



## Year 11 Mock Interview potential questions and suggestions

### 1. Tell me about yourself

In this question, employers are trying to learn more about the real you. In theory, by learning more about your personality and interests, they can get a sense of what kind of person you are. Try to avoid listing interests that may paint you in a negative light, or depict you as 'lazy'. Hobbies such as playing computer games can certainly be a lot of fun, but your interviewer will unlikely be find any value in that. Interests like long distance running or yoga which help to represent your healthy, energetic side are worth mentioning. Pursuits like being a keen reader or solving puzzles or brain teasers will help to reflect your intellectual learning.

**Your answer should be a couple of minutes long** and briefly cover your education, your interest in the field, work history and experience. Be sure to steer clear of controversial topics like politics or religion.

### 2. Why are you applying for this job or course?

You need to demonstrate you have researched the employer and the position or the college and the course, and link your knowledge of them into your own skills and interests. Try to find something specific about the employer/college that you are attracted to e.g. their training, their customers, their individuality, their public image, etc. This will go down well with the interviewer and demonstrate your enthusiasm for the role and organisation

### 3. Tell me about your Record of Achievement folder. Could you tell me what is in it and where it shows your strengths?

Make sure you know what is in your RoA and can talk about it confidently. Apply examples from it that reflect skills or qualities required for the job.

### 4. What optional subjects did you choose to study and why?

The interviewer is asking this question to understand how much planning went into your selection. There is no right or wrong way to answer this interview question. What the interviewer wants to get a handle on is how much **thought** and **effort** you have put into your career goals.

You could say:

*"Because I enjoy it"* – you're more likely to be committed and to succeed if you genuinely enjoy the subject you're studying, and you'll probably also be better at the subject

OR

*"Because it fits in perfectly with my career aims"* – this shows that your choice of course is part of a well-considered long-term plan, meaning that you are more likely to be committed to it.

### 5. What was your biggest achievement in school?

You probably have a number of accomplishments, but not all of them are going to prove your suitability for this particular role so, before you answer this question – ask yourself two things:

'what are they looking for?' ... and

'what achievement demonstrates that you can do it?'



6. **What is your least favourite subject?**

Are you able to overcome roadblocks?

You should talk about the struggles or difficulties you encountered, as long as you also demonstrate grit and a strong work ethic in your answer.

For example, you may say Maths was your least favourite subject however understood that as it is an important skill to have and that you did whatever you could to improve.

7. **What are your interests outside school?**

Stick with a couple of activities and relate your hobbies to the Job: You never want to lie about having a hobby you do not actually enjoy- but you should be able to find a way to discuss your hobby in a way that is related to the position you want to get. For instance- if the job requires a lot of teamwork and you play a team sport then you should mention how you enjoy working as part of a team and contributing to the overall success of the group. If the job you are interviewing for is a more creative- then discuss how you enjoy writing or drawing if they are relevant. Do not talk about hobbies that are a little too generic- such as listening to music. Everyone likes listening to music- so it does not add anything to you as a potential employee unless you are in a band...

8. **What are your major strengths?**

This is a question that employers almost always ask. When you are asked about your greatest strengths, choose about 3 skills or experiences you have that make you suitable for this specific job and set you apart from the other applicants. If you feel you do not have the right experience for the role but would really like to give it a shot, note down your positive personal attributes, such as work ethic, attention to detail, punctuality and so on

9. **What are your weaknesses?**

Avoid falling into the trap of using a strength disguised as a weakness, such as "I'm too much of a perfectionist" or "I push myself too hard". Interviewers know this trick.

A better strategy is to choose a weakness that you have worked on to improve and describe what action you are taking to remedy the weakness. This is honest but also demonstrates your willingness to tackle problems head-on.

For example: "I'm not a very self-confident person and used to find it very difficult to talk to people I didn't know well, but my Saturday job meant that I had to help people with all kinds of queries and that helped me a lot. Now I'm perfectly happy talking to anybody on a one-to-one basis. I've also joined the student counsel this year to give me experience of speaking in front of people."

10. **What do you understand by working in a team, and what are 3 important attributes of a good team player?**

Think about times you have worked in an effective team (this could be a group project at school, or a team sport for example). What three attributes do you think were key?

And even better if you can demonstrate how you displayed those attributes!

Examples of qualities that make a good team player are: Reliable/responsible; Good communicator; flexible/adaptable; committed; good listener; supportive; respectful; positivity.



**11. How would you rate your organisational skills on a level of 1-5 (1 being the lowest)? Can you give me an example to illustrate this?**

You need to explain how you organise your day/time and give some examples of times you have done this and how. You may have worked on a project at school or in Saturday job. It could be preparation for study for exams or balancing your school work with another hobby or sport for example if you struggled to balance study and that Saturday shop job/sport, then say so, and tell them how you hope to improve on that performance. If you found a great way of organising your revision plan between core subjects and option subjects, then use that.

