

What to say in an exit interview: A guide for departing employees

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“Be good to those you are leaving behind because it is night where you are going”. This is especially true when you are leaving a job. It is important to maintain relations and leave as amicably as possible even though the reasons leading to the departure may have been unsavory. In a study done in the United States, statistics revealed that [an average person changes jobs at least 12 times in their lifetime](#). If you remain in the same line of work, there is a good chance that you will have to engage with your previous employers and colleagues. Imagine how humiliating it would be having to engage with your previous employers after having thrown a fit of rage. Therefore, it is important to always leave with your dignity and in a way that does not offend your previous employer. This article will discuss tips on what to say and how to handle an exit interview when leaving an employer.

Before we delve into things to say in an exit interview, we must first understand what an exit interview is and understand the events leading to an exit interview. This information will allow us to determine what to say in an exit interview as circumstances are different. An exit interview is described as an interview held with an employee about to leave an organisation, typically in order to discuss the employee’s reasons for leaving and their experience of working for the organisation. Companies conduct [exit interviews](#) to hear an employee’s opinion about their job, supervisor, organisation, and more. These interviews are especially important because they offer a deeper look at [workplace culture](#), day-to-day processes, management solutions, and employee morale. During an exit interview, an exiting employee needs to give as much helpful information as possible to the employer.

Several factors may lead an employee to leave an organisation. These factors determine how a person should respond to an exit interview. There are generally two ways in which an individual can leave an organisation, firstly by choice because they have found a better opportunity or because they have been pushed out of the organisation due to [downsizing](#) or termination of employment.

What to say in an exit interview when you leave on your terms

In most cases, when you leave on your terms, it is generally due to the fact that you have found a better opportunity, or you were not happy with the culture in the organisation, or maybe because you felt like

your [career progression](#) was stunted. It is in your best interest and the organisation to be as honest as possible in such an exit interview. This allows employers to learn from your example and possibly adjust how they managed you when you were with them. This will improve the [retention of critical staff](#) and improve [employee satisfaction](#). However, it is important to note that you must remain tactful and respectful to the interviewers whilst being honest. It would help if you were wary of saying offensive and rude things.

Like any other interview, it would be a good idea to practice what you will say. Whilst it is important to be wary about what to say, withholding things and being resentful to an organisation will not help, being honest in a discreet way is the best policy. It is also important to try not to get too emotional during the exit interview, as this often leads to saying inappropriate things. Practising potential exit interview questions guides a person to say appropriate things that will not lead to speaking out of emotion, especially if the reasons for the departure were unsavoury.

Sample exit interview Questions and possible responses

1. Why are you leaving your position, or what led you to the decision to leave?

I am grateful for the opportunity you gave me, and I have learned a lot over the course of my employment. However, I feel like I have accomplished all I can in this role, and I need to expand my horizon. I felt like I did not get the support I could have gotten when I expressed an interest in my career progression. I realized that it might be time to go in a different direction for the sake of my career progression.

2. How do you feel about management, and do you have any feedback or suggestions for how we can improve?

“Overall, I am satisfied with the way management has guided me in my job, but there is room for improvement. Management sometimes overlooked the ways they could utilize my role, so I occasionally felt somewhat stagnant. However, if they empower new employees to feel independent from the beginning, we can get more innovative and new ideas from them to add value to the company’s success. This seems like a more effective solution than waiting for directives.”

What to say in an exit interview when your contract is terminated

This is usually the most problematic exit interview because it is hard or nearly impossible to put emotions on the side. Reasons for contract termination vary from downsizing to poor performance on your part or breaking company laws. It is as hard as it may be to keep your cool, as losing your temper may ruin your whole professional career going forward. Professionally handling yourself will always work in your favour as an employer may decide to be discrete about possible faults of yours to protect you. In cases where your contract has been terminated due to downsizing or poor performance, an employer can even write a recommendation for you or recommend other employers to take you. However, this depends on how you handle the interview and what you say in the interview. Maintain your cool, be respectful, and watch your tone.

