

How Attorneys and Law Students Should Respond to Oddball Questions in Law Firm Interviews

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Law firm interviewers sometimes ask "oddball" questions [because they believe that they somehow reveal valuable information about a candidate](#). Because they are so unpredictable and "tricky" by nature, they can be very difficult to answer effectively. Moreover, the best answer to these questions is not necessarily the "correct" answer. The best answer is the one that makes you look good, which is the whole point of the interview. Below is a description of some of the most common oddball question categories with several (real life) examples, followed by suggestions on how to handle oddball questions in each category.

1. Trivia questions.

"Calculate the angle of two clock pointers when time is 11:50."

"How many quarters would you need to reach the top of the Empire State Building?"

"Name 3 previous Nobel Prize Winners."

I was once asked in a law firm interview to name the original five members of baseball's Hall of Fame. Fortunately, I happen to be a baseball trivia buff, so I knew the answer. This illustrates the general nature of most trivia questions, which is that you either know the answer or you don't. If you don't know the answer, admit you don't know and move on. There are some trivia questions, however, that don't have a clear answer, such as the second question. With these questions, your actual answer isn't important, since nobody knows the correct answer anyway. What matters is how you come to your estimated answer, and how good (or smart, or creative) this effort makes you look.

2. The "really get to know you" questions.

"What songs best describe your work ethic?"

"What do you think about when you are alone in your car?"

"If you could be anyone else, who would it be?"

These questions are intended to reveal "deeper" information about you. Again, what matters is whether your answer makes you look good. For example, for the second question you should not tell the interviewer what you really think about when you are alone in your car. Instead, you could say that you think about work when alone in your car to show your dedication.

3. The "what if and why" philosophical questions

"If you were to get rid of one state in the U.S., which would it be and why?"

"If you could pick two celebrities to be your parents, who would they be and why?"

Learn why attorneys usually fail law firm phone-screening interviews in this article:

Why Most Attorneys Fail Telephone-Screening Interviews

"What kitchen utensil would you most like to be and why?"

See [Interviewing Tips](#) for more information

Once again, your literal "correct" answer is unimportant. What is important is that your answer reflects good things about you. For example, when asked to choose celebrities for some purpose, do not pick your favorites. Choose highly impressive celebrities that share some positive trait or traits with you (intelligence, integrity, hard work, etc.). Sometimes you can use humor in responding to oddball questions. This can be risky, however, as the success of this tactic depends on the sense of humor of the interviewer. For the most part, people who ask oddball questions take them seriously. You should too.

See [Top Ten Interview Questions](#) for more information