The most ridiculous job interview questions

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As if job interviews weren't stressful enough, hiring managers at some of the largest companies have taken to throwing real curve balls. Here's a sampling of the wackiest questions.

By Anne Fisher, copyright Fortune

With about five candidates for every job opening these days, some responsible for hiring decisions have resorted to desperate measures in their efforts to narrow the field. Researchers at career site Glassdoor.com culled through tens of thousands of queries reported by job seekers who had done their best to come up with answers on the spot, and selected the oddest interview questions of the past 15 months.

Luckily for beleaguered candidates, the interviewers seemed in most cases to be more interested in how people responded -- that is, in hearing their thought process, and seeing how well they kept their cool -- than in receiving a "correct" response. A sampling of Glassdoor's list, and where the question was asked:

"Given the numbers 1 to 1,000, what is the minimum number of guesses needed to find a specific number, if you are given the hint 'higher' or 'lower' for each guess you make?" -- Facebook

"Using a scale of 1 to 10, rate yourself on how weird you are." -- Capital One (COF)

"Explain quantum electrodynamics in two minutes, starting now." -- Intel (INTC)

"How many balloons would fit in this room?" -- PricewaterhouseCoopers

"If you were shrunk to the size of a pencil and put in a blender, how would you get out?" -- Goldman Sachs (GS)

"You have a bouquet of flowers. All but two are roses, all but two are daisies, and all but two are tulips. How many flowers do you have?" -- Epic Systems

"What is the philosophy of martial arts?" -- Aflac (AFL)

"Explain to me what has happened in this country during the last 10 years." -- Boston Consulting

"If you could be any superhero, which one would you be?" -- AT&T (T)
"How do you weigh an elephant without using a scale?" -- IBM (IBM)

"If you had 5,623 participants in a tournament, how many games would need to be played to determine the winner?" -- Amazon (AMZN)

"How many bricks are there in Shanghai? Consider only residential buildings." -- Deloitte Consulting

"You have five bottles of pills. One bottle has 9 gram pills, the others have 10 gram pills. You have a scale that can be used only once. How can you find out which bottle contains the 9 gram pills?" -- eBay (EBAY)

"What is your fastball?" -- Ernst & Young

"How would you market ping pong balls if ping pong itself became obsolete? List many ways, then pick one and go into detail." -- Microsoft (MSFT)

"How many smartphones are there in New York City?" -- Google (GOOG)

"You are in charge of 20 people. Organize them to figure out how many bicycles were sold in your area last year." -- Schlumberger (SLB)

"Why do you think only a small percentage of the population makes over $125,000 a year?" -- New York Life

"You have three boxes. One contains only apples, one contains only oranges, and one contains both apples and oranges. The boxes have been incorrectly labeled so that no label accurately identifies the contents of any of the boxes. Opening just one box, and without looking inside, you take out one piece of fruit. By looking at the fruit, how can you immediately label all of the boxes correctly?" -- Apple (AAPL)

"How many ball bearings, each one inch in diameter, can fit inside a 747 aircraft?" -- SAIC (SAI)

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