whether you'll pretend everything is perfect.

WHAT TO DO

Pick one real concern. Frame it as a question, not a complaint. Show you've thought carefully about whether this is the right fit.

24

When can you start?

WHY THEY ASK

They're often checking whether you're realistic about transitions and whether your timeline works for them.

WHAT TO DO

Be specific. Standard notice is two weeks. If you need more, say so and explain why. Don't underpromise to win the offer and then renegotiate.

25

Is there anything we haven't asked that you think we should know?

WHY THEY ASK

They're giving you the floor. They want to see whether you'll use it well or freeze.

WHAT TO DO

Have one thing prepared. Something you didn't get to share that strengthens your candidacy. A relevant project, a unique perspective, a reason this role is the right fit. Keep it under a minute.

Now do the work.

Block off two hours this week. Write out an answer for every question on this list. Read each answer out loud. Time yourself.

The ones that sound rehearsed need rewriting. The ones that take too long need cutting. The ones you haven't actually answered yet are the ones the interviewer will catch you on.

If you want help getting your answers tight before the real interview, I'd be happy to talk.

Book a free consultation

We'll talk about the role you're going after, where you feel stuck, and whether coaching is the right next step.

calendly.com/neilbondre-free-consultation

Stay confident, stay positive.

Neil

About Neil Bondre



Founder of The Interview Professional, based in Los Angeles. For over 15 years, Neil has worked with and coached candidates from firms including Goldman Sachs, Morgan Stanley, Kayne Anderson Capital Advisors, Merrill Lynch, Smith Barney, PwC, Ernst & Young, Apple, Salesforce, Snowflake, Databricks, Okta, DocuSign, NetSuite, Kaiser, UCLA, and LMU. His clients land roles in finance, private equity, consulting, and tech, and admits to MBA, medical, and residency programs.

Sessions are virtual, with clients across LA, North America, and globally.

Direct coaching, customized to your talk track, your resume, and your personality.

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