Sample Questions & Answers Based On Employer Research

Using Information in Answering Questions
Most of the questions you will be asked will not relate directly to the information in the literature. There are ways, however, to show how your skills and background meet the employer's needs using the information you gain. Some examples:

Question: "Why do you think you might want to work for this company?"
Response: "As I understand the job, there's plenty of opportunity to be involved in both the planning of marketing strategies and the actual selling. Besides using my communication skills and knowledge of chemicals in direct selling, I believe I'm creative when it comes to marketing."

Question: "I see you're involved with the Spanish Club. What were some of the benefits from that experience?"
Response: "As secretary, I was responsible for organizing a display on Spanish literature for the Cultural Fair we sponsored. Most of my correspondence with publishing houses was done in Spanish and I feel this experience added a whole new business angle to my fluency. I would feel very confident communicating with your international customers."

Question: "What courses did you like best?"
Response: "I enjoyed my Sociology of Learning class the most. During one in a series of field trips, I observed a rural daycare center. That confirmed for me that this type of setting is where I want to begin my career."

Using Information in Asking Questions
Next, it will be your turn to ask questions of the interviewer. It is to your advantage to ask questions which require the interviewer to expand on information you have learned from the employer's literature. Following are some excerpts from employer literature (in bold print), paired with questions that could be formulated from the information given.

[Excerpt] "After about 12-15 months from the time you began, if you've demonstrated your ability, you'll be ready for promotion to Merchandising Manager. Your increased responsibility will include a larger sales volume and a number of sales associates reporting to you."

Questions Formulated
- "Could you talk about some methods by which trainees are evaluated?"
- "What kinds of communication channels are there between the trainee and the supervisors?"
- "What would you say is the major quality or accomplishment which distinguishes those who are promoted from those who are not?"

[Excerpt] "Today's large store manager usually has gained experience in district or regional staff work."

Questions Formulated
- "In viewing some of the background that your large store managers have, regional staff work is mentioned. Could you describe some of the responsibilities of staff work?"

[Excerpt] "But that's still not the point. From the start, ABC Company has had a goal - a vision, if you will - of being the leader in communications. That's why we are into education and publishing and microfilm, among other things."

Questions Formulated
• "When the company looks to the future, it appears from the brochure that education, publishing and digital modeling are some key areas. What are some of the product areas now that might be less important in the future - which the company may be cutting back?"

[Excerpt] "Sales can mean...The opportunity to receive personal recognition and generous financial rewards based totally on the results of your day-to-day efforts, the chance to be creative and resourceful, stimulating exposure to a wide variety of people and market environments."

Questions Formulated
• "What are some examples of how employees are personally rewarded in a large, complex company like ABC?"
• "Could you give an example of a situation where the sales-person would be able to show initiative and creativity when serving a client?"

Examples of Poor Questions
• "Tell me about your training program." (Too general - shows you didn't do your homework.)
• "At what salary level would I be if I progress to Step 3 in my second year with the company?" (Shows your concern is money as opposed to responsibility.)
• "Could you explain your fringe benefits package?" (Standard, boring question - need to be more specific and ask about various aspects.)
• "I noticed that on the second half of last year, your dividends dropped 2 points - was that due to your plants closing in Virginia or just the general economy?" (Sounds like you are showing off and the question is a bit technical for most interviewers. A better related question would be: "Could you discuss a few of the problems - or related issues with the plant that closed in Charlottesville?")