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windows server interview questions and answers

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Windows Server Interview Questions and Answers

In today's enterprise environment, Windows Server remains a cornerstone for many organizations. Whether you're a seasoned system administrator or a fresh graduate looking to break into the field, interviewers often test your knowledge on a broad spectrum of Windows Server topics. From core concepts and installation to advanced troubleshooting, security, and automation, a comprehensive understanding of Windows Server is essential.

This article compiles a curated list of the most common Windows Server interview questions, grouped by topic. Each question is followed by a concise, yet thorough answer that not only demonstrates your technical proficiency but also showcases your ability to communicate complex ideas clearly.

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Basic Windows Server Concepts

What is Windows Server and what are its primary functions?

Windows Server is Microsoft's operating system designed for networked computing environments. It provides a platform for hosting services such as:

- File and print sharing
- Web, mail, and application hosting
- Active Directory for authentication and authorization
- Virtualization via Hyper V
- Security management and compliance controls
- Backup and disaster recovery solutions

Its core architecture is based on the NT kernel, offering high scalability, security, and integration with other Microsoft products.

Explain the difference between a domain controller and a global catalog.

A **domain controller**is a server that authenticates users, enforces security policies, and stores the Active

Directory database for a specific domain. It processes authentication requests, issues tickets, and replicates data to other domain controllers.

A **global catalog** is a read only copy of selected attributes from every object in the forest. It enables users to locate objects across all domains quickly, which is essential for logon processes and directory queries. In Windows Server, a domain controller can also act as a global catalog if the Global Catalog option is enabled.

What are the main editions of Windows Server 2022?

Windows Server 2022 is available in the following editions:

1. Standard – Ideal for small to medium environments with minimal virtualization needs.
2. Datacenter – Designed for highly virtualized or hyper converged data centers; unlimited virtualization rights.
3. Essentials – Targeted at small businesses with up to 25 users and 50 devices; simplified management.

How does Windows Server 2022 improve security over previous versions?

Key security enhancements include:

- Secured-core server – Hardware-based isolation, firmware protection, and secure boot.
- Enhanced Windows Defender – Advanced threat protection integrated with Microsoft Defender for Endpoint.
- TLS 1.3 support – Modern encryption for secure communications.
- Improved credential guard – Protects against credential theft.
- Shielded virtual machines – Protects VMs from compromised hosts.

Installation & Deployment

What are the prerequisites for installing Windows Server 2022?

Before installation, ensure:

- Supported hardware: 64 bit CPU, at least 4 /GB RAM (8 /GB recommended), and 32 /GB storage.
- Bootable media: USB or ISO image.
- Network connectivity for activation and updates.
- Valid product key or a license via Azure or Microsoft Store.

Explain the steps to perform a clean installation of Windows Server 2022.

1. Insert the installation media and boot the server.
2. Select language, time, and keyboard preferences.
3. Click Install now and enter the product key.
4. Accept the license terms.
5. Choose Custom: Install Windows only (advanced) to perform a clean install.
6. Select the target disk, delete any existing partitions, and create new ones.
7. Proceed with the installation; the system will reboot twice.
8. Configure the initial server settings: hostname, domain membership, and admin password.
9. Install updates via Windows Update or WSUS.

What is the role of the Server Manager during deployment?

The Server Manager provides a centralized console for:

- Installing and configuring roles and features.
- Monitoring server health and performance.
- Managing updates and security settings.
- Deploying and managing Hyper V hosts.

How do you convert a physical server to a virtual machine?

Use the **Microsoft Virtual Machine Converter (MVMC)** or the newer **Windows Server Migration Tools**. The process typically involves:

1. Installing the migration tool on the source server.
2. Exporting the server as a virtual hard disk (VHDX).
3. Importing the VHDX into Hyper V or another hypervisor.
4. Reconfiguring network adapters and verifying functionality.

Core Services & Roles

What are the essential roles for a file server?

