



## Top 10 Substitute Teacher Interview Questions and Answers [Updated 2024]

### Description

Stepping into a substitute teacher role can be a challenging yet rewarding experience. When preparing for an interview for such a position, it can be beneficial to familiarize yourself with frequently asked questions and to formulate your answers. This can help you demonstrate your capacity to manage diverse classroom scenarios, adapt to different educational settings, and meet the specific needs of students.

<b>Job Description</b>	A Substitute Teacher is responsible for covering classes when the regular teacher is absent. They must follow the lesson plans provided by the regular teacher and ensure a smooth and productive learning environment. They should be able to handle classroom management, grading, and administrative tasks.
<b>Skills</b>	Strong communication skills, Patience, Adaptability, Classroom management, Knowledge in various subjects, Problem-solving skills
<b>Industry</b>	Education, Primary/Secondary Education
<b>Experience Level</b>	Entry-Level to Mid-Level
<b>Education Requirements</b>	Bachelor's degree in Education or related field, and may require state-specific certification.
<b>Work Environment</b>	Substitute teachers work in public and private schools, across all levels from pre-kindergarten to high school. The job requires standing for long hours and interacting with students.
<b>Salary Range</b>	\$25,000 – \$45,000 per year
<b>Career Path</b>	Substitute teachers may proceed to become full-time teachers, school administrators, or specialists in areas such as special education or counseling.
<b>Popular Companies</b>	Kelly Services, Swing Education, Teach for America

### Substitute Teacher Interview Questions

**Can you describe a time when you had to adapt your lesson plan on the spot? How did you handle it?**



**How to Answer:**

The interviewer wants to know about your adaptability and problem-solving skills. Describe a specific instance where you had to change your lesson plan last minute. Explain the reasons behind the change, your thought process, and the steps you took to ensure the success of the lesson. It's also important to mention the outcome and what you learned from the experience.

**Example:**

During a long-term substitute position in a 7th-grade science class, I planned a hands-on experiment for the students. However, when I arrived that morning, I found that the necessary materials were unavailable. I quickly adapted by turning the lesson into a research project. I divided the students into groups, assigned each group a different part of the experiment, and had them research and present their findings. The students were engaged, and I believe they learned even more through this method. This experience taught me the importance of being flexible and creative in my teaching approach.

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**How would you handle a situation where a student is consistently disruptive in class?**

**How to Answer:**

The interviewer wants to understand your classroom management skills. They are interested in your strategies for maintaining a respectful, organized, and productive learning environment. When answering this question, highlight your ability to identify the root cause of the behavior, your approach to addressing it, your communication with the student, and any disciplinary measures you would take if necessary.

**Example:**

If I had a consistently disruptive student, I would first try to understand the cause of their behavior. I would observe their interactions and speak with them privately to get more insight. I believe that every behavior is a form of communication. I would let the student know that their behavior is disruptive and ask if there's anything they're struggling with. If the disruptive behavior continues, I would follow the school's disciplinary procedures, and ensure the student understands the consequences of their actions. I would also communicate with the student's parents and work together with them to address the issue.

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**Can you share an instance where you had to interact with a difficult parent? How did you handle the situation?**

**How to Answer:**

This question seeks to understand your communication and dispute resolution skills. When answering,



provide a specific example and outline the steps you took to resolve the issue. Show that you remained professional, empathetic and focused on the student's best interest throughout the interaction. It's also important to highlight your ability to build trust and maintain positive relationships with parents.

**Example:**

In one instance, I had a parent who was unhappy about their child's grades and blamed it on my teaching approach. I remained calm and patient, listening to their concerns without interruption. I then explained my teaching methods and reassured the parent that I always aim to bring out the best in each student. I offered to provide extra help for the child after school and suggested some resources that the parent could use at home. By the end of the conversation, the parent seemed more at ease and thanked me for my dedication.

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**As a substitute teacher, how do you approach maintaining the routine and structure of the regular teacher while still bringing your own style to the classroom?**

**How to Answer:**

Answer this question by first acknowledging the importance of maintaining the routine and structure set by the regular teacher. This not only ensures continuity in the students' learnings but also helps maintain discipline. Then, discuss how you can incorporate your own style into the teaching. This could be through new teaching techniques, use of technology or simply your approach to classroom management. It is important to strike a balance between maintaining the regular teacher's routine and introducing your own style.

