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Good answers for what are your weaknesses

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A good answer shows that you're self-aware and able to critically analyse your skills. It also shows that you're willing to address your weaknesses and that you can remain calm under pressure. Read on to find out how you can tackle this tricky question and turn your greatest weaknesses into your greatest interview strength. Interviewers are looking to discover your weak points to see how you'll address them. Why Do Interviewers Like to Ask This Question? It does seem a little perverse. When candidates are doing their best to make a good impression, the interviewer asks them to talk themselves down. However, interviewers can gain a huge amount of insight from this simple question (or a variant of it). This question is popular primarily because of its effectiveness at getting the candidate to think deeply about themselves. More specifically, interviewers might want to ask this question: To assess your character and personality To gauge your level of self-awareness and ability to reflect on your skills and any gaps To check that you don't have any critical flaws that might affect your ability to perform in the role To see if you're willing to work on your weaknesses To test your ability to maintain composure under pressure Different Ways of Asking the Weaknesses Question While this question is often asked outright, it can also take a variety of forms. Make sure you know what the interviewer is really asking so you don't get caught out. Here are a few of the other ways it can be phrased: "What would your employer or colleagues describe as your biggest weakness?" "Which of your current tasks or duties do you find most challenging?" "Which of this role's tasks or duties would you struggle with the most?" "Have any difficulties or issues arisen in your current role?" "What is the biggest regret you'll have on leaving your present job?" "Is there any area of your skill set that you feel still needs work?" "Tell me about a time when you let your team down" While each of these questions (and many more) are all asking a similar question, you don't want to come across as robotic, like you've prepared this answer purely by rote. Understand that they're asking for your weaknesses but take note of how exactly they posed the question. Tailor your response accordingly and it will come across as off-the-cuff, confident and fluent. Being able to adapt to the questions you are being asked is an important interview skill. It not only demonstrates that you can deliver a good answer, but that you can think on your feet and have good communication skills. This is the million-dollar question – how do you pick a good weakness to talk about in your interview? The weaknesses you choose should ideally be: Not fundamental to the job. You probably won't get far if you're applying for an accounting job and your weakness is that you're awful with numbers. Relevant. You should choose a weakness relating to relevant professional competencies. Answering with something like "I just don't do enough exercise" sounds like you're dodging the question. Fixable. One of the most important parts of answering this question is to get across the idea that you actively work on your weaknesses. This means that your weakness needs to be something that you could feasibly improve through personal effort. It is useful at this stage to have a thorough look at the job description. Pick out all the key skills and requirements and make sure that the weakness you choose does not apply to any of them. One of the ways to choose a relevant weakness is to research the role thoroughly. Knowing what the employer is looking for is the best way to avoid pitfalls and turn the question to your advantage. For instance, if the position requires lots of teamwork and regular interaction with management, a good weakness to use might be that you find it difficult to stay motivated in roles where you feel isolated, or those in which you can't learn from those around you. That's still a genuine weakness, but it's one that's largely negated by the role you have applied for. It also gets across the implication that you like the way their company works and would feel motivated there. If the job involves thinking on your feet and using your initiative, your weakness could be that you become frustrated when you are expected to adhere to strict protocol at all times. This is still a plausible weakness and something that you can work on, but for this role, it could become a positive and suggests that you are well suited to the job. It's important that for each weakness you prepare to talk about, you have a relevant example ready to help you describe your weakness and demonstrate how you attempted to overcome it. Perhaps you've completed a relevant course or joined a class or group. You might be getting help from a mentor or advisor, or have found tools that help you to correct your weakness on your own. Finally, try to provide some concrete evidence of improvement. If leadership is your weakness, perhaps you have recently started managing someone and received positive feedback. Or if you have been improving your time management, describe how working more efficiently has impacted positively on a particular task or project. Is Overthinking a Weakness? Overthinking can be viewed as both a strength and a weakness: It is, therefore, not a strong answer to give when asked about your weaknesses at interview. In some respects, someone that overthinks can be perceived to be unsure of themselves and their decision-making. You may be delaying your decision-making because you are scared of facing the consequences of your decisions. This weakness could be particularly concerning