Key roles include:

- File Services – Enables file sharing and storage management.
- DFS Namespace – Provides a unified namespace across multiple servers.
- DFS Replication – Synchronizes file shares between servers.
- Remote Storage – Allows users to store files on a remote server.

Describe how to set up a domain controller.

1. Open Server Manager and select Add Roles and Features.
2. Choose Active Directory Domain Services and complete the wizard.
3. After installation, click Promote this server to a domain controller.
4. Specify the domain name, forest functional level, and DNS options.
5. Set the Directory Services Restore Mode (DSRM) password.
6. Review and apply settings; the server will reboot.

What is the purpose of the DHCP role?

The DHCP role automatically assigns IP addresses and network configuration settings to clients. It reduces manual configuration, prevents IP conflicts, and supports dynamic DNS updates.

Explain how to configure the DNS role for a Windows Server domain.

1. Install the DNS Server role via Server Manager.
2. Create a new forward lookup zone matching your domain name.
3. Enable Dynamic updates and set the security settings.
4. Configure Conditional Forwarders for external domains.
5. Verify resolution using nslookup from a client.

What are the benefits of using the Web Server (IIS) role?

Benefits include:

- Scalable web hosting with support for HTTP/2, WebSockets, and SSL/TLS.
- Integrated authentication and authorization features.
- Extensive modules for logging, compression, and caching.
- Compatibility with ASP.NET, PHP, and Node.js via FastCGI.

Security & Hardening

What is the principle of least privilege and how is it applied in Windows Server?

The principle of least privilege dictates that users and services should receive only the minimum permissions

necessary to perform their tasks. In Windows Server, this is enforced through:

- Role based access control (RBAC) via Group Policy.
- Local Security Policy settings.
- Fine grained password policies and account lockout thresholds.

Describe how to enable BitLocker on a Windows Server.

1. Open the Control Panel and navigate to BitLocker Drive Encryption.
2. Select the drive to encrypt and click Turn on BitLocker.
3. Choose a recovery method: USB key, password, or TPM.
4. Set the encryption mode (XTS-AES for fixed drives).
5. Start the encryption process; the server may reboot.

What is Credential Guard and how does it protect a server?

Credential Guard uses virtualization-based security to isolate the LSASS process and protect credentials from theft. It ensures that even if an attacker gains administrative privileges, they cannot extract passwords or Kerberos tickets from memory.

How do you configure Windows Defender Antivirus on a server?

1. Open Windows Security via the Start menu.
2. Navigate to Virus & threat protection.
3. Enable real time protection, cloud delivered protection, and automatic sample submission.
4. Set exclusions for system directories and critical applications.
5. Schedule regular scans and configure alerting via Group Policy.

Explain the steps to set up a firewall rule for a custom TCP port.

1. Open Windows Defender Firewall with Advanced Security.
2. Select Inbound Rules and click New Rule….
3. Choose Port and click Next.
4. Select TCP and enter the custom port number.
5. Allow the connection, then specify the profile (Domain, Private, Public).
6. Name the rule and finish.

Active Directory & Group Policy

What is the difference between a forest and a domain?

A **forest** is the top-level container in Active Directory, representing the entire security boundary and shared schema. A **domain**is a logical group of objects (users, computers, groups) that share a common directory database and security policies. Multiple domains can reside within a single forest.

How do you create a new OU and move an object into it?

1. Open Active Directory Users and Computers.
2. Right click the domain, choose New !’ Organizational Unit, and name it.
3. Select the object to move, right click, and choose Move.
4. Browse to the target OU and confirm.

Explain Group Policy inheritance and blocking.

Group Policy objects (GPOs) are applied hierarchically: from the domain root down to sites, domains, and OUs. Inheritance allows child OUs to receive policies from parent OUs automatically. To block inheritance, right click an

OU, choose **Block Inheritance**. However, this does not prevent GPOs linked directly to the OU from applying.

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