Questions to ask employers during interviews

An interview is a two-way street.
Ask questions. The employer should, and will typically, provide an opportunity for you to ask questions at or near the end of the interview.

Always prepare questions to ask.
Having no questions prepared sends the message that you have no independent thought process, or are ill-prepared, or are not bright, or some combination. Employers make judgments about you based on the questions you ask.

- Have you done your research on the organization? (If yes, good.)
- Are you asking rather dull questions that you could find in a web search, but about which you have no interest? (Not good.)
- Are you asking about salary? (Bad sign.)
- Are your questions intelligent and thoughtful and cordial? (Very good.)

Show you've done your homework.
Example: "I read on the company / organization / agency website that employees have recently done presentations at XX conference. Is that a typical opportunity in the job for which I am interviewing? Are there specific professional organizations employees have been encouraged to join?"

Do not ask questions that are clearly answered on the employer's web site and/or in any literature provided by the employer to you in advance. This would simply reveal that you did not prepare for the interview, and you are wasting the employer's time by asking these questions.

Never ask about salary and benefits issues until those subjects are raised by the employer.

If you are having trouble developing questions, consider the following samples as food for thought to help you consider your own questions. However, don't ask a question if you are not truly interested in the answer; it will be obvious to the employer. Your questions must show your own thought process.

Here are the kinds of questions you should be asking in a job interview

1) **Credibility-building questions**: “As I think back to my experience in managing large sales forces, I’ve found there are typically three barriers to breakthrough sales performance: coordination of the sales function with marketing and manufacturing, customer selection, and product quality. In your case, do you think any of these factors are holding back your sales growth? What do you believe are your own greatest opportunities for increasing sales effectiveness?”

2) **“Why?” questions**: “Why did you close down your parts business rather than try to find a buyer for it?” or “Why did you decide to move from a functional to a product-based organization structure?”

3) **Personal understanding questions**: “I understand you joined the organization five years ago. With all the growth you’ve had, how do you find the experience of working here now compared to when you started?”

4) **Passion questions**: “What do you love most about working here?”

5) **Value-added advice questions**: “Have you considered creating an online platform for your top account executives, so that they can share success stories and collaborate better around key client opportunities? We implemented such a concept a year ago, and it’s been very successful.”

6) **Future-oriented questions**: “You’ve achieved large increases in productivity over the last three years. Where do you believe future operational improvements will come from?”

7) **Aspiration questions**: “As you look ahead to the next couple of years, what are the potential growth areas that people are most excited about in the company?”

8) **Organizational culture questions**: “What are the most common reasons why new hires don’t work out here?” or “What kinds of people really thrive in your organization?”

9) **Decision-making questions**: “If you were to arrive at two final candidates with equal experience and skills, how would you choose one over the other?”

10) **Company strengths-and-weaknesses questions**: “Why do people come to work for you rather than a competitor? And why do you think they stay?”

INFORMATION ON THIS PAGE PROVIDED BY:
10 Power Questions You Should Ask During a Job Interview
Nothing you can tell the interviewer will ever equal the impact of what you can ask.
Sample Questions to ask at an Interview

— What’s the biggest change your group has gone through in the last year? Does your group feel like the recession is over and things are getting better, or are things still pretty bleak?
— If I get the job, how do I earn a “gold star” on my performance review? What are the key accomplishments you’d like to see in this role over the next year?
— What’s your (or my future boss’) leadership style?
— About which competitor are you most worried?
— What type of people are successful here? What type of people are not?
— What’s one thing that’s key to this company’s success that somebody from outside the company wouldn’t know about?
— How did you get your start in this industry? Why do you stay?
— What are your group’s best and worst working relationships with other groups in the company?
— What keeps you up at night? What’s your biggest worry these days?
— What’s the timeline for making a decision on this position? When should I get back in touch with you?
— These are tough economic times, and every position is precious when it comes to the budget. Why did you decide to hire somebody for this position instead of the many other roles / jobs you could have hired for? What about this position made your prioritize it over others?
— What is your reward system? Is it a star system / team-oriented / equity-based / bonus-based / “attaboy!”-based? Why is that your reward system? What do you guys hope to get out of it, and what actually happens when you put it into practice? What are the positives and the negatives of your reward system? If you could change any one thing, what would it be?
— What information is shared with the employees (revenues, costs, operating metrics)? Is this an open-book shop, or do you play it closer to the vest? How is information shared? How do I get access to the information I need to be successful in this job?
— If we have a very successful 2012, what would that look like? What will have happened over the next 12 months? How does this position help achieve that?
— How does the company / my future boss do performance reviews? How do I make the most of the performance review process to ensure that I’m doing the best I can for the company?
— What is the rhythm to the work around here? Is there a time of year that it’s all hands on deck and we’re pulling all-nighters, or is it pretty consistent throughout the year? How about during the week / month? Is it pretty evenly spread throughout the week / month, or are there crunch days?
— Who are the heroes at your company? What characteristics do the people who are most celebrated have in common with each other?