Common Interview Questions and How to Answer Them

Tell me about yourself.
This is your opportunity to elaborate on your Positioning Statement (found on the UTSOA Career Center website under Resources!). Inform the interviewer of your previous academic and professional development, and emphasize your key qualifications and professional goals.

What are your strengths/weaknesses?
Focus on strengths that will be valued by the employer for the specific position. This is also opportunity to ensure you are remembered (for example: Mention innovative approaches to design issues, previous related experience in the industry, interpersonal and leadership capabilities).

View weaknesses as areas you would like to develop. This is not the time to admit your preference for sleeping in! Think about what you would like to gain experience in or skills you would like to develop/enhance. For example, you may wish to enhance your leadership abilities to one day become an effective supervisor.

Describe one of your most challenging/difficult assignments.
The interviewer is looking for your approach to a challenge and your thought process toward a solution. The level of difficulty will also allow the interviewer to find out if you are a fit for the position.

What would be your ideal job?
Your description will help the interviewer decide if you fit the needs of the organization. Will you enjoy the environment and the duties of the position? Be realistic… it’s not a good idea to state that you would prefer to arrive at work around 10am, take a 2-hour lunch and leave before 5!

Why should we hire you?
This is a great opportunity highlight what makes you perfect for the position. Know what makes you valuable and be convincing! Emphasize your best qualities and provide specific examples of how you will support the mission of the organization.

Have you ever been fired?
This is not a time to be dishonest. If the answer is yes, focus on what you learned from the experience. Once again, never speak negatively of co-workers and supervisors.

What would people who have worked with you say about you?

What would your fellow classmates say about you?
The interviewer is interested in your personality and attitude in a professional and group capacity, and how you interacted with your co-workers or teammates.

How did you get along with your direct supervisor?

What would your previous supervisor/professors say about you?
Demonstrate your ability to work well with your supervisors and describe the type of management style you prefer. Think about what you liked about your previous managers/professors and how you handled yourself when interacting with them. Remember, the interviewer will be contacting your references, so it is important to be consistent.

What have you been criticized for in the past?
The interviewer is looking for you to demonstrate how you handled criticism, and what could potentially be a weakness for you. Emphasize what you learned as well as what you did to improve.

Can you work under pressure?
This is an essential ability in any position. There will always be deadlines and last-minute changes to address. Think of an example of how you succeeded within an intensive timeline.

How have you demonstrated that you are a team player?
Throughout your career, you will function as an interdependent member of your organization. You can be assured that your co-workers will always present differing approaches and ideas. Some of them will be easier to work with than others;
and you will never work completely alone! You must illustrate a time where you overcame differences and succeeded in the mission. Never criticize a fellow co-worker or supervisor in your answer.

**Tell me about your biggest professional failure.**

The wrong answer is to state that you have never failed at anything. This implies that you haven’t taken risks and you haven’t faced the challenges needed to grow as a professional. It is important for you focus on what you have learned from your experience and how you improved, developed or changed.

Prepare a succinct response for each of these questions that you will be able to remember during the interview process. **It is more important to remember the "concept" of what you want to say than the exact words.**