



SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

"What is your greatest strength?" may seem like one of the easier [job interview questions](#) you'll be asked, but it is also one of the most important. The interviewer wants to know if your strengths align with the needs of the company and the qualifications for the job for which you're applying. Asking this question helps the employer decide whether or not you are the strongest applicant for the position.

When you are asked questions about [your strengths](#), it's important to discuss attributes that will qualify you for the specific job and set you apart from the other candidates. It's also critical to show the interviewer that you have the qualities the employer is seeking in the applicant that they are going to hire.

How to Answer Interview Questions About Your Greatest Strength

How should you answer questions about your strengths? The best way to respond is to describe the [skills](#) and experience that you have which directly correlates with the job you are applying for. Be prepared to answer by [making a list of the qualifications](#) mentioned [in the job posting](#).

Then, make a list of your skills that match those listed. This list can include education or training, soft skills, hard skills, or past work experiences. Narrow your list of skills down to 3 - 5 particularly strong skills.

Next to each skill, note an example of how you have used that strength in the past.

This will prepare you for when the employer asks you to elaborate on a particular strength. When you answer, you will be sharing strengths that match the qualifications the company is seeking. Also incorporate these [power words that help make a good impression](#) into your responses.

The closer a match you are to the stated job qualifications, the more likely you'll be to get a job offer.

Examples of the Best Answers

Review these examples of answers, and tailor your responses to your credentials and the job requirements of the position.

- I have an extremely strong work ethic. When I'm working on a project, I don't want just to meet deadlines. Rather, I prefer to complete the project well ahead of schedule. Last year, I even earned a bonus for completing my three most recent reports one week ahead of time.
- I have extremely strong writing skills. Having worked as a copy editor for five years, I have a strong attention to detail when it comes to my writing. I have also written for a variety of publications, so I know how to shape my writing style to fit the task and audience. As a marketing assistant, I will be able to effectively write and edit press releases and update web content with accuracy and ease.
- I am a skilled salesman with over ten years of experience. I have exceeded my sales goals every quarter and I've earned a bonus each year since I started with my current employer.
- I pride myself on my customer service skills and my ability to resolve what could be difficult situations. With five years of experience as a customer service associate, I have learned to effectively understand and resolve customer issues. On a related note, I also have strong communication skills, which help me work well with customers, team members, and executives. I am known for being an effective team member with a talent for giving presentations.

Answers to Avoid

This is not the time to be humble. While you do not want to exaggerate your strengths, you should be comfortable articulating what makes you an ideal candidate. Creating a list of your strengths (as they relate to the job) will help you answer this question with confidence.

On the other hand, you do not want to answer this question with a laundry list of vague strengths. Stay focused on a couple key strengths that relate directly to the position and the company. A focused, relevant answer with one or two examples will impress your interviewer.

What's the best way to talk about weaknesses at job interviews? It's important to respond carefully because you don't want the hiring manager to think that you're not going to be able to do the job. There are several different ways to answer when you're asked during a job interview what your greatest weakness is. You can mention skills that aren't critical for the job, discuss skills you have improved on, or turn a negative into a positive.

How to Answer What Is Your Greatest Weakness

Even though the question is about weaknesses, your answer should always be framed around positive aspects of your skills and abilities as an employee.

Discuss Non-Essential Skills

One approach to answering this question is to analyze the [key skills](#) and strengths [required for the position](#) you are interviewing for and then come up with an honest shortcoming which is not essential for success in that job.

For example, if you are applying for a nursing job, you might share that you are not particularly adept at conducting group presentations. In this case, it will be critical to underscore your strength in one-on-one communication with patients while providing an example of your difficulty with presentations to large groups.

Mention Skills You Have Improved

Another option is to discuss skills that you have improved upon during your previous job, so you are showing the interviewer that you can make improvements when necessary.

You can sketch for employers your initial level of functioning, discuss the steps you have taken to improve this area, and then reference your current, improved level of skill.

If you use this strategy be sure not to mention anything that you improved upon that is related to the job for which you are interviewing.

Turn a Negative Into a Positive

Another option is to turn a negative into a positive. For example, a sense of urgency to get projects completed or wanting to triple-check every item in a spreadsheet can be turned into a strength, i.e., you are a candidate who will make sure that the project is done on time and your work will be close to perfect.

Examples of the Best Answers

Note that the term "weakness" isn't used in the sample answers — you always want to focus on the positive when interviewing.

- When I'm working on a project, I don't want just to meet deadlines. Rather, I prefer to complete the project well ahead of schedule.
- Being organized wasn't my strongest point, but I implemented a time management system that helped my organization skills.
- I like to make sure that my work is perfect, so I tend to perhaps spend a little too much time checking it. However, I've come to a good balance by setting up a system to ensure everything is done the first time correctly.
- I used to wait until the last minute to set appointments for the coming week, but I realized that scheduling in advance makes much more sense.
- Sometimes, I spend more time than necessary on a task or take on tasks personally that could easily be delegated to someone else. Although I've never missed a deadline, it is still an effort for me to know when to move on to the next task, and to be confident when assigning others work.
- I had difficulty with calculus during college, but I persevered with tutoring assistance and extra effort and completed two levels with a B-minus average.
- I used to like to work on one project to its completion before starting on another, but I've learned to work on many projects at the same time, and I think it allows me to be more creative and effective in each one.
- I've learned to make my perfectionism work to my advantage. I have become proficient at meeting deadlines, and with my attention to detail, I know my work is accurate.
- As an undergrad, I used to leave assignments until the last minute, but with the workload of graduate school, I learned to schedule my time very effectively.

