General DBA questions

In a DBA interview, you are likely to be asked general questions you would get in other types of interviews to help potential employers get to know your personality and see if you are a good fit for their company. Here are some common questions you may be asked:

- What are your biggest strengths?
- What do you see as your biggest weaknesses?
- Why do you want to work here?
- How did you hear about us?
- What do you feel is your biggest professional achievement?
- What makes you a good fit for this position?
- What kind of work environment do you enjoy most?
- How do you work under pressure?

Questions about DBA experience and background

Prospective employers may also ask you these questions about your relevant experience and education to better understand your professional qualifications:

- Why did you choose database administration?
- Tell me about your experience as a DBA.
- Why did you leave your last DBA job?
- What are your top technical skills?
- Describe your workflow without direct supervision.
- How do you learn new applications?
- What do you feel is the role of a DBA?
- What are the most common tasks performed as a DBA?
- What do you feel are the most valuable skills you gained from your last position?

Related: Technical Skills: List, Definitions and Examples

In-depth questions

Interviewers ask these questions to gauge your knowledge of the subject, problem-solving skills and your personal and professional character. Here are some common in-depth questions you may be asked:

- What are the common problems you come across with database management?
- How do you prevent data loss when migrating to the cloud?
- Walk me through your troubleshooting process.
- Is there a time you made a mistake? How did you resolve it? How could you have prevented it?
- What is your process when users are complaining about database performance?

- What databases do you have experience with?

Interview questions and sample answers

During your interview, answer questions to the best of your knowledge. Some questions may vary by the position and company you are applying for. For effective answers that demonstrate your experience, use the [STAR interview response technique](#), which explains:

- **Situation:** Give context for your answer by describing a specific situation.
- **Task:** Explain what your role was in the situation.
- **Action:** Describe what actions you took as an individual or as part of a team.
- **Result:** Explain the outcome of the situation and give examples of how your efforts led to a resolution.

Here are seven common DBA interview questions with example answers to help you craft your own effective responses:

1. Describe your experience with database servers

This question demonstrates your familiarity with database servers. Describe the circumstances around your usage with each system and your years of experience. Also, explain if you had any unique issues and your role in its resolution.

Example: *"I used Oracle with my former employer for about two years, but it started failing and once shut down the server for an entire day. After some research, I suggested that we change to the latest version of Microsoft because it was best for our needs. I assisted with setup and migrating the old server to the new one. We used that for about another four years."*

2. Explain a situation where you disagreed with a coworker. How did you resolve it?

There may be instances where you and your coworkers disagree on something. Your answer to this behavioral question can help your interviewer better understand your approach to conflict resolution. It also shows your level of empathy, which is a skill necessary for leadership and collaboration in the workplace. To answer this question, you can use the STAR method to describe a specific disagreement and demonstrate your conflict-resolution skills.

Example: *"I was once involved in a project where the client had very strict deadlines. My teammate and I wanted to streamline our workflow but had two different ideas for what we thought would work best. I allowed my teammate to explain why he believed his process would work better, and then I explained my process. I realized that the*

difference between our processes was that we were focusing on our individual strengths.

Together, we separated tasks between us based on who was best at what, that way we could use our respective processes without impacting one another's productivity. We were then able to move forward with the work and complete the project within the deadline."

3. A client needs a SQL server. What questions do you ask them to determine the right one?

This question allows you to demonstrate your server knowledge and gives insight into your process. This question also shows how you interact with customers. Answer with a similar situation where you had to set up a server and your role in the process.

Example: *"In my experience, it's important that the SQL suits the size of the organization, so I would begin by asking what type of SQL the client could support. I also would ask about the desired amount of uptime, any applications needed and any unique security requirements.*

I once worked with a client who had recently upgraded their SQL server and was experiencing frequent application failure that interrupted business functions. After going through her database history, I discovered that while her information had been backed up and the server upgraded, the new database was not compatible with the old. I upgraded the old database to an intermediate one and then upgraded that to the current server to fix the issue."

4. Explain a time you experienced data loss. How did you handle it?

Data loss can negatively impact an organization, so understanding how to troubleshoot and recover data is an important function in DBA roles. Interviewers may ask this question to understand how you troubleshoot, your recovery process and how well you work under pressure. The STAR method is perfectly suited for this type of question so be sure to have a specific instance you can cite.

Example: *"Before all data migration projects, I make comprehensive backups and test them for any corruption or loss. Data loss does happen, but if there is a quality backup, it can mitigate the problem.*

In one circumstance, after performing a test migration, I found that the data was not translating across the system. After some troubleshooting, I found that the client had several old databases. There were multiple instances of duplicate file names for varying uses that I'd overlooked as duplicate files. I was able to suggest some software that connected seamlessly with the outdated systems and cleaned up the excess data for better migration."

5. Why would you use a SQL agent?

This general knowledge question can help the interviewer understand the depth of experience you have with database servers. To answer this question, detail a situation where you used it for its main purpose.

Example: *"SQL agents allow you to perform commands on a repeating timeframe or when needed. Backups need to be made regularly, but we want to do them when there aren't active users. I typically set the SQL agent to perform a backup every day at 4 a.m. or outside of work hours. That way, there aren't users actively pulling and updating the database. This ensures that we have all of the information backed up regularly without disturbing users or compromising the backup."*

6. What are your favorite third-party database tools?

This is another question formulated to grasp your experience and comfort level with the subject matter. The use of third party tools demonstrates your ability to solve a variety of problems. The interviewer may be gauging to see if you are familiar with the tools the organization already uses. Answer this question with your preferred tools and a reason why it's your favorite. Use a situation to explain why you would want to use a third-party tool.

Example: *"There are times when I need to connect to multiple servers at once. Using Navicat allows me to do this and also prepare data for backups. The projects I work on usually have large amounts of data that need to be checked for errors or missing information. I've worked with a client that had years of data that needed to be migrated to a new system within a tight deadline. MSAccess and Navicat allowed me to clean up the data quickly and finish within the deadline."*

7. Describe a time users were complaining about a database. What was your troubleshooting process?

Creative problem-solving is an invaluable skill for database administrators. When an issue arises, employers may count on you to correct it. This question is an opportunity to detail the issue, your step-by-step process and the resources you used to solve it. Similar to other questions that as for an example ("Describe a time…"), you can rely on the STAR method to answer this one.

Example: *"I usually monitor the database myself to check for any functional breakdowns. When there are several active tickets on an issue, that is my starting place for analysis. This one time, I had users complaining of slow application performance. The first thing I considered was that the memory was the issue. I reconfigured the memory, and things went back to normal. When the issue became more frequent, I upgraded the physical memory to solve the issue."*