

Sample Interview Questions and Answers

1. How would you describe yourself?

Sample excellent response:

My background to date has been centered around preparing myself to become the very best financial consultant I can become. Let me tell you specifically how I've prepared myself. I am an undergraduate student in finance and accounting at _____ University. My past experiences has been in retail and higher education. Both aspects have prepared me well for this career.

2. What specific goals, including those related to your occupation, have you established for your life?

Sample excellent response:

I want to be working for an excellent company like yours in a job in which I am managing information. I plan to contribute my leadership, interpersonal, and technical skills. My long-range career goal is to be the best information systems technician I can for the company I work for.

3. How has your college experience prepared you for a business career?

Sample excellent response:

I have prepared myself to transition into the the work force through real-world experience involving travel abroad, internship, and entrepreneurial opportunities. While interning with a private organization in Ecuador, I developed a 15-page marketing plan composed in Spanish that recommended more effective ways the company could promote its services. I also traveled abroad on two other occasions in which I researched the indigenous culture of the Mayan Indians in Todos Santos, Guatemala, and participate din a total language immersion program in Costa Rica. As you can see from my academic, extracurricular, and experiential background, I have unconditionally committed myself to success as a marketing professional.

4. Please describe the ideal job for you following graduation.

Sample excellent response (equates ideal job with job he's interviewing for):

My ideal job is one that incorporates both my education and practical work skills to be the best I can be. Namely combining my education in finance with my working knowledge of customer service operations, entrepreneurial abilities, computer skills, and administrative skills. I want to utilize my analytical expertise to help people meet their financial goals. This is exactly why I am convinced that I would be a very valuable member of the Merrill Lynch team.

5. What influenced you to choose this career?

Sample excellent response:

My past experiences have shown me that I enjoy facing and overcoming the

challenge of making a sale. Without a doubt, once I have practiced my presentation and prepared myself for objections, I feel very confident approaching people I don't know and convincing them that they need my product. Lastly, I like sales because my potential for success is limited only by how much of myself I dedicate toward my goal. If any profession is founded on self-determinism, it surely must be sales.

6. At what point did you choose this career?

Sample excellent response:

I knew that I wanted to pursue information systems technology about my sophomore year in college. It was then that I realized that my that my hobby (computers) was taking up most of my time. My favorite courses were IT courses. I also realized that I was doing computer-oriented work-study that I enjoyed so much I would have done it for free.

7. What specific goals have you established for your career?

Sample excellent response:

My goals include becoming a Certified Financial Advisor so I can obtain a better working knowledge of financial research analysis, which would allow me contribute to my client base as a better financial consultant since I would have that extra insight into the companies they are seeking to invest in. Also this is the foundation block to advancing my career to portfolio manager or even branch office manager.

8. What will it take to attain your goals, and what steps have you taken toward attaining them?

Sample excellent response:

I've already done some research on other workers at Merrill Lynch to see how they achieved similar goals. I know that Merrill Lynch encourages the pursuit and will reimburse for tuition of a graduate degree. I plan on pursuing a MBA to give me an even more extensive knowledge of business and financial analysis.

9. What do you think it takes to be successful in this career?

Sample excellent response:

I believe successful salespeople put forth that extra effort that turns potential clients into first-time customers. Salespeople who attend to the details by doing whatever it takes to win over a prospective customer distinguish themselves from the countless others who don't go to any extra effort. Second, I think that if you label success as an attainable goal, you will never consistently remain successful. You can only succeed if you learn all there is to learn about your product, your competitors, and personal selling. Since this learning process is continuous, it's an unattainable goal. With good reason, salespeople should not consider success an attainable ending point but an objective that will always linger slightly beyond their reach.

10. How do you determine or evaluate success? Give me an example of one of your successful accomplishments.

Sample excellent response:

Last semester I was hired by by university's Council for Student Activities. The

group negotiates contracts of entertainers, sets up sound equipment, markets the entertainers to students, and generally decides what kind of programming should be done. When I got hired, I didn't know the first thing about how fill any of those responsibilities. I decided, however, that I wasn't going to fail. Four months later, I have become the Webmaster for the group. I also write our campus newsletter and created Game Night, a student competition of table games. That event yielded the biggest audience ever for a non-concert event.

11. Do you have the qualifications and personal characteristics necessary for success in your chosen career?

Sample excellent response:

I believe I have a combination of qualities to be successful in this career. First, I have a strong interest, backed by a solid, well-rounded, state-of-the-art education, especially in a career that is technically oriented. This basic ingredient, backed by love of learning, problem-solving skills, well-rounded interests, determination to succeed and excel, strong communication skills, and the ability to work hard, are the most important qualities that will help me succeed in this career. To succeed, you also need a natural curiosity about how systems work -- the kind of curiosity I demonstrated when I upgraded my two computers recently. Technology is constantly changing, so you must a fast learner just to keep up or you will be overwhelmed. All of these traits combine to create a solid team member in the ever-changing field of information systems. I am convinced that I possess these characteristics and am ready to be a successful team member for your firm.

