

## Beat the 10 Technology Interview Questions



Job interviews take a lot of time and practice to get to a point where you are comfortable. However, most of us are lucky enough to not have to do too many of them, which means that they remain a daunting prospect for a large number of people.

With whiteboard exercises and code sample requests becoming fairly commonplace, IT interviews are adding another layer of complexity. On top of this, many companies have introduced “curveball” tactics, asking candidates unusual questions just to view their thought process.

This guide is designed to even up the scales by preparing you for some of the key interview questions you are likely to face in 2016.

### **The Staple Interview Questions**

Some things never change. We’ve probably all heard these interview questions before, but they get asked for a reason. These questions are the basis for any interview and the way you answer them can be the difference between getting the job and not. These questions are designed to test your soft skills and the way you communicate.

#### **1. What do you know about us?**

It’s important to do your homework on the company you’re applying to work with for many reasons – not least because it’ll give you some hints as to what you’ll actually be working on. Not knowing anything about the company can lead many interviewers to just writing off the candidate then and there, figuring that if they haven’t bothered to do their research on the role, they probably don’t want it enough.

However, showing off too much knowledge can backfire, so make sure you don't go into obsessive levels of detail. Finding out what the company does, what field they operate in, the product or service they provide, what your role would entail and what technology or methods they use is sufficient in most cases.

Whilst we're talking about research, these days it is also possible to research the person who is interviewing you. This will give you more of an idea of what to expect, and provide topics of mutual interest. Sites to start your research are the company About Us pages, LinkedIn and Twitter.

## 2. Why do you want the job?

This question is often a tricky one to answer. Answers often vary so much dependent on the candidate and the job, but there are certain things you should avoid saying in an interview situation. Saying that you want the job for the pay or benefits package is a big mistake. Though some interviewers might respect your honesty, others will see you as someone who does not care about the work or company itself, meaning that you will move on the moment a better offer comes in.

Think about the things that attracted you to the role in the first place; are you looking for a new challenge? Is the company in a particular sector or field you would like to work in? Does the role have any unique traits you're interested in? Is the company renowned for having a good culture? These are all great reasons that any interviewer likes to hear. However, if your biggest priority is the salary or perks, there are still ways you can express this. For instance, if the role offers flexible hours or remote working, talk about how you like the flexibility and work/life balance that the role offers.

## 3. What is your biggest strength and your biggest weakness?

When thinking about your biggest strength, think about both technical and soft skills, and what skills are best suited to the role. You might have many great strengths, but if they aren't applicable to the role then the interviewer will likely find them irrelevant. If you're interviewing for a programming role, perhaps you could talk about your C++ skills, whereas if you're going for a project management position, it would be better to talk about your communication skills.

Though you might be tempted to say that your biggest weakness is that you're a perfectionist (don't be that person), it's important to answer this question honestly and not bluff or beat around the bush. However, that doesn't mean you should rattle off everything you're bad at and leave it at that. Pick one or two weaknesses and make sure to follow it up with the actions you've been taking to address them. For instance, if time management has been a problem for you then say that, but follow it up by saying that you've been tracking the time you spend on each activity in order to improve yourself. This shows that you're honest enough to admit when you have a fault, but also that you're motivated and self-aware enough to address it yourself, which is a great combination.

## Behavioural Interview Questions

Behavioural interview questions are now a standard part of job interviews. These are the kinds of questions that are based around specific situations, designed to make candidates reveal how they act in certain environments. These questions are asked on the principle that past behaviour is a good predictor for future behaviour.

### 4. Tell me about a complicated problem you've had to solve

This question is aimed at understanding your method of problem solving. The way that you identify issues and implement solutions is central to the way you work, especially in IT, where problem solving makes up significant proportion of most roles, particularly the more technical ones.

Think about a specific example and prepare it before you go into



#### Top 5 Behavioural Based Interview Questions

1. Describe a time when you saw some problem and took the initiative to correct it rather than waiting for someone else to do it.

2. We all make mistakes we wish we could take back. Tell me about a time you wish you'd handled a situation differently with a colleague.

the interview, this way you're ready if the question is asked. The best kinds of examples for these questions are complicated issues that you tried to tackle multiple times before succeeding. Talk about the times that you failed, what you learned and how that knowledge helped you to come up with a better solution. With this kind of answer, you demonstrate your willingness and ability to learn from your mistakes and make something better.

### 5. Tell me about a time you worked in a team

Expect an interviewer to ask you about a project you worked on as part of a team, how you functioned within that and how successful your role, and the project itself, turned out to be. Do you need a lot of direction when in a team, or do you work self-sufficiently (even though it may be at the detriment of others' work)? Are you a good communicator and easy to collaborate with? It pays to ask yourself these questions before you walk into the interview too, so that you can give yourself an honest appraisal of how you work in a team and answer this question in more detail.