**Example:**

I believe it's crucial to respect and maintain the regular teacher's routine to ensure a sense of familiarity and continuity for the students. I study the lesson plans thoroughly and try to stick to them as much as possible. However, I also believe that every teacher has a unique teaching style and it's important to incorporate that into the classroom as well. For instance, I like to use interactive activities to make the lessons more engaging. So, while I stick to the prescribed lesson plan, I might incorporate a group activity or a short quiz to reinforce the lesson and keep the students engaged.

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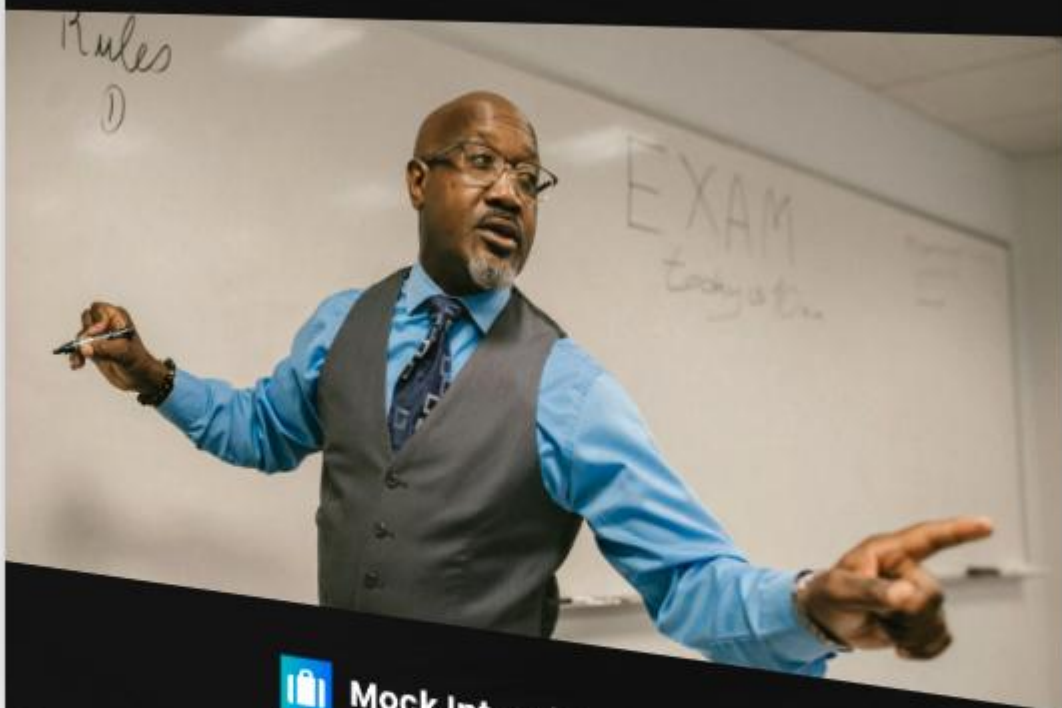
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## How do you maintain student engagement in a lesson when you're not their regular teacher?

### How to Answer:

The interviewer is looking to understand your strategies for managing classroom dynamics and keeping students engaged, especially when you're not their regular teacher. Talk about your methods for grabbing attention, sustaining interest, and ensuring learning outcomes. You may want to mention techniques like interactive activities, real-life applications of lessons, positive reinforcement, clear communication and setting expectations from the start.

### Example:

To maintain student engagement, I believe it's important to first establish a rapport with the students. I introduce myself and engage in a brief discussion to understand their interests. I use interactive teaching methods and real-life examples to make lessons interesting. For instance, if I am teaching math, I might use examples like shopping budgets or sports statistics to make it relatable. I also use positive reinforcement to motivate students. If a student is doing well, I acknowledge their efforts in front of the class to encourage others. Lastly, I set expectations at the start of the class about the lesson plan and the behavior expected from students. This way, they know what to expect and can be mentally prepared for the class.

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## How would you handle the situation if you are unable to answer a student's question?