12. What has been your most rewarding accomplishment?

Sample excellent response:

A recent satisfying accomplishment I was sent to one of our branch banks that was notorious for not growing their loan base. The branch had logged \$75,000 in new loans in an 18-month period prior to my arrival. Having a reputation as a "hired gun" when it came to loan production I was successful in the solicitation and booking of \$700,000 in my first six months at the branch.

13. If you could do so, how would you plan your college career differently?

Sample excellent response:

I wouldn't change anything. All that I have done was a great learning experience that I will carry forward throughout the rest of my life.

14. Are you more energized by working with data or by collaborating with other individuals?

Sample excellent response:

I like the validity of information and also like the energy that comes with working with people. The best thing about working in a group is combining the great minds from different perspectives and coming up with something extremely great, compared with when you're working alone. At the same time, information can generate vitality in the project you're working on. No matter how many heads you've got together, without information, you can't go very far. The perfect situation would be a combination of working with information and people, and I'm confident of my abilities in both areas.

[Submitted by "Stacey"]

See also this page of our [Job Interviewing Tutorial](#).

15. How would you describe yourself in terms of your ability to work as a member of a team?

Sample excellent response:

I have had many opportunities in both athletics and academics to develop my skills as a team player. My tenure as a rower with my college's crew team serves as a good example. I learned a great deal about teamwork while rowing because all the rowers in the boat must act as one, which meant that we incessantly worked to keep each movement in the boat synchronized. On an individual basis, we still worked toward group goals through weightlifting and land-rowing. My experience as a marketing research team leader also helped me to learn the role of "team player." I viewed my position as that of group leader and of group member. I ensured that everyone in the group had equal opportunity to contribute, maintained excellent communication among group members, and coordinated their energies toward reaching our team's goal.

16. What motivates you to put forth your greatest effort?

Sample excellent response:

You would think that because I am interested in sales, only financial compensation would motivate me to achieve. Although monetary rewards are important to me, I am driven to succeed internally. More than anything, I want to be respected by my friends and coworkers for being the best at what I do. Whether I am considered to be the best car detailer in my hometown or the best columnist for my college newspaper, I want to be recognized as the best.

17. Given the investment our company will make in hiring and training you, can you give us a reason to hire you?

Sample excellent response:

I sincerely believe that I'm the best person for the job. I realize that there are many other college students who have the ability to do this job. I also have that ability. But I also bring an additional quality that makes me the very best person for the job -- my attitude for excellence. Not just giving lip service to excellence, but putting every part of myself into achieving it. In college and at my previous jobs, I have consistently reached for becoming the very best I can become. I think my leadership awards from my college, and my management positions are the result of possessing the qualities you're looking for in an employee.

See also this page of our [Job Interviewing Tutorial](#).

18. Would you describe yourself as goal-driven?

Sample excellent response:

Yes, and I demonstrated my goal orientation as president of the local Jaycees, a community service organization. I am very proud of the fact that I set a goal of signing 50 new members by the end of the year, and I accomplished that.

See also this page of our [Job Interviewing Tutorial](#).

19. Describe what you've accomplished toward reaching a recent goal for yourself.

Sample excellent response:

My first few years in banking had me on the fast track to branch management. I realized at some point along the way that my true passion was in offering financial advice not limited to checking accounts and loans. It was at that point that I made the necessary arrangements to go back to school full-time to pursue my goal, which I am just about to achieve.

20. What short-term goals and objectives have you established for yourself?

Sample excellent response:

My short-term objectives are to graduate from the Professional Development Program before the standard two years and begin developing a clientele. As an intern, I prepared ahead of time by studying for the Series 7 and Series 64 exams that constitute a majority of a beginning financial consultant's time. I'd like to make the company that hires me wonder what it ever did without me.

21. Can you describe your long-range goals and objectives?

Sample excellent response:

My primary objectives are to learn as much as possible about your company's product offering, organizational structure, and professional sales techniques so that I may become the most productive member of your sales team.

22. What do you expect to be doing in five years?

Sample excellent response:

Although it is hard to predict the future, I sincerely believe that I will become a very good financial consultant. I believe that my abilities will allow me to excel to the point that I can seek other opportunities as a portfolio manager (the next step) and possibly even higher. My ultimate goal continues to be -- and will always be -- to be the best at whatever level I am working at within Merrill Lynch's corporate structure.

See also this page of our [Job Interviewing Tutorial](#).

