Common interview questions and how to answer them

Gulp. The interview is looming. How can you make sure you get the job? One way is to be ready with winning answers to common interview questions.

You’ll do better if you understand the psychology behind these questions. They’re designed to tease information out of you about:

- Who you really are
- What you can do for the organisation
- Why you’re switching jobs
- How much you expect to be paid

In this article we outline the top 10 most typical interview questions and how to answer them:

1. **Tell me about yourself?**
   **Inside story:** Don’t you just hate this one? The employer doesn’t want to know what level you have reached on Candy Crush or your boyfriend. What the employer really wants to know is your experience, your skills and, if you’re new in the workforce, your education. Keep it short and sweet.

2. **What interests you about this job?**
   **Inside story:** This question weeds out people who just want any job. This is your chance to shine. Try: “there is a greater scope for me to use my skills” – which you then outline.

3. **What did you like and/or dislike about your current/previous job?**
   **Inside story:** The interviewer wants to find out whether your cup is half full or half empty. It’s best to focus on what you liked. Talk about the culture and the organisation and post it in a good light.

4. **Why are you leaving?**
   **Inside story:** This question can give a lot away about you. Focus on the
opportunities available to you if you take the job.

5. **What do you know about our company?**
   **Inside story:** This question uncovers candidates who haven’t taken the time to find out about the organisation. If you’ve done your homework you should be able to talk about the products or services, opportunities or difficulties in the market, and some recent news.

6. **Why do you want to work for us?**
   **Inside story:** Employers want someone who’ll be committed, not someone who just needs a job. If you can link your skills to what the company or organisation does, you’re on the right track.

7. **What are your strong points?**
   **Inside story:** We know you’re perfect. But this could work against you if you brag. Think of three or four good points and give examples of how they have benefited previous employers.

8. **What are your weak points?**
   **Inside story:** If you’re counting on your fingers, stop now. Only ever give one weak point – which you can shed in a good light. Have another up your sleeve in case you’re pushed.

9. **What have you learned from your mistakes?**
   **Inside story:** Everyone has made mistakes. If you’re honest about one or two mistakes you’ll come across as more believable and trustworthy than someone who denies all. Focus on the take outs from these mistakes.

10. **How much do you think this position pays?**
    **Inside story:** The interviewers are trying to find out if you are affordable and how little they can get away with paying.

Whatever you do: practice, practice, practice when it comes to job interview questions. Have an answer to every common question ready that focuses on the positive.