

10-Minute YC Interview Drill

The 10 most-asked questions, the trap behind each, and a script · ycplaybook.xyz

1. What does your company do?

Why asked: First question, every interview. Tests clarity under pressure.

How to answer: One sentence. No buzzwords. 'We make X for Y so they can Z.' Practice 50x.

Trap: If you ramble for 30 sec, the rest of the interview is uphill.

2. Why is now the right time?

Why asked: Tests market timing understanding vs. trend chasing.

How to answer: Pick 2-3 specific shifts (regulation / cost curve / consumer behavior) that unlock this NOW.

Trap: 'AI is hot' is not an answer. Be specific about the last 18 months.

3. Who's your competition? Why will you win?

Why asked: Tests how seriously you take the market.

How to answer: Name 3 real competitors. Pick ONE specific wedge: distribution, vertical depth, founder edge.

Trap: 'We have no competition' = rejection. Always.

4. Why you? Why this team?

Why asked: YC bets on people > ideas. Want a reason this team outlasts the rough patches.

How to answer: Concrete story: how you met, what you've shipped together, why you for this market.

Trap: Don't list resumes. They want chemistry and grit, not credentials.

5. What's your growth?

Why asked: If post-launch, this IS the question. Numbers don't lie.

How to answer: WoW growth %, MRR/active users, retention. Brutally honest. If bad, have a real diagnosis.

Trap: Inflating numbers is suicide. They check refs.

6. What have you learned from your users?

Why asked: Tests whether you actually talk to them.

How to answer: Specific recent stories: 'Last week customer said X, shipped Y Tuesday, now Z.'

Trap: Generic 'users love it' = you don't talk to users.

7. How big can this be?

Why asked: They need to believe a path exists to \$1B+.

How to answer: Bottom-up TAM: 'X users × \$Y price.' Not 'the market is \$Z trillion.'

Trap: Top-down market slides feel lazy.

8. What would you do with the money?

Why asked: Tests whether you have a 6-month plan.

How to answer: Specifics: '2 engineers + 9 mo runway + \$20k/mo paid acquisition tests.'

Trap: 'Hire a marketing team' = wrong stage.

9. What's the hardest part of this business?

Why asked: Tests self-awareness.

How to answer: Pick the real hard thing. Show you have a plan.

Trap: 'Nothing, we got it' = arrogance flag.

10. If we don't fund you, what will you do?

Why asked: Tests commitment.

How to answer: 'Keep building. Bootstrap from revenue or raise from angels.'

Trap: 'Probably go back to our jobs' = instant rejection.

Interview Day Logistics

- 10 minutes. Hard cap. They will cut you off.
- 2-3 partners in the room. One leads, others probe.
- Decisions same day, sometimes within 1 hour.
- Wear what you'd wear coding. Don't dress up.
- Bring a laptop with the live product loaded. Demos > slides.