Sample Interview Questions: Law

Question: Why did you go to law school?
Answer: On the surface, this seems like an easy question, but can actually trip up a number of people. Answering with “To make a difference” may certainly be true, but your answer should mention something specific that motivated you to pursue a legal career. Give a detailed and dynamic answer that is both truthful and sets you apart from others. Perhaps there was a mentor who inspired you or a job that sparked your interest – you should feel comfortable discussing why you decided to go to law school. While it is important to include details, be careful not to ramble; being articulate may separate you from other candidates.

Question: Why did you apply to this firm?
Answer: Naturally, there may be some general reasons you applied for a job at this firm, such as the type of practice, the reputation of the firm or the firm’s location. While it is okay to briefly touch on these points, make sure that your answer focuses on an aspect that is unique to this particular firm. This, of course, is where all your thorough research comes into play. You can bring up one of the cases they have done, especially if it ties into your personal interests. You can also discuss the positive things they offer to their employees, such as in-house training for specialized fields.

Question: Where do you see yourself in five years?
Answer: This question is especially tough if you are at the beginning of your career, when your path is less clear and you may be unsure where you are headed. What’s most important is to show that you have clear goals, and that the position you are interviewing for makes sense as a part of your trajectory. Make sure that the goals you state are not only compatible with, but directly related to, the role. Most interviewers are proud of their companies and are not interested in hiring someone who sees a job as merely a stepping stone to where they really want to be.

Question: Have you ever had a conflict with a co-worker? How did you solve it?
Answer: Conflicts arise in the workplace, and employers want to know that you will be able to resolve them effectively. The best situations to talk about in response to this question deal with work-related (not personal) conflicts. Describe a time where you and a colleague differed on your approach to an assignment. Then, explain the steps you took to come to an agreement. The anecdote should not end with a description of who "won," but rather how you reached a compromise with your colleague.

Question: Do you have any questions for me?
Answer: Always be prepared with questions for the interviewer. There are some general ones that work, such as:
• What do you think are the most important qualities to be an attorney here?
• Can you tell me more about the specifics of the position?

It is a good idea to ask the attorney that is interviewing you about their job or their career path. One question to ask in interviews is “What is one case that you found most interesting to work on in your career, one that has stuck with you?” People always enjoy talking about themselves, and if you are truly interested in their answer, they are likely to come away with a more positive impression of you.