

## Top 15 Nursing Interview Questions (Sample Answers Included)

By Mike Simpson

Being a nurse takes a special kind of person.

Oftentimes, you're seeing people in the middle of what can easily be the worst day of their lives. You need patience, resilience, a sense of humor, attention to detail, and a thick skin.

Of course, it can also be one of the most rewarding careers, full of excitement and drama and the kind of rush you can only get when you're helping others. Becoming a nurse is truly a calling for the right person, but sometimes getting that first job can seem like the hardest part of the entire process, starting with those nail-biting nursing interview questions.

Luckily, we're here to help! We'll go over exactly what types of questions nurses can expect to be asked in an interview. We'll give you some pro-tips on how to answer those questions including how to tailor.

Finally, we'll give you the ten most common nursing interview questions you are most likely to encounter along with how to best answer them.

Sounds easy, right? So, let's get started!

But just before we do, have you ever stopped to consider that there are hundreds of other, non-nursing-related interview questions you could be asked in your interview?

Several of our students have confirmed that nursing interviews are not only made up of nursing-themed questions, but also of both traditional and behavioral interview questions commonly found in a standard, non-nursing interview.

But don't worry, because we've put together a foolproof PDF cheat sheet that will outline the most common interview questions you can expect to be asked:

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### Types of Interview Questions For Nurses

First off, let's discuss the different types of interview questions for nurses.

Being a nurse is a unique position, and the questions you'll be asked in your interview are just as unique.

Yes, it's true, you're going to inevitably end up being asked some of the same questions you'd come across in any other job interview situation like "Tell me about yourself" and "What is your greatest

strength/weakness?" but you're also going to get asked some very specific nursing questions, and knowing how to properly answer those is going to help set you apart.

Let's start with what makes nursing so unique in the job world.

Unlike most other careers and industries where your interactions with the public would be more along the lines of a "client" or "customer," your interaction with the public is as a caregiver to a patient.

That requires a set of finely honed and carefully crafted interpersonal skills.

As a result, a lot of your interview questions will revolve around patient care and satisfaction and how you meet their unique needs in incredibly varied situations and circumstances.

Those questions fall under the category of behavioral questions and are asked so an interviewer can learn quickly and easily how you'd react to different situations based on your past experiences and behavior.

They'll also tell an interviewer how you'll handle working on a team and with other medical professionals including doctors and technicians as well as relatives and friends of patients.

Be prepared to answer questions about why you chose nursing and what it is about the career that interests you.

You'll also be asked questions about how you work in a team as well as your ability to self-motivate and work alone.

You should also prep for questions about how you handle a crisis or how you deal with stress.

Feeling a little feverish with all these potential nursing interview questions and answers? Don't worry! All it takes is a little prep beforehand.

### Pro Tips For Answering Nurse Interview Questions

The first thing you need to do when preparing for an interview is to go over the job description with a fine-toothed comb.

Make a list of everything the employer is looking for in their Perfect Candidate.

Now, sit down and look back over all your experiences and see exactly how you've met all those requirements before.

It doesn't matter if the experiences you have aren't 100% related to the job description you're applying to. Basically, what you want to do is give your potential future employer tailored examples of how you've handled situations in the past so they can extrapolate how you'd most likely react in future situations...and in some cases, examples outside of work show how you're adept at thinking on your feet and handling yourself beyond just your job. Just make sure that no matter what, you're answering their questions with personal examples that highlight your skills and abilities.

**MIKE'S TIP:** Does this style of answering questions sound familiar? It should if you're a reader of our blog. We're essentially covering the STAR Method. Start with a description of your example, explain the

situation that you found yourself in, and then describe exactly how you responded to that situation using your skills and knowledge.

While you're doing your prep and looking over the job description, it's a good idea to also do a little research into where you're applying. Having specifics on their techniques or their way of doing things and relating that to how you do things will not only show them you're already in tune with their style, but it will also help to reinforce the idea that you're the Perfect Candidate!

It's also an opportunity to familiarize yourself with who you might be working with and for, and that can help you immensely if you find yourself invited to a panel interview.

