



Nine Things You Should Never Say in an Interview

Make sure you avoid these interview blunders.

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1. "What does your company do?"

Ask questions that show you're well informed and eager to work at the company, not those to which you should already know the answers, or that can be easily gleaned from the company's website or annual report.

2. "My salary requirements are very flexible."

Compensation is often the touchiest subject in an interview. Certainly you want to know what a company will pay, and interviewers want to know what you're willing to take. It's a negotiation, not a game. When push comes to shove, you should be willing at least to give a range, even if you have to be broad and say, for example, "I'm looking for something between \$30,000 and \$60,000."

But don't pretend to be flexible when you aren't. If you're worried that your salary requirements are too high for the job, you may need to do some serious thinking about how low you're willing to go. Don't sell yourself short, but ask yourself how much you honestly think you're worth. Do research about what similar jobs pay and what salaries are like in the region. If a company comes back with too low an offer, you can always try and negotiate up.

3. "It would be hella cool to get jiggy with this job."

Maybe that is how all of your friends talk (and it's become a habit with you), but it's not the way you should speak during a job interview. Using slang is a serious turnoff for interviewers. You may be articulate, intelligent, and confident, but like, you sure won't sound that way.

4. "Bill Gates himself offered me a \$100,000 bonus."

Don't lie! You'll be found out, and you'll regret it. Someday when you least expect it, someone somewhere will discover that you didn't *really* increase sales by 999 percent in six months. Interviewers know you'll probably exaggerate a little to sell yourself; but don't cross the line between exaggeration and out-and-out lying.

5. "In five years, I see myself on a boat in the Caribbean."

When interviewers ask you about long-term goals, they want an answer that relates to the company. Telling them that you really want to be living on a farm (unless you're applying for an agricultural job) isn't going to convince them that you're an ambitious professional in your chosen field.

Even if you don't plan to stick around long, say something that reflects a commitment to the position and the company. This may seem to contradict the previous exhortation about lying, but try to think of it as a rhetorical question. You *might* still be at the same company in five years, right?

6. "Sorry, I don't know how to do that."

Rather than admitting that you don't have a specific skill, stress that you're a fast learner and are excited about the possibility of acquiring new skills. Most companies would rather hire an enthusiastic, smart person who needs to be trained than someone who already has the required skills but isn't as eager to learn.

7. "You see, I just went through a painful divorce. . . ."

Even if an interviewer starts getting personal, don't follow suit. You may think you're being open and honest, but you're really just coming across as unprofessional, unfocused, and disrespectful. Keep it businesslike and polite.

8. "What can your company do for me?"

Interviewers hate arrogance and selfishness. They want to know why they should hire you. Stress the contributions you can make. Tell them about how your efforts helped previous employers. Don't start asking about raises, bonuses, and promotions right away.

Remember, you're the one being interviewed, and while you should use the opportunity to get your questions answered, you shouldn't make it seem as if you'll be doing them a favor if they hire you.

9. "I left my last job because my boss was a real jerk."

Bad-mouthing your previous employer is possibly the dumbest thing you can do during an interview. Even if your last company was a chaotic hellhole, your boss was a monster, your coworkers were Martians, and you got paid in tin cans, say that you left to look for more responsibility, you wanted greater opportunity for advancement, or you were just ready for a change.

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