Questions to ask when interviewing a CPA to do your taxes:

* Do they have an active CPA license for the state you are in? How long have they been a CPA? Ideally, you would want someone who has been one for at least 3 years.
* Confirm they (or another CPA in the firm) will be signing the return.
* Do they have experience doing taxes for other people in the same industry as you? This isn’t a deal breaker, but it can be more beneficial for you if they have expertise in your industry.
* How many years have you been doing taxes? How many years have you had your business? Look for someone with at least 5 years of tax experience.
* Get details on how they determine their rates. They should be able to give you a price range for your return within $100-$150 of the expected price. Ask if the fee’s include tax advice throughout the year. If not, what are their fees for tax advice?
* Are you cloud based or paper based? This may or may not be a deal breaker for you…if you prefer to not have to go into the office to give them documents, make sure they are cloud based AND have a secure method for uploading. NEVER work with someone that sends your personal information over unsecured (non-password protected) email.
* Ask what happens if you get audited…what fees do they charge?
* If there is an error on the return due to the preparer’s negligence, do they cover any additional penalties/interest assessed on additional tax due? (note that they will and should never be responsible for additional tax due, as the tax would have been due whether it was paid at original filing or at time of assessment).
* What is your typical turnaround time for tax preparation? Do you provide status updates? This is nice to know but shouldn’t be a deal breaker. CPAs are super busy. At the least, they should return messages within a reasonable amount of time (24-48 hours) if you call to check on the return status.
* What do they expect from you each year? This helps set expectations.
* Do you outsource your work? If so, to whom? This is important because some are outsourcing to other countries. It’s up to you if you are comfortable with this. If so, be sure to ask about how secure everything is and how the process works. If you are not comfortable with this, move on to a different CPA.
* What are your deadlines for getting tax documents to them so as to not have to file an extension.
* Do they prefer to communicate by phone/text/email? Not a deal breaker, but ideally, they communicate the same way you prefer to be communicated with.
* Do they automatically file extensions on your behalf each year, or do you need to call and request one? Is there a fee for them to file an extension?
* Why should you use them? What sets them apart from other CPA’s/tax preparers?
* Who will you be interacting with? Them directly, other staff members? If other staff members, tell me a little more about them and their experience.