In most situations, being a nurse means working on a team and as a result, your interview might consist of members of that potential future team. Be prepared to meet with the hiring manager, other nurses, doctors, technicians and members of the hospital administrative staff and try to know a little about each person before you go in (just don't make it creepy.)

Now that we've covered some basic tips, let's take a look at 10 of the most commonly asked nurse interview questions.

#### Top 15 Commonly Asked Nursing Interview Questions

##### 1. "Why did you decide on a career as a nurse?"

While this isn't exactly a behavioral question, it's still one you need to be prepared to answer ahead of time. Because this is such a hands-on, specialized field, employers need to know what it is that makes you want to be a part of it. Don't be afraid to get a little personal with your answer...just don't go overboard!

Example answer:

I come from a long line of nurses. Both my grandmother and my mother are nurses. Growing up in that environment and seeing how much they love what they do every day is both inspiring and motivating. I love the challenges and thinking outside the box to come up with solutions keeps me excited and engaged. I'm proud to continue the tradition of nursing in my family. Above all, knowing that I'm truly making a difference in people's lives is what truly makes it all worthwhile.

##### 2. "What do you find rewarding about this job?"

There are lots of rewards that come with a good job; the paycheck, proximity to where you live, the retirement benefits...but remember, when you're in an interview, it's not actually about you...it's about them and satisfying their need, which is finding the Perfect Candidate (hint, it's you!).

Example answer:

I truly love helping people, and when those people are children, there's no better feeling in the world. I remember having one little boy as a patient who had a long-term issue resulting in the loss of one of his legs. During the course of his treatments we discovered we had a mutual love for robot movies. I stayed with him all through his amputation surgery, and when he was fitted with his prosthetic, I was there to cheer him on. We celebrated his first step with his new leg by throwing a robot movie marathon in the common room. His dad pulled me aside that afternoon and told me how grateful the whole family was

for all our help and support. It wasn't an easy time for that boy or for his family, but knowing that it was a little easier because I was there and had made a genuine personal connection with them all was humbling and inspiring.

3. How you deal with someone who isn't satisfied with your patient care?

Here is a great example of a behavioral question. The interviewer is asking you for a concrete example of how you handle a situation. Remember, as we discussed above, give your interviewer an example from your past and how you dealt with a situation, so they can get a feel for how you would behave in a similar situation in the future.

Example answer:

Nobody likes not feeling well, and it's easy to have those feeling manifest as frustration and anger. While I constantly strive to do everything I can for a patient, there are times when even that isn't good enough and someone takes issue with my care. I had a situation like that once with a patient who complained to my supervisor about me, telling them I was denying them specific care for an issue. The first thing I have to do in that situation is to step back and really assess what's going on. Are they upset because of something I'm doing or not doing? Is it something I can correct or should correct? I spoke with my supervisor and told her that I was following strict doctor's orders. We spoke with the attending physician about the situation and she agreed to come with me to speak to the patient. It turns out that the patient had misunderstood something the doctor had told her, leading her to assume I was neglecting a step in her care process. Once the confusion was cleared up, we were able to work with the patient to come up with a satisfactory solution. I work hard to ensure that I answer patient's questions and when I can't, I try to find the people who can. Sometimes, even with all that, you find people who aren't happy with what you're doing. In those situations, I do my best to accommodate them without compromising their care. If it's a situation where I really can't fix the problem, then I work with the other nurses and doctors on my team to find an alternative solution.

4. "Tell me what you feel your greatest skill as a nurse is."

This is your opportunity to really showcase what it is that makes you unique from all the other applicants! Really think about this ahead of time and come up with solid examples that highlight this skill.

Example answer:

I'm very proud of my ability to really listen to what a patient is telling me. Nothing frustrates them more than feeling as though they're not being heard. Having spent the past five years in the medical field working directly with patients has shown me just how far actively listening can go in helping make someone comfortable. My most recent position included working with patient directly in admissions which meant I was often the first face they'd see when they came in and the last on their way out as well as everything in-between. In that time, I learned that addressing their concerns and making sure they felt we were genuinely listening to them was just as important as receiving quality care. As a result, I helped to establish a patient advocacy program to help teach other nurses those same listening skills.

5. "How do you handle the stress of the job?"

