
Prioritization interview questions

Use these prioritization interview questions to evaluate candidates' time management skills and identify potential hires who organize their workload and follow deadlines.

Why ask candidates prioritization interview questions

The ability to prioritize tasks is an essential skill in all roles. Employees with good prioritization skills are able to:

- Meet deadlines
- Manage their workload effectively
- Use their time wisely and avoid distractions
- [Adapt to changes](#) and re-evaluate their priorities
- [Control their stress](#) when dealing with multiple tasks
- Deal with the most important projects first and put secondary tasks aside

Here are some sample interview questions to evaluate candidates' prioritization skills:

Examples of prioritization interview questions

- How do you organize your work when you have to juggle multiple projects/clients at the same time?
- If you're reporting to more than one manager, how do you prioritize your duties?
- Describe a typical day at work. What's your morning routine?
- How much time do you spend per week on X task?
- You return to work after a two-week vacation and find fifty new emails in your inbox. How do you choose which emails to open and answer first?
- Have you ever missed a deadline? If so, what happened? If not, how do you make sure you're not falling behind?
- What productivity tools (e.g. time-management or project-management software) have you found useful?
- Describe a time you successfully delegated tasks to your team.
- How would you reply if your manager suddenly asked you to complete a challenging task on a tight deadline? (e.g. make fifty cold calls to potential customers in one day)
- Have you ever felt overwhelmed at work? What did you do?

How to assess prioritization skills in interviews

Here are signs of candidates with good prioritization skills:

- **They make to-do lists.** People who are organized and break large projects into smaller, doable steps are more likely to complete their work on time.
- **They separate important from urgent.** Most job duties are important, but only some of them are time-sensitive. Look for people who understand the difference and follow deadlines.
- **They estimate the time, effort and resources needed for each task.** To properly prioritize tasks, employees need to prepare themselves. They should evaluate a project's requirements before digging into work.
- **They don't hesitate to re-evaluate tasks.** Employees should be able to identify inefficiencies in their workload and suggest ways to improve processes. And managers should frequently re-assess regular duties to determine what works and what doesn't.

Red flags

- **They micromanage.** Employees who want to control every part of a project find it hard to delegate tasks. They're more likely to wind up with more tasks than they can handle.
- **They lack communication skills.** Managers who can't clearly communicate requirements cause team-wide misunderstandings regarding priorities and deadlines.
- **They lose the bigger picture.** Employees who view projects as individual tasks aren't likely to consider how they add value to the company. This makes them less likely to prioritize projects based on their importance.
- **They procrastinate.** Poor concentration and lack of a "can do" attitude are red flags. Also, people who are easily distracted by trivial issues struggle with focusing on their most important job responsibilities.