Examples of Tricky Questions

Q: “Why have you been out of work so long, and how many others were laid off?”

• In other words: “Why were you laid off? What’s possibly wrong with you?”
  The employer may be trying to listen for any potential issues that may have presented in your last job; though this question may offer you an opportunity to offer insight into industry trends, budget cuts or reasons for your outcome.

Q: “If employed, how do you manage time for interviews?”

• In other words: “Are you being honest with your current boss about taking time off? Are you sincerely interested in this position or are you applying and interviewing elsewhere? Are you scheduling outside of ‘normal’ work hours?”
  This question can offer insight into your intentions and job search to a potential employer.

Q: “Do you know anyone who works for us?”

• In other words “Who are your associations? Did someone refer you? How can I judge your character?”
  It is not always a positive in your favor to ‘name drop’ or have someone else deliver your resume for you. The potential employer will also be exploring the reputation of this individual that you mention and if this particular person is well respected within the organization.

Q: “Where would you really like to work?”

• In other words: “Are you applying to everything and anything in sight?”
  This is an opportunity for a job hunter to convince the potential employer that they have done their ‘homework’ (research) on the organization and share their reason(s) for application, and how the candidate is the ‘best fit,’ or possibly to even share their short term goals.

Q: “What bugs you about coworkers or bosses?”

In other words “Do you have trouble getting along with others? Will you bring the morale down within the team?” For this question, answers should reflect optimism, a positive attitude and self-control. You do not want to say negative things about past co-workers or employers and this would not potentially prompt an employer to question you and your ethics. You are under
no obligation to share confidential information and any relative details surrounding past employment.

Q: “How does this position compare with others you’re applying for?”

- *In other words “Is this your destination and do you want to work for us? What could you bring to the board?”*
Candidates can use this question as an opportunity to share their marketability or again, convince the employer that their organization/proposed occupation aligns with the candidates’ needs, values and skills set, in comparison to other opportunities (without naming specific organizations).

Q: “If you won the lottery, would you still work?”

- *In other words “Are you motivated to work? Are you a hard worker or do you want an easy way out?”* Employers ideally want to hire individuals that have a good work ethic. They offer this question to explore your answer, as silly as it may be, to see if you would want to quit or continue to contribute to your society and career.

Additional examples:
1. Do you feel you were better at your position than your co-workers?
2. How would you react if I told you that this interview was terrible so far?
3. What’s the last book you read?
4. Who’s your hero?
5. Do you feel you could have done a better job than your previous boss?
6. As we still have some time left, can you tell me a story?
7. What is the worst thing you have heard about our company?
8. What advice would you give . . . ? (Oprah Winfrey)?
9. If you could win ‘employee of the month’ for 12 months consecutively and be disliked or have all your co-workers see you as a team player, what would you choose and why?
10. Desk, car or your house – what would you clean first and why?
11. Spell . . . (ambidextrous)
12. Give me 10 ways to use a . . . (paperclip).
13. What do you think of . . . our current premier?
14. Is your university GPA reflective of your potential?
15. If you could be a superhero, what power would you possess and why?
16. If you wrote an autobiography, what do you think the title should be?
17. What makes you the most angry?
18. You only have time to save three things from a fire in your home. Your family is safe. What are the three things?
19. What would you do differently if you could start your working life over?
20. How do you balance life and work?
21. What led you to this point in your life?
22. What excites you most about the position and what do you think would be stretch for you?
23. Describe the work environment or culture in which you are most productive and happy.
24. What was the last book you read?
25. What can you do for us that someone else cannot?
26. What keeps you awake at night?
27. The interviewer stays quiet . . . what to do?
28. What’s the one thing you’ll never be as good at as others?
29. Sell me that jacket that you are wearing.
30. Describe your biggest failure.
31. Do you check email when you are on vacation?
32. If you could choose to have breakfast with anyone (alive or dead), who would it be and why?
33. What is your favorite game?
34. What is your motto that you live by?
35. The employer tells you that he/she wants to be entertained for the next two minutes.