Sample exit interview questions and responses when the contract has been terminated

Do you feel that your particular job was significant in the overall operation of the business?

I do feel that my job was significant to the business; however, I felt overwhelmed with the workload, and I often felt unsupported. The lack of support may have contributed to my low performance. Had I gotten more support, I would have met my deadlines.

This response is honest and yet tactfully and respectfully put. As an employer, I would still recommend this individual to a less demanding organization that may be more up to this employee's speed.

In conclusion, what you say, how you say it, and your body language should remain professional and respectful in an exit interview regardless of the circumstance of departure. It is important to consider that your behavior when you leave will haunt you or favor you, so choose to keep your dignity by remaining professional.

Other Exit Interview Common Questions

When going for an exit interview, you can prepare to answer the following common exit interview question:

1. What made you begin looking for a new job?
2. What Are the Benefits of Your New Position That Informed Your Decision To Leave?
3. Would You Ever Think About Coming Back To This Company?
4. Were You at Ease Speaking With Your Manager?
5. What Best Describes the Culture of Our Company?
6. Did you have all you required for job success?
7. Do you believe that the nature of your job has changed since you were hired? How?
8. What Characteristics Should We Look For In Your Replacement, In Your Opinion?
9. What Aspect Of Your Job Was The Worst?
10. How would you raise staff morale?

Exit Interview Questions You Can Ask Your Leaving Employee



Don't feel obliged to use all of them. Just pick the ones you think you will need!
You want to make the most out of your exit interview. Below are some questions
you can add to your exit interview template.

- ? Why did you begin looking for a new job?
- ? What made you accept the new position?
- ? Did you feel that you were equipped to excel at your job?
- ? How would you describe the culture of our company? Can you give me specific examples?
- ? Since we hired you, do you feel your job description has changed? In what way?

- ? Were you satisfied by how you were managed? What things could your manager have done better?
- ? Did you feel like a valuable part of the company? Do you have any suggestions on improvements?
- ? Did you have clear goals and objectives? Did your manager help you achieve those goals and objectives?
- ? Did you receive constructive feedback to help you improve?
- ? What was your best experience in the company? What was the worst?

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Source: <https://blog.cake.hr/free-exit-interview-template-everything-you-need-know-when-employee-leaves>

Frequently Asked Question About What to say in an exit interview

1. Can you be honest in an exit interview?

It is not advised to lie in your exit interview, just like any other interview. In the same line, avoid damaging relationships and developing a bad reputation for yourself in the name of being honest. Negative comments and assessments are unlikely to influence anything other than how others perceive you. Due to the small size of the industry and the corresponding sectors, it is likely that you may work with former coworkers and superiors. Your connection could be harmed if you give them unfavorable criticism in a departure interview. In your exit interview, try to be professional and provide useful information.

2. What should you not say in an exit interview?

- Do not complain about your boss
- Do not badmouth your coworkers
- Avoid blaming other people
- Do not trash the company policies and rules
- Complaining about pay

Related: [How to Resign from your Job: Everything you Need to Know](#)

3. What should I say in an exit interview for a toxic job?

Lets face it, people hate complainers, do not come out as one. The more you highlight negative stuff, the more you come out as complainer. The environment might be bad or toxic, the good thing is that you are leaving. Do not take that as an opportunity to go on a crusade about how bad the organisation or your boss is. Here are ways you can handle an exit interview for a toxic job:

- You can skip it: Exit interviews are not mandatory so you can consider not going.
- Be neutral, focus on positive areas.
- Suggest improvements in a helpful and professional manner.
- Focus on the job you were doing on how it helped you grow

Related: [Toxic Managers: How to manage one](#)

4. What is the good reason for leaving job?

Here are good reasons you can give for leaving your job in an exit interview:

- You found a good opportunity

- Looking for career growth
- Looking for [career change](#)
- Health reasons
- Looking to spend more time with the family

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<https://thehumancapitalhub.com/articles/what-to-say-in-an-exit-interview-a-guide-for-departing-employees>