### 6. Tell me about a time you've overcome a conflict

Whether it's how you dealt with a particularly difficult co-worker, or how you reacted to an approach you disagreed with, this question is all about understanding how you handle adversity.

Like most behavioural questions, you should try to prepare an example in advance. Think about a project where you ran into some kind of interpersonal conflict, and talk about what you did to remedy the situation and create the best outcome for the project. Just try to avoid making yourself look bad with your example, so avoid examples where something you did caused the conflict in the first place, or times when somebody else solved the conflict. Remember that the focus here is on you.

## Technical

If you are interviewing for a technical job, most of the time you can expect to have some technical questions thrown at you.

### 7. Let me just grab this whiteboard...

This method can take a number of forms, from asking candidates to explain concepts on the whiteboard, to solving mathematical or thought problems, or straight up writing out code. These kinds of exercises are used to test whether you can come up with something useful, or solve a problem, on the spot.

Getting you to write out code on a whiteboard might seem slightly pointless at first, considering that you're going to be using a computer for all of your coding. However, it tests how you write code without the safety net of an IDE, and also forces you to give reasoning about the code you're using. This shows that you have a deeper understanding of the code beyond just what it looks like.

### 8. Do you have a sample of your code?

Most companies will ask you for a code sample if you're applying for a programming role. Make sure that you submit this, or make it available online, in advance of your interview, so that the interviewer has enough time to look over it. Expect questions to be asked of your code, and understand that this isn't necessarily because it is bad. Most of the time these questions will be asked simply to check your reasoning and make sure you understand the code you're writing.

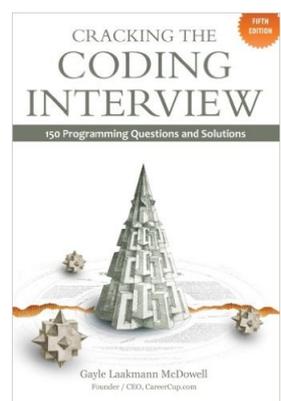
When you're asked for a code sample, you need to ensure that you are actually allowed to share it. Normally, work you've done for a client at another company remains their intellectual property. This means that you cannot share it with

...died a situation differently with a colleague and why.

3. Talk about a time when you had to work closely with someone whose personality was very different from yours.

4. Tell me about a time you were under a lot of pressure. What was going on, and how did you get through it?

5. Give me an example of a time when you were able to successfully persuade someone to see things your way at work.



another party, or risk being sued. However, if the code is publicly available, like an open-source app or a public website, then you can use this code as your sample. Using code from your own projects is also a good idea, as you own the code and it shows the interviewer that you have the drive to construct something in your own time.



### Top 5 Curveball Interview Questions

1. "If you woke up and had 2,000 unread emails and could only answer 300 of them how would you choose which ones to answer?"
  2. "Tell me something that's true, that almost nobody agrees with you on."
  3. "Explain the internet to an 8-year old in three sentences."
  4. "If there was a movie produced about your life, who would play you and why?"
- Lastly, something to really throw you off guard.
5. "How much should you charge to wash all the windows in Christchurch?"

Though we are expert IT recruiters, we aren't expert coders or web developers. Books like [Cracking the Coding Interview](#), which covers every kind of technical question you could run into, and sites like [Interview Cake](#), are great resources for practicing questions before an interview.

## 9. The Curveball

The curveball is becoming a more and more popular tactic amongst interviewers. After companies like Apple and Google started to ask questions like "How many gas stations are there in America?" and "How many windows can I wash in a day?", many started following in their footsteps by asking other odd, slightly off-putting questions. And of course, the point of these questions is to be odd and put the candidate off. They are meant to put you off your guard, just to see how you react to being surprised by such a question.

When you're asked a question like this, don't be thrown. These questions are meant to test your creativity and ability to think on the spot. Being able to improvise and have a little fun with your answer can have a real positive impact on your prospects.

## And finally...

## 10. Do you have any questions?

This question is going to be asked in every interview, and it's an opportunity many candidates don't take advantage of. It's your chance to show you've been paying attention by presenting thoughtful questions and showcasing any strengths that may have been missed, and it's also an opportunity for you to interview the interviewer and make sure the role is right for you.

Guiding the conversation to the company again is another good move. Asking about the organisation's long term plans, how any recent developments might change things, future projects, and about your own long-term career path with the company, will show that you've done your homework and that you're looking further than the next paycheque, and will end the interview on a positive note.

## Summary

With so many new job opportunities opening up already this year, we hope this guide helps you to get your job search off on the right foot, and walk into that interview more confident and ready to succeed. If you're looking for more interview advice, or you're looking for a new role in the Christchurch IT market, feel free to get [in touch](#).

Good luck.