

SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

ABELSON LEGAL SEARCH

Q1. “Why do you want to leave where you are?”

A1. Do not, under any circumstances “bad mouth” your current firm. Speak in terms of positives – *i.e.* “I feel could better use my banking training in a firm with a larger commercial practice.” If you are leaving a firm that is breaking up, use a phrase like, “As you know, X, Y and Z are undergoing some major structural changes, and I would like to be with a firm that is a little surer of its direction.”

Q2. “What can you bring to our firm/corporation?”

A2. This may be a very technical question – number of clients, billables, etc., or it may be general, “what are your skills?” Find out which it is. If you do not have a client following, be up front about the fact. If this is a general background question, try to be as specific as possible. Use actual examples from your work, without violating a client’s privacy. For example: “I worked directly with the senior partner in charge of the Chapter 7 bankruptcy of a twenty-person accounting firm. I was in charge of _____, _____ and _____.”

Q3. “What do you know about our firm/corporation?”

A3. Here’s where the research pays off. Again, be specific, if you know specifics, but do NOT rave about reputedly short working hours, great benefits, or long vacations!

Q4. “What’s your greatest weakness?”

A4. Don’t ask me why, but they actually do ask this question. “I guess sometimes I work too hard,” is one of the oldest cliché in the book. Look seriously at yourself. Usually a really honest, thoughtful answer to this question will score big points.

Q5. “What do you like to do in your spare time?”

A5. Don’t make it such a long answer that it sounds as if you have tons of spare time (not working hard enough?), but try to stay away from generalities like “I like sports” or “I like to read” or “I like to run.” Again, keep the conversation flowing with a specific answer. “I’m not a serious runner, but I like to take my dog out for a mile or two run early in the morning,” or, “When I find time, I really enjoy reading classic mysteries of the 1930’s, especially Dashiell Hammett,” or whatever it is you do. This is a personal question. Find a personal answer. If you are active politically or religiously, frame your answers generally. “I really enjoy my work with teenagers at my church.” “I am a committeewoman and am active in representing my neighborhood.”

Q6. “What has been your most interesting, or best, or worst case?”

A6. No matter how much you’d love to give them the real dirt – remember your clients’ and firm’s confidentiality. If you’ve worked for a well-known client of the firm almost exclusively, be especially careful an interviewer can’t figure out whom you’re discussing.

Q7. “What kind of money are you looking for?”

A7. Think about your answer carefully, and, if you’re using a recruiter, have discussed this one with them before the interview.

Q8. “Have you ever done (a specific kind of legal work)?”

A8. If you have – give enough detail to your answer to let the interviewer know you really have, and at what level. If you haven't – say so honestly. If you have done truly closely related work, say so – but, again, give exact answers. "I've never handled a Chapter 7, but I've done four Chapter 11's and two Chapter 13's."

Q9. "Who's your greatest hero?"

"Who's your legal hero?"

"What's your favorite book?"

"What's your favorite movie?"

"What's your favorite sports team?"

"With whom (living/dead) would you most like to have dinner?"

"What was your favorite college course? Law school course?"

"If you weren't a lawyer, what would you like to be?"

A9. Give a little thought to these kinds of questions. Your answers shouldn't be cutesy or pretentious or too slick. Hope you don't get questions about "what vegetable do you most resemble," or some of the other ultra trendy questions popular a few years ago. There really isn't any way to prepare for these sorts of off-the-wall questions. But there are others, like the ones listed above, you can give some thought to. They are great "while you are in the shower questions." For the ones you can think about, try to take into account some degree of tact and/or political correctness. It probably is not smart to pick a particularly violent, or anti-woman, or anti-man, etc. book, movie or individual. If possible, relate your answer(s) to earlier questions about what you like to do. (*If you haven't kept up with the latest information about Clarence Darrow, he is no longer the best answer to this question.)

Q10. "How about them Phillies?"

A10. Nobody knows the right answer to this one. [Although in 2008 this became an easier answer!]