Interviewers will sometimes start an interview with an [open-ended question](#) like "Tell me about yourself." It's a way to break the ice and make you feel more comfortable during the interview process. It's also a way for the hiring manager to get insight into your personality to help determine if [you're a good fit for the job](#).

Sharing too much or too little information isn't a good idea. The interviewer doesn't want to know everything about you, but disclosing too little can make him or her wonder why you aren't more open.

How to Answer the Tell Me About Yourself Interview Question

Although it might be tempting to share a list of your most [compelling qualifications for the job](#) at hand, a more low-key approach will probably help you to develop a personal rapport with your interviewer.

Try starting out by sharing some personal interests which don't relate directly to your work. Examples might include a hobby which you are passionate about like quilting, astronomy, chess, choral singing, golf, skiing, tennis, or antiquing.

Interests like long distance running or yoga which help to represent your healthy, energetic side are worth mentioning. Pursuits like being an avid reader or solving crossword puzzles or [brain teasers](#) will help to showcase your intellectual leaning. Interests like golf, tennis, and gourmet food might have some value if you would be entertaining clients in your new job.

[Volunteer work](#) will demonstrate the seriousness of your character and commitment to the welfare of your community.

Interactive roles like PTA volunteer, museum tour guide, fundraiser, or chair of a social club will help show your comfort with engaging others.

Transition to Professional from Personal

After sharing a few interesting personal aspects of your background, you can transition to sharing some [key professional skills](#) that would help you to add value if you were hired for your target job.

Consider using phrases like "In addition to those interests and passions, my professional life is a huge part of who I am, so I'd like to talk a bit about some of the [strengths](#) which I would bring to this job."

Share Your Expertise

Be ready to share three or four of the personal qualities, skills and/or areas of expertise which would help you to excel in the job for which you are interviewing. Ultimately, you will want to share several other strengths before the interview is over.

Make a list of your strengths before you go into the interview, so you know what you will share. Look at the job description and [match it with your skills](#). Then share the top few skills which make you an ideal candidate for the job.

However, be careful not to overwhelm the interviewer with too much information. After mentioning three or four strengths, you might mention that you have several other assets which you would like to discuss as the interview unfolds.

At first, you should only mention the asset and allude only briefly to some proof of how you have tapped it to your advantage. For example, you might say that you love to give presentations and that has helped you to generate lots of leads at sales dinners for prospective clients.

Later in the interview, you will want to be more specific and detailed in discussing situations, interventions and results flowing from your strengths.

Avoid Politics and Controversy

Typically, you would steer clear of controversial topics like politics or religion. It's important to avoid any references to topics that would cause concern about your ethics, character, productivity, or work ethic. You also don't need to share personal information about your family.

There is no need to discuss spouses, partners, children, or any other strictly personal information. Here are some of the things [you should never say during a job interview](#).

Why do you want this job? This is a [common interview question](#), so it is good idea to prepare your answer ahead of time.

When answering this question, you want to show that you have researched the company, and prove that you are a good fit for the job.

Read below for more advice on answering this question, and sample answers.

How to Answer the Question

- **Research the company ahead of time.** Interviewers will be listening for a response that shows you've done [research on the company](#). Make sure you know some basic information about both the company and the job. You might want to read some recent articles on the company to get a sense of their current goals and projects. Also be sure to reread the job posting. This way, when you answer the question, you can mention specific aspects of the company and position that appeal to you.
- **Be specific about why you are a good fit.** Be specific about what makes you a [good fit](#) for this role. To prepare your answer, make a list of the requirements of the job (as explained in the [job listing](#)), and then note which requirements fit your skills and experience. In your answer, highlight a few of your abilities that qualify you for the job.
- **Emphasize what you can contribute.** Your answer should also emphasize what you can contribute—what will you bring to the position? Mention any skills or work experience that makes you a unique, strong candidate for the job. If possible, use numbers to express how you can [add value](#) to the company. For example, if you saved your previous company a certain amount of money, mention this, and say that you want to do the same for this company.
- **Avoid reasons that focus on you.** Even if it's true, do not mention salary, hours, or commute as the primary reasons you want the job. Remember that you want to focus on how you can benefit the company, not how the company or job can benefit you.

Best Answers to the Question

Below are some of the best job interview answers to the question, "Why do you want this job?" Customize these answers to fit your particular circumstances and the job you are applying for.

- I want this job because it emphasizes sales and marketing, two of my greatest skill sets. In my previous job, I increased sales by 15% in what was at the time considered a flat industry. I know I could bring my ten years of sales and marketing experience to this company, and help you continue your years of growth.