23. What do you see yourself doing in ten years?

Sample excellent response:

Ten years from now I see myself as a successful consultant for a world-class firm like yours. I want to have developed a wonderful bond with my employer I will have proven myself a highly competent systems analyst and will represent my company in helping others find solutions to their information-systems needs in a professional and timely manner.

See also this page of our [Job Interviewing Tutorial](#).

24. How would you evaluate your ability to deal with conflict?

Sample excellent response:

I believe I am quite good at handling conflict. Working in retail and in the residence halls required that I make many unpopular decisions at times, whether it was terminating an associate or taking judicial action on a resident. Often the person in conflict with me would be upset and sometimes physically outraged. I

would always make sure that I fully explained the situation, the policies behind my decision, and why those policies exist. Usually by the end of the conversation, the person could see the other side of the situation.

25. Have you ever had difficulty with a supervisor or instructor? How did you resolve the conflict?

Sample excellent response:

Yes, I had an incident with my Spanish professor. I turned in an essay that she said was too good to be mine. I was honest with her; I told her that I had a native speaker review the essay, but he made very few corrections. However, I had broken the Golden Rule of Spanish Composition -- the essay must not even touch the hands of a native speaker. To prove to her that I was capable of producing an essay that exceeded her expectations of a non-native speaker, I offered to re-write another essay in her office. I earned an A-minus.

See also this page of our [Job Interviewing Tutorial](#).

26. Tell me about a major problem you recently handled. Were you successful in resolving it?

Sample excellent response:

While working at K-mart, I was one of three people to work in the electronics department. One day upon arriving at work, I was told the district manager was coming the next day to do a store inspection. The two other people who worked in electronics were both over 55. Neither could lift heavy objects, and one refused to work at all. As a result, the electronics department was usually left to me to keep stocked with product and kept in order. I had about five hours of work time to get the entire department in order. Those five hours passed around, and there was still a substantial amount of work to be done. I asked the store manager if I could stay and work after hours while the overnight stockers were there. He said that because of the employment budget, he could not let me. I was faced with bringing the entire store's rating down, so I suggested a creative staffing solution, allowing me to work the extra hours while temporarily reducing the hours of the other two members of the department. Because of this solution, in a matter of hours, the department was in tip-top shape -- and still under budget. And the results? The electronics department got a score of 95 out of 100.

27. Would you say that you can easily deal with high-pressure situations?

Sample excellent response:

Yes. My past experience as an Administrative Coordinator required me to deal with many serious situations since I held emergency on-call duties as a supervisor. One example was when I was called by a Resident Assistant to deal with an attempted suicide on her residence hall floor. The situation required that I think clearly and quickly in this life-and-death situation. I had to weigh the many tasks that needed to be completed. I had to assign RAs to call 911, make sure that EMS could get into the locked building, while at the same time applying first aid, and ensuring that the rest of the residents on the floor were OK. I also had to make sure the privacy of the resident in need was respected. I basically prioritized and dealt with each task by its importance. I delegated responsibility to RAs for things that they were capable of handling because I could not physically be in many places at once. Once the resident was taken to the hospital, I was responsible for paperwork and follow up to make sure the staff members,

residents, and the resident-in-need adjusted back to "normal" life. I know this is an extreme example not found in the financial consulting field; however, it shows just how well I can deal with extreme pressure.

See also this page of our [Job Interviewing Tutorial](#).

28. What quality or attribute do you feel will most contribute to your career success?

Sample excellent response:

My greatest strength is my flexibility. I have learned that work conditions change from day to day and throughout the day, as well, no matter where I have worked in the past. I also have realized that certain projects require individual attention and others involve a teamwork approach. These are just a few examples of the changes that happen in the financial consulting field, as you are well aware. My flexibility to adapt to the different demands of the job has allowed me to surpass my supervisor's expectations.

See also this page of our [Job Interviewing Tutorial](#).

29. What personal weakness has caused you the greatest difficulty in school or on the job?

Sample excellent response (shows how he recognized his weakness and worked to improve):

My greatest weakness had been delegation. I would take it upon myself to do many small projects throughout my shift as a manager that could have been done by others in an attempt to improve my workers' efficiency. Once I realized that I was doing more work than the other assistant managers, and they were achieving better results, I reevaluated what I was doing. I quickly realized that if I assigned each person just one small project at the beginning of their shift, clearly state expectations for the project, and then follow up that everything would get done, and I could manage much more efficiently and actually accomplish much more.

See also this page of our [Job Interviewing Tutorial](#).

30. What were your reasons for selecting your college or university?

Sample excellent response (tells how education specifically will benefit the employer):

My college has always had a reputation as having an excellent accounting department, so I knew that if I enrolled there, I would achieve first-class preparation for my chosen career field. It is also a highly accredited school known for satisfying employers with the preparation of its graduates -- that's why companies like yours recruit at my school -- the school produces top graduates. The school offers an excellent liberal-arts background, which research shows equips graduates with numerous qualities, such as versatility and strong critical-thinking skills. Finally, having visited the campus before enrolling, I knew that the business school emphasized group projects. During my four years in the school, I participated in more than 35 group projects, which taught me invaluable teamwork, communication, and interpersonal skills.