Let's be honest, nursing can be incredibly high stress. An employer needs to know how you handle that stress and whether or not you work well under pressure.

Example answer:

I find the best way to handle the stress of the job is through meticulous organization and attention to detail. By making lists and prioritizing what needs to get done throughout my day, I find that tasks which might seem overwhelming all at once are much more manageable. This also makes it possible for me to stay calm and remain focused on what needs to get done when unexpected situations arise.

6. "Are you comfortable working with other doctors and nurses?"

As a nurse who has to interact with a wide variety of individuals in the medical field including doctors, technicians, other nurses, and the friends and families of your patients just to name a few, your first answer had better be yes. Of course, what you say after that is what is going to make or break you in your interview.

Example answer:

I find I work well under a variety of conditions and circumstances and I take pride in my flexibility. I really enjoy working in a team because I often find that different viewpoints can help me find solutions to a problem I might not think of on my own. I also enjoy self-motivating and am equally comfortable working alone

7. "What do you find is the hardest part about being a nurse?"

This is a trick question. No, the hiring manager isn't actually asking you to tell him how much you hate the early morning shifts because you're just not a morning person and you hate getting up before the sun does. Remember, they're there to find a person to fill a job position, they're not your therapist.

Example Answer:

I think the hardest thing I've had to deal with is feeling helpless. While it's my job to provide as much care and comfort as medically possible, there are times when you just can't do more. Seeing someone in pain or feeling miserable and knowing there's nothing you can do to help is the most difficult thing I deal with. I am a nurse because I genuinely care about people and want to help, and when I can't, that's hard.

8. "Why are you the best nursing candidate for this position?"

Oh man, this question is actually the best question you could hope to be asked. Why? Because this is your opportunity to really sell the hiring manager on why you're the Perfect Candidate without actually saying those words (no, really, don't say those words...)

Example answer:

I've been working as a Registered Nurse for the past eight years and loved every day of it. This is more than a job, it's a passion, and I've used that passion to drive me forward. I make sure to stay abreast on all the current advancements in my field, am continuing to further my education, and am constantly striving to make sure that I stay on top of emerging trends and technology. I enjoy the challenges that come with this job and take every opportunity to learn and grow.

Wow. This person truly is the perfect candidate! They're driven, passionate, open to new things, and not content to simply come in and punch the clock. This is who you want to be because this is who employers want to hire!

9. "Tell me about yourself."

While we at the Interview Guys already go over this question in depth on our blog in another post, it's such an important question to answer properly that we're going to go over it here as well.

Remember that they're not asking you for your life story. An interviewer is asking you this question to find out from you what you think is important and how well that matches up with what they're looking for. Remember that list of qualifications and qualities you made earlier when going over the job posting?

Now's a time to work a few in.

Example answer:

I'm a motivated self-starter who really enjoys the hands-on and human aspect of our industry. To me, there's nothing more satisfying than helping people out when they need it the most. Having spent the past five years in the medical field working directly with patients has shown me just how far actively listening to a patient can go in helping make someone comfortable. My most recent position included working with patient directly in admissions which meant I was often the first face they'd see when they came in and the last on their way out as well as everything in-between. In that time, I learned that addressing their concerns and making sure they felt their voices were being heard was just as important to them as receiving quality care. As a result, I helped to establish a patient advocacy program to help teach other nurses those same skills.

This answer focuses directly on your strengths and how those strengths directly impact your role within the organization in a positive light.

10. "Why are you leaving your current position?"

This question is a potential land-mine. Do NOT use it as an opportunity to badmouth your current or former position. Future employers don't need to know you hate where you worked or that your old boss was a tyrant. Rather, focus on the positive aspects and how you're leveraging those in your new job.

Example answer:

While my last job was an opportunity for me to learn and grow at a comfortable pace in a smaller clinical environment, I'm looking for new challenges and opportunities to continue to expand my knowledge in a larger, hospital based environment. I am eager to try new things and learn skill-sets that come from working in a faster paced environment like this one here.

This answer is good because you're not saying anything negative about your past job and stressing that you're eager to learn and take on more responsibilities. For a more in-depth article on how to generally answer this interview question, check out our article [10 Good Reasons For Leaving a Job](#).

