



## The Possible Meaning Behind the Questions

### 1. Can you tell me something about yourself?

*What's the meaning behind this question?*

The interviewer will normally be giving you the opportunity to say whatever you like; maybe he / she will be looking to put you at your ease.

*How should you answer?*

Tell the interviewer about your skills and qualities that make you the perfect candidate for the position. Back up your statements with specific examples.

### 2. Why have you applied for this position?

*What's the meaning behind this question?*

What do you know about the internship and the company? How well do you match the requirements? What is your motivation for applying?

*How should you answer?*

Provide specific answers to the questions listed above under "What's the meaning behind this question?" Answer clearly and succinctly. Do not waffle.

### 3. Why do you want to work for us?

*What's the meaning behind this question?*

What do you know about the organization and why is this attractive to you?

*How should you answer?*

Show that you have done your homework. Be specific. As always, be truthful.

### 4. What are your strengths?

*What's the meaning behind this question?*

Are you able to clearly articulate your key selling points? Do these key selling points match the profile the interviewer is looking for? What insights can the interviewer get into your character? Do you come across as arrogant, self-confident, shy etc?

*How should you answer?*

Pick genuine strengths that are relevant to the position and back these up with concrete examples. Aim to come across as self-confident but not arrogant.

### 5. What are your weaknesses?

*What's the meaning behind this question?*

Can the interviewer identify any weaknesses which might mean that you are not right for the position? How do you deal with a difficult question? How self-aware are you?

*How should you answer?*

Either a) answer with a weakness that isn't a weakness at all e.g. "I'm a perfectionist, which means that I often work long hours" or b) Give an example of something that you have learned to cope with e.g. "At school I was rather disorganized, and since I've been at university I have focused on organizing myself better and have been successful in doing this." Again, it's important to be truthful. Think about which of these strategies you are most comfortable with and which sounds the most sincere.



**6. What has been your greatest achievement?**

*What's the meaning behind this question?*

What do you consider as an achievement? Can you present your successes confidently without sounding arrogant?

*How should you answer?*

You don't necessarily have to speak about a work or study-related achievement. This is an opportunity for you to show the skills and qualities that you have. If possible they should be skills and qualities which are relevant for the position. Speak about a) the background b) what you achieved and c) the impact this had on your life?

**7. Why should we give you an internship?**

*What's the meaning behind this question?*

Are you able to clearly articulate your key selling points? Do these key selling points match the profile the interviewer is looking for? What insights can the interviewer get into your character? Do you come across as arrogant, self-confident, shy etc?

*How should you answer?*

Pick genuine strengths that are relevant to the position and back these up with concrete examples. Aim to come across as self-confident but not arrogant.

**8. Where do you see yourself in 5 years' time?**

*What's the meaning behind this question?*

Are you able to articulate your plans? How does this internship tie in with those plans?

*How should you answer?*

As always be honest and open. Think about why you are interested in the internship. What skills and qualities might you learn or what experiences might you have that will help you in your future career?

**9. You've said that you are interested in X on your CV. Can you tell me more about it?**

*What's the meaning behind this question?*

The interviewer might be trying to find out something about your character. Or he / she might be trying to find out how truthful you have been in your CV.

*How should you answer?*

If you have been truthful in your CV then you should have no problems with this question. If speaking about your hobbies, look to illustrate qualities that will make you desirable e.g. you can take responsibility, you can stick to a task etc.

**10. How would you /your friends / university lecturers describe you?**

*What's the meaning behind this question?*

What qualities do you have that are interesting for the position? Do you understand how others might see you? Do you sound arrogant?

*How should you answer?*

Provide a balanced answer. Show that you understand that different people will have different perspectives of you. Choose the most relevant positive adjectives from the list provided in the interviewing section.



**11. In what ways are you a team player?**

*What's the meaning behind this question?*

Can you articulate your role in a team? How do you communicate with others? How do you work with others?

*How should you answer?*

Look to support your answer with concrete examples.

**12. Do you work well on your own initiative?**

*What's the meaning behind this question?*

Are you self-motivated or do you need constant supervision? Do you recognise when you will need the support of more experienced superiors and colleagues?

*How should you answer?*

Give examples that show you are self-motivated, but show that you are motivated to learn from colleagues and superiors.