See also this page of our [Job Interviewing Tutorial](#).

31. If you could change or improve anything about your college, what would it be?

Sample excellent response:

My major department had a wonderful internship program, and I was able to complete three valuable internships with my department's guidance. Some other departments in the business school don't have internship programs that are as strong as my department's. I'd like to see all the departments have strong internship programs so all my school's business grads would have the same opportunities that I had.

32. How will the academic program and coursework you've taken benefit your career?

Sample excellent response (response is very specific to the job he is interviewing for):

As you will note on my resume, I've taken not only the required core classes for the finance field, I've also gone above and beyond by double majoring in accounting. I doubled majored since I knew that the financial consulting field requires much knowledge of portfolio analysis and understanding of the tax laws. I believe that my success in both areas of study have specifically prepared me for this area. But it's not just taking the classes in these two areas that allows me to offer Merrill Lynch clients more. I minored in Spanish to understand the growing hispanic clientele in the Central Florida area, which as you are well aware is a growing source of revenue for the industry. If you like, I can elaborate on other aspects of my education further.

33. Which college classes or subjects did you like best? Why?

Sample excellent response:

My favorite classes have been the ones pertaining to my major, which is marketing. These classes have laid the groundwork for my career in marketing. They have also taught me skills that I can bring to my employer, ranging from communication skills to interacting with others.

See also this page of our [Job Interviewing Tutorial](#).

34. Are you the type of student for whom conducting independent research has been a positive experience?

Sample excellent response:

Yes, I love it. I thoroughly enjoyed my senior research in college while many others in my class were miserable. I was never tired of learning more about my topic and found it exhilarating to be researching something that had not been studied before.

See also this page of our [Job Interviewing Tutorial](#).

35. Describe the type of professor that has created the most beneficial learning experience for you.

Sample excellent response:

My favorite professors were the ones who gave me hands-on learning

experiences that I can apply to my career. Any person can make you memorize the quadratic equation, but someone who can show you how to use it, and why, were the professors I liked. I liked teachers who realized that sometimes there is more than one answer and everyone thinks differently.

See also this page of our [Job Interviewing Tutorial](#).

36. Do you think that your grades are a indication of your academic achievement?

Sample excellent response:

I have focused much of my energy on work and obtaining real-world experience. I commend my classmates who have earned high GPAs, but I also feel it's important to be well-rounded. In addition to work experience, I participated in sports and extracurricular activities in school. These activities taught me leadership, communication, and teamwork skills. Sometimes my heavy load has not allowed me to keep up with some of my studies, but I have learned an enormous amount that I can apply in my future industry. As you will discover if you talk to my supervisors, my ability to work effectively is much more reflective of my future potential than is my GPA.

See also this page of our [Job Interviewing Tutorial](#).

37. What plans do you have for continued study? An advanced degree?

Sample excellent response:

I plan to continue my education for the rest of my life. In any technology-related field, keeping up to date through continuing education is of the utmost importance. Continuing education can include on-the-job training, courses sponsored by the employer, and courses taken in new technologies as they emerge. I plan to be not only a career employee but a career student so that I can be the best information systems analyst I can be. I will ensure, however, that any education I pursue not only doesn't interfere with my job or the company's policies, but will enhance my value as an employee.

See also this page of our [Job Interviewing Tutorial](#).

38. Before you can make a productive contribution to the company, what degree of training do you feel you will require?

Sample excellent response:

My background has been focused on preparing me for the financial consulting industry, so I can be productive right away. I already have obtained the educational credentials and skills to allow me to become an immediate asset to Merrill Lynch. After interning for a semester, I am well aware of the shared beliefs of the organization and its corporate values. I already have a very good working knowledge of the financial consulting business. I am confident of my ability to get up to speed quickly in any assignment with which I'm not familiar.

See also this page of our [Job Interviewing Tutorial](#).

39. Describe the characteristics of a successful manager.

Sample excellent response:

A successful manager should have the vision and capabilities to formulate strategies to reach his or her objectives and communicate these ideas to his or her team members. In addition to serving as a positive role model for co-workers, successful managers must also be capable of inspiring others to recognize, develop, and apply their talents to their utmost potential to reach a common goal. These are the traits I hope to demonstrate when I'm a manager.

See also this page of our [Job Interviewing Tutorial](#).

40. Why did you decide to seek a position in this field?

Sample excellent response:

I want to work in the marketing and PR industry because ever since I took my first marketing course in college, I have felt very passionate toward the industry and cannot imagine myself doing anything else.