

# Career Centers

## Additional Help

### The Eight Types of Interview Questions

Interviewing is not a science. Nor is it an art form. It is simply an imperfect form of human communication designed to increase the predictive validity of potential employer-employee relationships. And it is very imperfect.

There are basically eight types of questions you may face during the course of an interview:

1. **Credential verification questions**

This type of question includes What was your GPA? and How long were you at . . . Its purpose is to place objective measurements on features of your background.

2. **Experience verification questions**

This type of question includes What did you learn in that class? and What were your responsibilities in that position? Its purpose is to subjectively evaluate features of your background.

3. **Opinion questions**

This type of question includes What would you do in this situation? and What are your strengths and weaknesses? Their purpose is to subjectively analyze how you would respond in a series of scenarios. The reality is that Tape #143 in your brain typically kicks in (I know the answer to that one!) and plays back the pre-programmed answer.

4. **Dumb questions**

This type of question includes What kind of animal would you like to be? and What color best describes you? Their purpose is to get past your pre-programmed answers to find out if you are capable of an original thought. There is not necessarily a right or wrong answer, since it is used primarily to test your ability to think on your feet.

5. **Math questions**

This type of question includes "What is 1000 divided by 73?" to "How many ping pong balls could fit in a Volkswagen?" Its purpose is to evaluate not only your mental math calculation skills, but also your creative ability in formulating the mathematical formula for providing an answer (or estimate, as can often be the case).

6. **Case questions**

This type of question includes problem-solving questions ranging from: "How many gas stations are there in Europe?" to "What is your estimate of the global online retail market for books?" Its purpose is to evaluate your problem-solving abilities and how you would analyze and work through potential case situations.

7. **Behavioral questions**

This type of question includes Can you give me a specific example of how you did that? and What were the steps you followed to accomplish that task? Its purpose is to anticipate future behaviors based upon past behaviors.

8. **Competency questions**

This type of question includes "Can you give me a specific example of your leadership skills?" or

"Explain a way in which you sought a creative solution to a problem." Its purpose is to align your past behaviors with specific competencies which are required for the position.

Interviewing is a game in which I deal the cards, but you hold the aces. Its up to you to play them.

It is interesting to note that the first four types of interview questions listed have a predictive validity for on the job success of just 10 percent. And 10 percent predictive validity is the same level that is generated from a simple resume review. Math questions increase the predictive validity to 15 percent (since it tests intelligence, commonly a key competency for most positions) and case questions raise the predictive validity to 25 percent (and slightly higher for consulting positions). Behavioral and competency interviewing, on the other hand, yield a predictive validity of 55 percent. Still far from perfect, yet much more reliable for most interviewers. Interestingly, the first four question types are still the favored approach by most untrained interviewers, simply due to lack of experience. Behavioral and competency interviewing is gaining greater acceptance by trained interviewers because past performance is the most reliable indicator of future results, especially when it is tied to the specific competencies for the position. Companies such as Accenture have modified this approach with specific critical behavioral interviewing to target those behaviors which provide the highest correlation with the required competencies for highly predictive positive results.



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