- I understand that this is a company on the rise. As I've read on your website and in various press releases, you are planning to launch several new products in the coming months. I want to be a part of this business as it grows, and I know my experience in product development would help your company as you roll out these products.
- I have worked as a dental hygienist in a children's dental office for the past six years. Not only am I experienced working with this population, but also I greatly enjoy it. Being able to work for your office, which caters to children and young adults, would allow me to continue to put my skills to use in a population I love. This is the kind of work environment I would look forward to coming to every day.
- This job is a good fit for what I've been doing and enjoying throughout my career. It offers a mix of short-term projects and long-term goals. My organizational skills allow me to successfully multitask and complete both kinds of projects.
- I want this retail job at your store because I know I would be terrific at it. I love engaging with people and providing them with assistance. I also have two years of experience working cash registers at other stores. I am a regular customer of this store, so I would love to apply my skills to a store I believe in and support.
- I have admired this company's successful strategies and mission for years. Your emphasis on creating a relationship between your company and the surrounding community have brought you success everywhere you have opened an office. There are values I greatly admire.

When a hiring manager asks you, "Why should we hire you?" she is really asking, "What makes you the best fit for this position?" Your answer to this question should be a concise "sales pitch" that explains what you have to offer the employer.

Remember that employers hire workers to solve a problem, whether it's boosting sales or streamlining processes or building a brand. Your goal when making your pitch is to show that you're the best person to solve that problem.

How to Prepare to Answer Interview Questions About Why You Should Be Hired

When you're getting ready for the interview, take a moment to review the [job description](#). Make a list of the [requirements for the position](#), including personality traits, skills, and qualifications. Then, make a list of the qualities you have that fit these requirements.

For each quality, think of a specific time that you used that trait to achieve something at work. For example, if you list that you are a "team player," think of a time in which your ability to work well on a team resulted in a successfully completed project. (Here's [how to match your qualifications to a job](#).)

Don't forget to think beyond the job description and consider which of your [skills and accomplishments](#) make you a better candidate than the competition. For example, maybe you have an additional certification that makes you more knowledgeable about the company's product than the typical salesperson.

When you're honing your pitch, remember to be positive and to reiterate your interest in the company and the position.

Keep It Concise

You want your answer to be brief - no more than a minute or two long.

Therefore, select one or two specific qualities from the list you created to emphasize in your "sales pitch." Begin by explaining what you believe the employer is looking for, and how you fulfill that need.

Be prepared to adapt to new information, if the interviewer indicates that another quality or skill is more valuable to the organization.

Focus on Your Uniqueness

The interviewer wants to know how you stand out among the other applicants.

Therefore, focus on one or two qualities you possess that are different from what other interviewees might offer, or are more difficult to find in candidates generally. For example, if you are very experienced with a certain skill that the job requires, say so. This is your chance to tell the interviewer why you would be an invaluable employee.

6 Examples of the Best Answers

1. “I think that my experience in the (widget) industry and my ability to work autonomously make me a good match for this position.”
2. “I have the savvy, experience, and superior communication ability to be an asset to your company.”
3. “Your company provides many services that I have had experience with, in a variety of capacities. [Offer a few specific examples.] I believe that my familiarity with the industry would make me a good fit for this position.”
4. “You have explained that you are looking for a sales executive who is able to effectively manage over a dozen employees. In my 15 years of experience as a sales manager, I have developed strong motivational and team-building skills. I was twice awarded manager-of-the-year for my innovative strategies for motivating employees to meet and surpass quarterly deadlines. If hired, I will bring my leadership abilities and strategies for achieving profit gains to this position.”
5. “I have top-notch administrative skills and I believe I'd be an asset for the office. My skill set seems to be a perfect match for what you're looking for. In addition, I enjoy working with people, and would welcome the opportunity to be a part of your team.”
6. “You describe in the job listing that you are looking for a special education assistant teacher with an abundance of patience and compassion. Having served as a tutor at a summer school for dyslexic children for the past two years, I have developed my ability to be extremely patient while still achieving academic gains with my students. My experience teaching phonics to children ages 6 to 18 has taught me strategies for working with children of all ages and abilities, always with a smile. My previous employer often placed me with the students with the most severe learning disabilities because of my history of success. I will bring not only experience, but patience and creative problem-solving, to this position.”

Why Are You the Best Candidate?

A related question is "[Why should we hire you instead of the other applicants?](#)"

When answering this question, remember that the hiring manager is looking to solve a problem. Explain how you would do that better than anyone else, and you'll make a positive impression.

Another related question is "[Why shouldn't we hire you?](#)" Be prepared to answer that as well. Avoid falling into the trap of humble-bragging about your best traits ("You shouldn't hire me if you don't want someone who crushes her numbers, each and every quarter!") Instead, answer honestly and thoughtfully. For example, you might mention a quality that's a bonus in some jobs but not in others, e.g. "You shouldn't hire me if an extrovert would be a bad fit for your team. I value teamwork and relationships, and do my best work in a collaborative environment."

Asked well, this question can provide you with information about the [corporate culture](#) that will help you decide if you want the job – which is just as important as persuading the hiring manager that you're the best person for the role.