**12. Can you tell me how you cope under pressure and in stressful situations?**

The interviewer does not want to hear that you never get stressed; after all, everyone feels stress at one time or another at work. Instead, they want to see if you know how pressure affects you, and how you manage it. Maybe when under pressure having lots of exams coming up in one week you used one of the time management apps to calmly organise your revision time and collect your thoughts, overcoming the stressful situation with a pragmatic solution. Or perhaps you have taken a leadership position when placed in a situation at work or at school, helping other people or solving a problem while under pressure. Avoid mentioning a situation when you put yourself in a needlessly stressful situation. For example, do not share a story about a time when you were stressed because you left things to the last minute and had to finish a project quickly.

**13. Can you give an example of when you have had to deal with a difficult situation either in life or school, and how you managed it?**

Employers simply want to see that, when you face a difficult decision or situation, you are able to handle it. They also want to see what kind of decisions you consider difficult. The interviewer wants to know what you do when you face a difficult decision. As with the question about stress, be prepared to share an example of what you did in a tough situation. When answering these questions, give an example of difficult situations you have actually faced, then discuss what decisions you had to make to remedy the situations. You want to come across as confident and capable of making big decisions.

**14. Tell me about your experience of the world of work and say what you feel you have learned from it.**

Work experience develops your maturity and gives you transferrable skills. You can talk about how work experience has taught you organisational skills, or helped you realise the type of career you want to pursue. If the experience was not positive you can state that it taught you that it is important to persevere even when you feel like giving up.

**15. Where do you see yourself five years from now?**

Tell the truth, and then describe how you think the job would help you reach your goal. Employers want to know that you know what you want. Hiring, training and developing staff costs a lot of money and/or effort, so they want to make sure you're committed to staying with the organisation or industry. You could say for example: *"I'd like to gradually take more and more responsibility and move up within the team"* You need to show that you are ambitious but also your goals must be realistic.



**16. What gives you an edge over others applying for this job/course?**

This question gives the interviewer an opportunity to test your confidence and gauge your level of self-worth. When asked, “Why should we choose you?” they are really asking, “What makes you the best fit for this job or course? Are you the best candidate? Be prepared to say why. Make your response a concise sales pitch that gives concrete examples of why your skills and accomplishments make you the best candidate.

**17. Is there anything I haven't asked you that you would like to tell me about yourself?**

Opportunity to tell the interviewer anything that has not come up that you feel is relevant or reflects positively.

**18. Do you have any questions you want to ask me?**

It's highly likely that you'll be given the opportunity to ask some questions at the end of the interview. Try to prepare some in advance, for example

- What it is like to work for the company/attend the college
  - Where the company plans to go in the future
  - Opportunities for progression or extra-curricular activities available
  - Is this a new post or existing one
  - A good question to ask the interviewer is to ask them if there is any concerns or doubts they have about your ability to do the job that has not been addressed, this gives you the final opportunity to sell yourself and allay any concerns they may still have.
  - When can I expect to hear from you
-



## Tips



Preparation is the key to job interview success.

### **Make sure you're in the know**

Do not be afraid to telephone the company in advance and ask about your interview. Some companies will provide this information online, but if not, it is a good idea to find out what format the interview will take and how long it will last. Ask if the interview will involve group exercises or tests and whether or not you need to prepare anything. It is also a good idea to find out the names of the people who will be interviewing you.

### **Plan your journey and do not be late!**

Work out how long it will take to get there and give yourself plenty of time. You should aim to arrive ten minutes early. Do not arrive too early, though! Hanging around for ages will only make you nervous.

If you are using public transport, check beforehand if there are any scheduled works that might disrupt your route. Make sure you have the contact details of the interviewer with you, including their telephone number, their email and the address of the company. If you get stuck in traffic on the bus, give them a call to let them know that you will be there shortly. Do not worry too much if this happens! If it is not your fault, they will understand. Just make sure you try and get there as soon as possible, and apologise when you arrive.

### **Research**

Do your research. Pore over the company's website, check out their competitors and find out where the company plans to go in the future. Look for recent news articles about them and make sure you really know what is going on in the sector. Demonstrating knowledge of topical issues and showing a genuine understanding of the company's values will really work in your favour.

### **Understand the role you are applying for**

Don't get ideas above your station! They want people who are confident, driven and ambitious, but they don't want delusional people who are getting far too ahead of themselves. Read through the job description again and really think about how you will fit into the organisation. Consider the added value you will bring to the company as a young, energetic school leaver.

### **Practice answering interview questions.**

Write down a list of the questions that the interviewers might ask you and get a friend or family member to ask them. Imagine the toughest questions they could possibly ask you (e.g. look at your CV and pinpoint any weaknesses they might mention) and think about how you could answer them. You don't want to sound too rehearsed, but you also don't want to be caught off guard.

### **Plan your outfit**

Pick out your interview outfit a week in advance and try it on to make sure there are no stains, missing buttons, broken zips, dirty shoes and that it still fits. Dress smart. Even if you are going in your school uniform make sure you are clean and smart and within school guidelines.