

# ASK THESE QUESTIONS IN YOUR NEXT INTERVIEW



Job hunters need to know whether a potential position is a good fit for them professionally and culturally. To do that, they need to find out all they can about a potential employer's company or department. To help you in this endeavor, here are the questions you should ask during initial job interviews. By taking this list with you to that next job interview, you'll be able to ask the right questions to help you determine whether the company will be a good fit for your talents and expectations.

1. What do you find most frustrating about your position?
2. Why is this position open?
3. Can you describe a typical day in this role?
4. Where do you see this position in three to five years?
5. What is the company's policy regarding training?
6. Would the job description assigned to me be based on my interest areas?
7. What are the company's financial stability and future growth possibilities?
8. Could you describe the work culture (do people work overtime, etc.)?
9. What are the personal growth opportunities (such as leadership training, company-supported community work, mentoring, and so on)?
10. What is the training budget?
11. How many employees do you have?

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## PHONE CALL VERSUS LETTER VERSUS EMAIL

It is common to respond to an offer in the same manner that it was conveyed (i.e., respond to a telephone call with a telephone call), but it is not necessary. If you are nervous about calling with your news, keep in mind that you should not anticipate that the phone call will be long, intense, or even awkward. Companies get turned down regularly, and though they may not like it, they are typically quite gracious about it. It is acceptable to leave a voice mail message declining a job offer, but don't try to avoid talking to a live person by calling at 11 p.m. Voice mail records the time of the call, and your attempt to avoid the conversation will be obvious. If the thought of a phone conversation makes you very uncomfortable, just send a short, courteous letter. Only respond by email if that is the manner in which you received your offer.

## APPROPRIATE ADDRESSEE

The best addressee is the person who made you the offer; another choice is the person you met on campus or was in charge of your callback visit. The recruiting director is also an option, since she is the person who keeps the files. If you decline by phone, you can send your follow-up letter directly to the recruiting coordinator (explain you are confirming your phone conversation with X), or write to the person with whom you spoke and cc the recruiting director.

## WHAT TO SAY

You need not volunteer a lot of information; just be direct and scrupulously polite. Think of the sorts of things a company would say in turning you down, and adapt them—you're grateful for the offer, you very much appreciate their time and effort, it's a difficult decision when faced with a number of interesting choices, but you have a limited amount of time and you couldn't do everything, and you think another option is best for you for this summer (or words to that effect). You can certainly volunteer the name of the firm where you'll be working, but you don't have to. In a telephone conversation, you may be asked where you're going, so just be prepared for the question. Generally, they're curious, not upset, and will simply say something nice like "Oh, XYZ is a good firm."

## FOLLOW UP

If you decline an offer over the phone, it is a good idea to follow up with a letter (especially if you only leave a voice mail message) so you and the firm have a record. If you accept a job offer over the phone, it is usually not necessary to follow up with a letter. The employer typically follows up an acceptance with a letter confirming the acceptance and providing additional information about the position.

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