10 INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
TO ASK A
SOFTWARE ENGINEER

1. Perfection or excellence?

Engineers need to understand that perfection is unattainable. An engineer who focuses on perfection might always focus on edge cases rather than shipping features and providing value.

2. How do you keep your skills sharp?

A candidate needs to demonstrate they stay on top of changes in the industry, but also aren't distracted by every shiny new object. Code is a craft that needs to be nurtured.

3. What personal projects do you have going on outside of work?

Software engineers are tinkerers, hackers, and problem solvers. If they don't have a side project going on outside of work, they likely don't have passion about what they do.

4. What type of challenges excite you professionally?

If spending time fixing bugs excites them, they're likely not a fit for a full-stack role working on user interfaces.

5. Can you solve this coding problem?

Make sure every candidate writes code as part of the interview process. Engineers should be able to whiteboard a simple problem. If they don't solve it as fast as they can write, look elsewhere.

6. What does being a defensive programmer mean to you?

Great engineers always think about worst case scenarios. What happens when the inputs that are always going to be what you expect aren't? Does the whole thing blow up?!

7. How do you test your code?

When someone points out a bug, engineers shouldn't say "Weird. It worked on my machine." A solid engineer will talk about unit tests, functional test automation and other methodologies. Make sure they have a process.

8. Do you prefer working as an individual, or in a team?

Understand the engineer's working style and preferences so it lines up with the way your corporation has structured its team.

9. What are you looking for in your next team or company?

Building a strong team requires finding individuals who interact well with others and is a cultural fit to your organization. Make sure these line up.

10. Do you prefer to work for a company that is in build mode or maintenance mode?

Build can be exciting while maintenance is often routine. Make sure the candidate's interest match the mode the company is in.

Tweet This