

How to Answer the Weakness Question on an Interview



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When you go on an interview, you can nearly count on being asked the infamous weakness question. You know the one. What is your biggest weakness? While it's usually easy to answer what your strengths are, the weakness question makes all of us argue with ourselves. Are we completely honest and admit to our worst of faults – potentially scaring away the employer? Do we try to make something up that really is a strength and try to pass it off as a weakness? We're going to get you ready to answer this question and pass with flying colors.

Be Prepared

The number one thing you can do to make sure you answer this question well is to know it's coming and think about it ahead of time. It seems simple, but oftentimes, people will just wing it. The key is to spend some time thinking about things you can do better and compare them to the job description. If the job is for a quality inspector, saying that you sometimes miss small details will not work in your favor.

Bonus points if you spend some time looking at the company's website. Many companies will list their corporate values on their site. Use this to guide you away from other weaknesses that may conflict with who they are as an organization.

It's helpful to write your answers down on either a 3×5 card or on your phone so you can review them just before you walk into your interview. Ideally, get to your interview about 20 minutes in advance. Spend 10 minutes going over your notes and then head into the building 10 minutes before your interview is about to begin.

Know Why it is Being Asked

Employers ask this question for a few reasons. They want to see how you think on your feet (ah, but you've taken our advice and prepared in advance!). They are hoping to gain an insight into who you are. You'd be shocked at how many people will answer the weakness question with an answer that will lose them the job – such as “I'm late for everything.” Those are words your future employer does NOT want to hear. They need to know you will make it to work on time every day.

Don't Try to Pass off a Strength as a Weakness

It's a rookie mistake and we've all done it, but do not be tempted to turn a strength into a weakness. For instance, every interviewer has heard something like “I am a workaholic.” When you try this strategy, you look dishonest and like you can't fully self-reflect and give an honest answer.

Explain How You Work on the Weakness

What your future employer really wants to know is that you are self-reflective and honest enough to share a real weakness and that you have a plan of attack to work on it. Here's an example. “When things get hectic, sometimes I will feel overwhelmed and not know what to work on next. What I've done to get myself through that is have a strong organizational system. When I feel myself getting stressed out, I will review my system and see what the most important thing to work on next is. If I can't work it through on my own, I'll consult with my supervisor to make sure I'm making the right choice. Doing those things always gets me back on track.”

As you can see, this is an honest answer that anyone can relate to. Who doesn't get stressed out when work gets busy? This answer to the weakness question is something that won't scare an employer off (like being late, missing details, etc.) and it shows that you're aware of it and have a plan in place to deal with it.

Spend some time thinking about your weakness and fit it into this format. You'll ace the weakness question the next time you're in an interview. Good luck!