How To Answer The Most Common Nursing Interview Questions

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This piece was written in direct response to the numerous inquiries that people make about their upcoming nursing job interviews. The intended purpose of this article is to shed some much-needed light onto a few of the most commonly-asked nursing interview questions.

To be perfectly blunt, interviews can be rather nerve-wracking because a lot is at stake. After all, you really want to be considered for this available position, and you only have one chance to make a good first impression on the interviewer. Another aspect that adds to the stressful nature of the interview process is the fact that you are most likely competing with many other applicants for that prized job opening.

Based on my personal experiences, the vast majority of the most common nursing interview questions have remained constant and unchanged over the handful of years that I have been in this profession. Without further ado, here are some of the most common interview questions.

Tell me about yourself.

Although the interviewer is not wanting to listen to your life story, he/she does want you to describe your personality, educational attainment, career goals, and professional experiences.

Tell me what you know about our company.

You should conduct some research and be at least somewhat knowledgeable about the entity that might very well become your future workplace. You will look good to the interviewer if it appears that you have been doing your 'homework' on the company.

So, tell us what you know about _____ nursing.

Insert any nursing specialty into the blank space provided. You will stand out to the interviewer as a candidate who truly has passion about the specialty if you know more about it than the average person. If your dream is to work as a nurse in a well-baby nursery, you’d better be knowledgeable about the area in which you envision yourself working.

Tell us what your current/former boss would say about you.

The interviewer is basically looking for clues that will shed light on your work ethic and interpersonal skills. Direct quotes work well. "Jill always said I was dependable" is a direct quote that says a lot.
Tell me why you want to work here.

Your reasons for wanting to work at this place of employment should be positive. Also, make a connection between your career goals and how they can be achieved at this company.

Describe to us how you perform under pressure.

The settings in which nurses work can quickly turn into pressure-cooker environments. To be blunt, the interviewer does not want to hire anyone who is so emotionally fragile that they’ll shatter like plate glass when faced with the day-to-day pressures of the job.

Discuss your biggest strengths and weaknesses.

The interviewer wants to hear about strengths that would be assets in the workplace. Since we all have weaknesses, the person conducting the interview will know you’re a boldfaced liar if you deny having any.

Are you a team player?

Healthcare facilities prefer to hire people who work well with others, have good social skills, get along well with patients and visitors, and can pull together as a team for the sake of patient care.

Discuss your salary requirements.

This question is sneaky. Some companies have strict pay grids and other facilities are unionized, so salary typically cannot be negotiated at these places. However, smaller workplaces may offer some wiggle room for negotiating the salary. The important thing is to not price oneself out of the market.

What motivates you to be a nurse?

Companies prefer to hire healthcare workers who are motivated by intangible ideals, not concrete realities such as money. Even if cash is your ultimate motivation, do not elaborate on your need for money.

Recall a difficult situation and describe how you handled it.

If you have healthcare experience, they want to know how you have dealt with angry doctors, emotionally upset families, or difficult patients. If you lack healthcare experience, you can discuss a difficult situation that occurred in school or a previous workplace.

Tell us why we should hire you.

This is the last time to truly sell yourself to the interviewer. Emphasize your positive attributes, reaffirm that you are a team player, and tell them why you are the best candidate for the position that they need to fill.

Do you have any questions for us?

Ask the interviewer a question or two, whether it pertains to nurse/patient ratios, length of orientation, or educational opportunities. You might appear uninterested if you have no questions.

Please read Nursing Interview Questions (part 2) and 10 Toughest Nursing Interview Questions (part 3) of this series for more interview questions and how to answer them!