

How to Answer the Strength Question on an Interview





If there are two questions that happen on nearly every interview for every type of job, it's the strengths question and the weakness question. You know the ones...what's your biggest strength and what's your biggest weakness. While these questions are sure to trip you up if you haven't prepared, with a little thought ahead of time, you'll breeze through these questions.

Take Direction from the Job Posting

While you certainly want to answer the strengths question honestly, you probably have a few strengths that spring to mind. Why not pick the exact ones your future employer is looking for?

To do this, go through the job posting you applied to or the job description if you were given one. Most ads specifically list attributes the company is looking for. For instance, it might say "we are looking for hard-working individuals."

In that instance, you'll want to highlight your work ethic.

Give Examples

The key to really nailing the strengths question is to give examples. Let's stay with "work ethic" for a moment. If this is the attribute that resonated with you from the job posting, have one or two examples at the ready to bring color to your answer.

For instance, your answer might be: "My biggest strength is my work ethic. Not only do I want to get the job done, I want to get it done right. At my last job, people would leave right at 5:00. I always stayed to make sure all of the orders were done for the day before I left."

Be Prepared with Three Strengths

Sometimes, you'll find that a company will ask you for THREE strengths and weaknesses. If you haven't prepared for this, it can be intimidating and really throw you off your game. Always assume this is going to happen and have three strengths with examples prepared.

Worst case scenario, you'll be over-prepared. Again, take your cues from the job posting here. It's rare that the ad won't tell you exactly what you need to say!

The other advantage of having three strengths prepared in advance is that it allows you to change your answer based upon the conversation. If you planned on mentioning "work ethic" as your top strength, but the person interviewing you keeps talking about how they've been having trouble finding detail-oriented people, you'll be able to pivot your response if that is something that was mentioned in the job posting.

Write it Down

After you've come up with your three strengths and examples to go with them, write them down on a piece of paper or 3x5 card. Get to your interview a little bit early and spend time going through your answers in your head. No matter how much time you spent thinking about the strengths question, it's very likely you'll be nervous in your actual interview. By spending a few minutes before you walk into the interview reviewing your answers, you'll walk in confidently and greatly increase your chance at nailing down the job!