



# Wellington Careers and Employment

## Career Essentials—Potential interview questions

Questions asked by skilled and well-prepared interviewers always have a purpose regardless of how irrelevant they may seem to the role. The interviewer aims to discover whether you have the specific qualities and skills required. There is not necessarily a right or wrong answer to such questions, rather interviewers are seeking evidence of such qualities as your motivation, energy, attitudes, initiative, and maturity.

These examples of questions are intended as a guide to stimulate your thinking and are **not model answers**. Other questions may be specific to the competencies required in the role (e.g., research skills, writing skills, technical knowledge, or customer service). Look carefully at the job description and analyse the role to identify the skills the interviewer is likely to focus on.

A good interviewer will mostly use open questions—meant to encourage you to elaborate on your answers—so use the opportunity to convey your thinking. It's OK to ask for clarification on any question.

### Tell us about yourself

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This is often asked at the beginning of the interview, so give a quick rundown of your qualifications and experience to date, why you chose this degree, and perhaps some brief personal info. If the question is asked towards the end of the interview and you have already talked a lot about yourself, then this is an opportunity for you to elaborate on any positive points and convey any messages you haven't given so far.

### What are your long-term plans?

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If you are flexible about your long-term plans, say so. However, it pays to give a general picture of what interests you now, and how you see that developing. You don't need to commit yourself to a long-term period with an employer. It's helpful to mention how enthusiastic you are about using your skills. Avoid "I don't know" if possible, because the interviewer is usually trying to assess how motivated and interested you are!

### What do you have to offer us?

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This is the essence of what the interviewers want to know. Answer in terms of the skills and personal qualities you have relevant to the job. You may refer to your academic qualifications, relevant sections of university courses, experience in the workplace, leisure activities, or personal attributes.

### How do you measure success?

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In your preparation for the interview, you would have developed a good understanding of the duties and personal attributes listed in the job description, as well as finding out about the goals and objectives of the organisation. Think about tangible results you might be able to achieve on the job that contribute to those





goals and objectives. Are there any practical ways you currently measure your success in part-time work or study (e.g., sales figures, grades, or feedback from supervisors or lecturers)?

### Why do you want to work here?

Explain why you are interested in the organisation. If you have had a long-term interest in them, say so. If location is significant, you could mention this after talking about your interest in the firm. Try not to focus on what you will get from the organisation but rather on the qualities you will bring to them.

### What are your major strengths and weaknesses?

With this question, the employer is trying to gauge your level of self-awareness. The job description will help you focus on where you see your strengths and weaknesses in relation to the tasks listed. Remember weaknesses can be turned into strengths. Talk about the strategies you use for dealing with that weakness, or its positive side. For example, taking time to make decisions may slow you down, but on the other hand you are not impulsive. Only mention one or two weaknesses—the interviewer isn't looking for a long list.

### What do you know about us?

Your answer will reveal the amount of research you have done. For example, if the company has products in the marketplace look for these at points of sale. Use your initiative to find out as much as you can about the organisation and during the interview cite ways in which you have gone about finding out this information.

### What salary do you expect?

This question may be asked when the position description doesn't indicate a salary. Try to investigate comparable rates elsewhere before you attend the interview. Check out [careers.govt.nz](https://careers.govt.nz), the annual Hays salary guide, or [nzgraduateoutcomes.ac.nz/EmploymentResearch](https://nzgraduateoutcomes.ac.nz/EmploymentResearch). One option is to provide a salary range. However, be prepared to accept the lowest number if you're offered the role. The interviewer may not raise the issue of salary, so we recommend waiting until they offer you the position to discuss it.

### What do you do in your spare time?

This is generally asked by employers seeking a fuller picture of you, or to help you relax during the interview. Finding out about your other interests and leisure activities gives employers another opportunity to uncover other skills and abilities you possess, as well as discover what you're enthusiastic or curious about.

### Tell us about a project or a piece of research you have worked on.

For this question, the interviewers are more interested in hearing the steps you took in completing the project or research. By examining 'why' and 'how' these steps were taken, the interviewer gains some idea of your skills and your ability to solve problems. Skills identified in your answer may include preparation and planning, teamwork, time management, organising, and researching.

### Have you any questions for us?

It is important that you prepare a few questions that will genuinely help you understand the role and the working environment better. All interviews are a two-way conversation, and this is your opportunity to clarify whether this role is right for you. Prepared questions also show you are serious about the role. You may want to ask what skills they consider to be the most critical for the position, how they perceive the culture of the team, or what training and development opportunities are available.