### How to Answer:

The interviewer is looking to see if you can handle situations where you don't have all the answers. It's



important to show that you're not afraid to admit when you're unsure, but also that you'll take steps to find the correct information. You can discuss using resources at your disposal, such as textbooks or the internet, or seeking help from colleagues. It's also important to emphasize that you would make sure to follow up with the student to provide them the answer later.

**Example:**

If I was unable to answer a student's question, I would first admit that I'm unsure about the answer. I believe it's important for students to see that teachers are also continuous learners and don't know everything. I would then use resources available to me to find the answer, such as textbooks or online resources. Alternatively, I might ask a colleague for assistance. Regardless, I'd make sure to follow up with the student later to provide them with the correct answer or an explanation, ensuring they don't feel ignored or left in the dark.

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**What strategies would you use to establish a positive relationship with students who have seen you for the first time in their classroom?**

**How to Answer:**

In answering this question, a candidate should highlight their interpersonal skills and emotional intelligence. They could talk about how they would introduce themselves to the students, how they would set clear expectations and ground rules, and how they would show respect and empathy towards the students. They could also mention how they would use engaging teaching methods to win the students' interest and trust.

**Example:**

When I enter a new classroom, I first introduce myself and share a little about my background and interests. This helps to humanize me in the eyes of the students. I then set clear expectations for behavior and classwork. But I also make sure to listen to the students and show understanding and empathy towards their needs and concerns. I believe in creating a positive and inclusive classroom environment where every student feels valued and respected. I also try to use engaging teaching methods, like interactive activities and multimedia resources, to make learning fun and interesting. This helps to win the students' interest and trust.

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**What steps would you take to fill the role of the regular teacher effectively?**

**How to Answer:**

Discuss your process of familiarizing yourself with the regular teacher's lesson plans, teaching style, and classroom rules. Mention how you would strive to maintain continuity for the students while also bringing your unique approach to keep students engaged. Don't forget to mention your ability to communicate effectively with the regular teacher to understand any ongoing projects or specific



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student needs.

**Example:**

Before stepping into the classroom, I would thoroughly review the lesson plans provided by the regular teacher and familiarize myself with their teaching style by asking them or the school administration. I would also ensure I understand the classroom rules and ongoing projects. Once in the classroom, I would strive to maintain the same environment to provide continuity to the students. However, I would also try to bring my unique approach to teaching to keep students engaged. If any questions or concerns arise, I would not hesitate to communicate with the regular teacher or the school administration to ensure I am meeting the students' needs effectively.

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**What methods would you use to manage a class where you don't have established authority?**

**How to Answer:**

When answering this question, make sure to emphasize your ability to quickly establish rapport with students, maintain discipline, and create a positive learning environment. You can do this by providing examples of your past experiences where you successfully managed a class under similar circumstances.

**Example:**

In the past, I've found that setting clear expectations at the start of the class works well in managing a class where I don't have established authority. I introduce myself, give a brief overview of my background in teaching, and explain what they can expect from me as their substitute teacher. I make sure to maintain the rules and routines the regular teacher has established, but I also incorporate my own techniques for maintaining discipline. For example, I use positive reinforcement to encourage good behavior. I believe in treating students with respect and fairness, which I've found helps to quickly establish rapport and authority.

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**How would you ensure that you are effectively communicating with the regular teacher to ensure continuity in the students' learning?**

**How to Answer:**

The interviewer is looking to see if you understand the importance of communication and collaboration in the role of a substitute teacher. They want to know if you have strategies for keeping the regular teacher informed about what happens in the classroom during their absence. Hence, in your response, illustrate your ability to effectively communicate and collaborate with your colleagues. You might talk about specific tools or methods you've used in the past, or how you might approach this in a new





setting.

**Example:**

Communication is key in ensuring continuity in students' learning. I would ensure effective communication with the regular teacher by maintaining a daily log of the activities and lessons covered, along with any significant incidents, student progress or behavioral issues. I would also make sure to consult with the regular teacher beforehand, if possible, to understand their expectations and lesson plans. I would use email or a shared digital platform for regular updates, and also be open to meetings or phone calls if required. In my previous role, I found this open line of communication to be extremely beneficial in maintaining consistency and ensuring a smooth transition for both the teacher and students.

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