

Handling difficult questions

Consider the situations below and see how you would handle them.

Difficult situations and questions	How to handle?
1. If the question was unexpected and difficult to answer, what should I do?	
2. If I need time to think, what should I do?	
3. If there was a conflict between my view and the interviewer's, what should I say ?	
4. If I could not catch the question or understand the intended meaning of the question, what should I do?	
5. If I felt answering the question would put me or a third party (e.g. a previous employer/colleague) in an unfavourable light, what should I say?	
6. If I could not understand the accent or speech of an expatriate interviewer, what should I do?	
7. If there was an aggressive interviewer who interrupted my answer or showed that s/he was not convinced by my answer, what should I do?	
8. If I were asked how much starting pay I expected, what should I say?	
9. If my answer is very long how can I avoid losing the listener?	<i>Structure and section a long answer</i>
10. What should I do if I am very nervous?	<i>Smile, make eye contact, sit comfortably in your seat, do not speak in a monotone</i>
11. Should I prepare my answers?	<i>Yes, but do not rattle off a prepared answer; pause between important chunks of information</i>

1. If the question was unexpected and difficult to answer, what should I do?
 - ❑ **Say that you would prefer not to answer that question.**
 - ❑ **Pretend that you misunderstood the question, and give an different answer.**
 - ❑ **Take some time to think then try to answer the question as concisely as you can.**
2. If I need time to think, what should I do?
 - ❑ **Asked to be excused so you can go to the washroom.**
 - ❑ **Ask the interviewer a question that you think might take some time to answer.**
 - ❑ **Calmly take a few moments to think.**
3. If there was a conflict between my view and the interviewer's, what should I say?
 - ❑ **Mount a logical argument to demonstrate and justify your position.**
 - ❑ **Listen carefully and acknowledge the interviewer's viewpoint, then try to state your briefly why you have your viewpoint and then move to another topic.**
 - ❑ **Do not let on that your viewpoint is different. Always agree with the interviewer.**
4. If I could not catch the question or understand the intended meaning of the question, what should I do?
 - ❑ **Politely ask the interviewer to repeat the question.**
 - ❑ **Answer the question as well as you can based on the parts that you did understand.**
 - ❑ **Kindly ask the interviewer to conduct the interview in Cantonese.**
5. If I felt answering the question would put me or a third party (e.g. a previous employer/colleague) in an unfavourable light, what should I say?
 - ❑ **Try to answer the question briefly, without blaming or giving negative details about other people.**
 - ❑ **Don't be afraid to put others in a negative light, unless you think that the interviewer might know them. NEVER talk about mistakes you have made.**
 - ❑ **You should lie about negative details, unless you think that the interviewer might have information that could expose your lie.**
6. If I could not understand the accent or speech of an expatriate interviewer, what should I do?
 - ❑ **Ask the interviewer if they would mind writing their questions on paper.**
 - ❑ **Listen very carefully, and ask the interviewer if they would mind speaking more slowly, and ask them to repeat questions.**
 - ❑ **Ask a Chinese interviewer to translate the questions to Cantonese.**
7. If there was an aggressive interviewer who interrupted my answer or showed that s/he was not convinced by my answer, what should I do?
 - ❑ **Ignore that interviewer and try to focus your attention on the others.**
 - ❑ **Try your best to express your aggravation with facial expressions so the interviewer will stop.**
 - ❑ **Be calm, let the aggressive interviewer finish, and then resume with your answer.**

8. If I were asked how much starting pay I expected, what should I say?
- ❑ **Name a figure higher than what you really expect so that it can be negotiated down later.**
 - ❑ **Respond that I would like salary commiserate with your experience, and the responsibilities of the position.**
 - ❑ **Respond that money is not important, and you would be willing to work there for any price.**
9. If my answer is very long how can I avoid losing the listener?
- ❑ **Structure and section the answer, emphasising the main point.**
 - ❑ **Trim the answer, covering just the main points.**
 - ❑ **Don't worry about losing the listener; interviewers are good listeners.**
10. What should I do if I am very nervous?
- ❑ **Bring along some object to hold in my hands to occupy my nervous energy.**
 - ❑ **Smile, make eye-contact, sit comfortably and try to focus on the questions.**
 - ❑ **Don't worry about being nervous; all applicants are nervous and the interviewers will understand.**