11. "Why do you want to work here?"

Don't say the money. We all know it's the money, but please, don't say it. Employers aren't stupid. They know that paycheck is a big part of why you're applying, but don't be that guy. Talk about your career

goals and your vision for your future in your industry and how those directly relate to what you will be doing if hired.

Example answer:

I'm fascinated by the new and emerging technology involved in ongoing patient care, especially in the field of pediatrics. Your hospital has been ranked in the top five hospitals in the nation for the past seven years running in new innovations and I'm excited by the possibility of being a part of that and learning from your experts.

Nicely said! You're both complimenting your potential employer while also stating that you're open to continuous learning and growth. For a more in-depth article on how to generally answer this interview question, check out our article [Why Do You Want to Work Here?](#).

12. "Would you say you're a team player?"

As a nurse who has to interact with a wide variety of individuals in the medical field including doctors, technicians, other nurses, and the friends and families of your patients just to name a few, your first answer had better be yes. Of course, what you say after that is what is going to make or break you in your interview.

Example answer:

I find I work well under a variety of conditions and circumstances and I take pride in my flexibility. I really enjoy working in a team because I often find that different viewpoints can help me find solutions to a problem I might not think of on my own. I also enjoy self-motivating and am equally comfortable working alone.

This is a good answer because it covers the fact that you're a team player but also lets the employer know if there's ever a time where you're going to have to be on your own, you can handle it.

13. "Describe a time you had to deal with a difficult patient and how you handled that."

Tough patients are going to be a regular part of your daily routine, and no employer wants to hire a nurse who is going to be unable to handle these types of characters.

Example answer:

Working with elderly patients always presents unique challenges as you're dealing with people who are used to being independent and who are now totally reliant on strangers. I remember one gentleman who had a reputation for being extremely difficult. He was angry and argumentative and would often fight with the other nurses over things as little as the temperature of his room. I admit, I wasn't excited when I found I was going to be working with him, so to prepare, I looked over his charts. I discovered that his wife had died a number of years ago and that he had no friends or family in the area and hadn't had a visitor in ages. Rather than treating him just as a patient, I did my best to connect with him as a human. I would talk to him, not just at him. It took a little, but eventually he came around and ended up being one of my favorite people to visit with every day.

This shows a potential employer that you're comfortable tackling tough situations and that you take pride in working through problems others have given up on.

#### 14. "Why should we hire you?"

Oh man, this question is actually the best question you could hope to be asked. Why? Because this is your opportunity to really sell the hiring manager on why you're the Perfect Candidate without actually saying those words (no, really, don't say those words...)

Example answer:

I've been working as a Registered Nurse for the past eight years and loved every day of it. This is more than a job, it's a passion, and I've used that passion to drive me forward. I make sure to stay abreast on all the current advancements in my field, am continuing to further my education, and am constantly striving to make sure that I stay on top of emerging trends and technology. I enjoy the challenges that come with this job and take every opportunity to learn and grow.

Wow. This person truly is the perfect candidate! They're driven, passionate, open to new things, and not content to simply come in and punch the clock. This is who you want to be because this is who employers want to hire! For a more in-depth article on how to generally answer this interview question, check out our article [Why Should We Hire You?](#)

#### 15. "Do you have any questions for us?"

Yes. Yes you do. And you thought about those questions before you came in. In fact, you thought about those questions so carefully that you wrote them down and now you've got them on a piece of paper so you can ask the hiring manager one or two well thought out, intelligent questions. You could ask about length of new hire orientation and what you'd be doing exactly if you were hire. You might ask about the nurse to patient ratio or how a typical day is structured.

Regardless of what you ask, it's important that you do ask. The point is (and we go much further into depth here in our article covering questions to ask your interviewer) by not asking questions, you'll appear uninterested and unmotivated, and we know that's not possible!

Putting It All Together

Now that we've gone over the types of questions you might be asked, given you a few nursing interview tips, brushed up on some practice questions and some sample answers, and gotten you thinking about your own questions, I think it's safe to say you've got the perfect prescription for nailing that interview. (Groan!)

Good luck!