



# CAREER CENTER

DIXIE STATE UNIVERSITY

## Accounting Interview Questions

### Technical

.....and how hiring managers will use them.

1. **"What is the difference between accounts receivable (AR) and accounts payable (AP)?"**
  - a. This is one of many elementary interview questions that hiring managers can use to find out more about the general accounting knowledge of entry-level job candidates for bookkeeping or accounting clerk openings. Verbal and non-verbal responses will reveal whether the applicant understands accounting fundamentals.
2. **"When a company is using double-entry accounting, what elements of a given ledger must be equal?"**
  - a. This is another fairly basic inquiry. Candidates with some accounting training or experience should have no trouble answering it. As with question one, how the applicant replies may show the hiring manager that he or she is under- or overqualified for a junior-level position.
  - b. ***Find out what attracts accounting and finance professionals to work for a company.***
3. **"If a company has three bank accounts for processing payments, what is the minimum number of ledgers it needs?"**
  - a. Hiring Managers can use this as a starting point to explore a candidate's knowledge of ledgers. They can observe the candidate's initial reaction and use it as a leaping off point for further discussion of skills related to the opening they are trying to fill. They will expect the response to reveal the extent to which the candidate has thought through how accounts relate to lines of business and generally accepted accounting principles.
4. **"What are two or three types of special journals?"**
  - a. While still a fairly basic question, Hiring Managers may tailor their follow-up queries according to the specifics of their business or to the candidate's work history. Or, as a skill test, they could present a few journal samples and ask the applicant to explain them. The way the applicant responds will show the skill level in identifying mistakes or omissions.
5. **"What methods have you used for estimating bad debt?"**
  - a. This question can open a conversation about the ways the applicant has approached this routine process with previous employers. This line of inquiry allows recent grads to apply theoretical knowledge in venturing educated guesses. The applicant's answer will reveal the level of understanding of the methods most commonly used and could open a dialogue about how the Hiring Manager's company handles this.

6. **"Why is it easier for someone to perpetrate fraud using a journal entry than with a ledger?"**
  - a. Accounting professionals, particularly those who have managed ledgers or worked as full-charge bookkeepers for more than a couple of years, should be able to speculate on this scenario. A candidate with more formal training specific to auditing or fraud analysis will likely explain this thoroughly and be able to provide examples.
  
7. **"Which enterprise resource planning (ERP) systems have you used?"**
  - a. Most professionals, especially those with experience working for medium to large organizations, should have an answer for this. A response might include any of the following: Hyperion, Microsoft Dynamics GP or Oracle Enterprise Manager. For entry-level candidates, the Hiring Manager might turn this into a discussion of finance certifications and future training possibilities. For example, they might ask which ERP systems the applicant would like to master. Discussion of these tools, how the applicant learned them and what applications the Hiring Manager's company uses will reveal how much, if any, training the applicant might need if hired.
  
8. **"What is your experience with developing business metrics?"**
  - a. Though somewhat general, this interview question can elicit answers useful in evaluating entry-level business or financial analyst candidates all the way up to mid-career professionals who aspire to roles that come with budget and staff oversight responsibilities.
  
9. **"If a private company with break-even operations received a \$10 million investment, how would you develop a strategy to spend or invest that money?"**
  - a. This falls into the category of situational interview techniques, a tactic useful in gauging an applicant's ability to think through a scenario like one that might be faced in a more senior finance role. The applicant's response will show the Hiring Manager if the approach is in alignment with that of their existing team, which will also indicate if this candidate is a good fit for their organization's culture.
  
10. **"What challenges have you faced in leading a team through an analysis project?"**
  - a. As with question nine, the applicant's reply will reveal the level of critical thinking skills and elicit a better picture of his or her leadership techniques.

## Behavioral

- **Meeting Deadlines:** "Tell me about a time when you had various tasks to complete in order to meet accounting deadlines."
- **Attention to Detail:** Any accounting function must be completed precisely. "Describe the skills and tools you use to ensure that your tasks, reports, projects are completed precisely with complete attention to detail."
- **Communication:** Accurate accounting relies on effective communication within the accounting department as well as with other departments. "Describe an example of the effective communication necessary to complete an Accounting function."

- **Team Work:** Team Work is critical within the Accounting Department because all functions in all areas must come together to produce the Financial Reports. “Give me a recent example of you partnering with a member of your accounting team to ensure that all functions were completed accurately and on deadline.”
- **Problem Solving:** With the closest attention to detail, the best communication, and the most effective team work; problems will still present themselves. “Tell me about a time that you utilized your problem solving skills to reach a resolution to an unexpected problem.”
- **Accountability:** Everyone makes mistakes. Taking accountability for your errors is the key to successfully reaching goals. “Describe a recent situation when an error was discovered and how you responded to the situation.”
- **Goals:** Each and every company, department and individual has goals. These may be goals that are set for you or goals that you set for yourself. “Let’s talk about a major goal that was set and how you were involved in reaching that goal.”