**13. What motivates you?**

*What's the meaning behind this question?*

The interviewer really wants to know whether you will be sufficiently motivated to do the job well and what the company might need to do to motivate you. The question also tests self-awareness.

*How should you answer?*

Be honest and look to choose examples which will not place a burden on your employer or better still might be of benefit to them e.g. being part of a successful team. Can you then come up with a concrete example of when you've been part of a successful team and express how motivating you found this?

**14. What's the worst mistake you made, and how did you deal with it?**

*What's the meaning behind this question?*

How do you react to a difficult question? Can you show the ability to learn from your mistakes?

*How should you answer?*

Describe a genuine mistake (we all make them), the consequences and most importantly what you learned and how this has improved your life. Avoid talking about things that you are embarrassed about.

**15. How would you handle the following situation.....?**

*What's the meaning behind this question?*

Can you show skills and qualities that will be necessary in the position you are applying for. Can you think on your feet?

*How should you answer?*

Use your common sense. Show that you can think independently and that you are prepared to ask for help if necessary.



**16. What would you do if you disagreed with your manager?**

*What's the meaning behind this question?*

How do you fit into a team? How do you deal with authority? How self-confident are you?

*How should you answer?*

Be honest. Show that you are aware that your manager has much more experience than you and is likely to be right. Nevertheless, we all have the right to express our opinions. Maybe you could treat it as a learning experience e.g. "Looking at the diagram, I would think ....., can you tell me why that's not right."

**17. What did you learn in your last internship?**

*What's the meaning behind this question?*

Can you show that you can learn from your experiences? What skills do you already have that would be useful in this internship? Are you likely to make the most of the opportunity this opportunity? If yes, you are likely to do a better job.

*How should you answer?*

If possible pick examples that will be relevant in the position you are applying for. Show what you learned, how you learned it and how this experience has benefited you.

**18. Why is there a gap in your CV?**

*What's the meaning behind this question?*

Why is there a gap in your CV? What did you do during this time?

*How should you answer?*

First of all, make sure that either there is no gap in your CV, or if there is, you have consciously decided to leave this gap and you have your explanation ready. Common answers which are acceptable to employers are travel, raising children and caring for elderly relatives.

**19. What do you know about us?**

*What's the meaning behind this question?*

What do you know about the organization and why is this attractive to you?

*How should you answer?*

Show that you have done your homework. Be specific. As always, be truthful.

**20. What do you know about the position you are applying for?**

*What's the meaning behind this question?*

What do you know about the position and why is this attractive to you?

*How should you answer?*

Show that you have done your homework. Be specific. As always, be truthful.



**21. What other internships are you applying for?**

*What's the meaning behind this question?*

How important this particular application to you? How organized and motivated are you?

*How should you answer?*

Show that you have undertaken a rational process in deciding which positions to apply for.

Show that there is a common theme in your applications e.g. working abroad or in specific industries. Show that this particular application is important to you.

**22. What have you learned at university?**

*What's the meaning behind this question?*

Can you show that you can learn from your experiences? What skills and knowledge have you gained that would be useful in this internship? Can you provide a rational, organised answer to a broad question?

*How should you answer?*

This is an opportunity to show that you have gained skills and knowledge that will be useful during the internship. I suggest that say a) that you have learned a lot and b) "Probably the most important three things are...." and then ask the interviewer if he / she would like to hear more.

**23. How have you developed since leaving school?**

*What's the meaning behind this question?*

Can you show that you can learn from your experiences? What skills and knowledge have you gained that would be useful in this internship? How self analytical are you? How open are you to learning and development.

*How should you answer?*

This is an opportunity to show that you have developed skills, knowledge and characteristics that will be useful during the internship.

**24. What do you know about current news in (the USA)?**

*What's the meaning behind this question?*

Are you genuinely interested in the country that you are applying to? How much interest do you take in the world around you?

*How should you answer?*

This is an opportunity to show that you have done your homework. Make sure that you know some basic facts about the country you are applying to so you can prove that you are interested in it. If you don't know about the current news in the country concerned, show that you follow world news and most importantly that you know about the country you are applying to.

**Do you mind if we contact your university for a reference?**

*What's the meaning behind this question?*

Most likely you will have written "references can be provided on request". This is now the request.

*How should you answer?*

Make sure that you have checked with the person or people who you are going to name and that they have agreed that you should name them. Then there should be no problem.