to an interviewer so, if you really want to mention this at interview, make sure you show evidence of self-reflection and mention the steps you are taking to address this or how you have begun to use it to achieve a positive outcome. Overthinkers could also be seen as careful perfectionists that take the time to consider all aspects of a decision so they don't miss anything. This is not really a weakness, it may be seen by the interviewer to be a veiled attempt at presenting a positive as a negative. Some Sample Answers To help you prepare for your interview, here are a few example answers that demonstrate the points mentioned. Remember, the key is to select a weakness that isn't fundamental to your ability to perform the role and then to demonstrate that you're proactive about fixing that weakness. Example 1 You are applying for an analyst position, largely working with numbers and data: I don't have much experience working directly with clients so my client-facing communication skills definitely need some work. I'm much more comfortable digging deep into the data and providing the analysis, rather than talking it through with a client. However, I realise that experience working with clients directly would be a big help to the way I present my analysis so I'm very keen to improve that aspect. This is an answer that's honest and shows a good degree of critical self-reflection. It's a weakness that isn't critical to the role but the candidate recognises the ways that fixing their weakness would help them in the areas they're already strong in. This answer also manages to sneak in a strength (digging deep into data and providing analysis of it). Example 2 A more generic weakness that can be used for any role, with evidence of proactivity: At the beginning of my career, I found that I was overwhelmed with the level of work expected of me. Scheduling everything was a big issue for me and I dropped the ball on some projects because I wasn't able to give them my proper focus. However, I attended a number of time-management seminars and have found my workload much more manageable since then, and I'm continuing to work on it. Here, the candidate explains a weakness of theirs that could be a serious problem but immediately shows that they've already been taking significant steps towards fixing it and that they've made good progress so far. That comes across as genuine and shows that the candidate is proactive and self-reflective. A weakness that isn't critical and that is easily fixed: In the past, I've tended to want to complete one project in its entirety before moving onto another. Of course, that can cause problems in a busy workplace. I know that, in the future, I need to be more comfortable switching focus when it's needed. This is the acceptable version of the 'I'm just too much of a perfectionist' answer. It's a problem a lot of people can relate to as it's only natural that we want to see our work completed and followed through before switching focus. You'll probably have the interviewer agreeing with you. Again, though, it shows some self-reflection by recognising the issues that this approach can cause. Example 4 I would say that I can be too direct. When I'm giving feedback to colleagues I try to be very honest but I have learned that sometimes my comments come across as brusque. I do a debrief after each project and I realised that some team members felt I was being more critical than constructive, which wasn't my intention. I took part in a leadership course where we talked about the best ways to provide feedback and how we should tailor our communication style to different people and situations. I've been working on applying all that I've learned and last week a colleague came to thank me for some feedback on a recent presentation. He said my comments had been really valuable. The interviewee makes it clear that they were not being actively unpleasant to colleagues, but were aware that their communication skills needed work and this was creating some negative feeling at work. They took positive steps to improve those skills and offer a solid example of the progress they have made. Example 5 I get very nervous about addressing large groups. I'm comfortable speaking up in team meetings and will happily give presentations to my colleagues at work. But in a more formal setting or in front of a crowd of strangers I do struggle. I don't want this to hold me back, so I'm trying to build my confidence in public speaking. Someone suggested that acting classes might help so I've signed up for a course at my local college. And last month, I volunteered to give a presentation at a networking event I attend. There were about 50 people there and normally I would have been terrified at the thought of standing up in front of them. I was still nervous but I felt that the presentation went well. Actually, I ended up enjoying it." Many people can identify with a fear of public speaking. The interviewee makes sure that they are not too timid to speak up at work at all, which could be a concern. They show initiative in how they are tackling this weakness head-on and provide clear evidence that their efforts are paying off. Of course, any answer you give will need to be specific to both you and the role. Don't make something up - you'll come across as disingenuous and might not be able to handle any follow-up questions. The STAR Technique (2025) The STAR method is a fantastic approach for all interview questions. It's a technique you should be familiar with and practice. It's a way of structuring any example-based response you give that ensures all the key components are there. Situation. Give the context of the example. What was the company and the project? Who was the client? Were you working in a team? Task. Move into the specifics and describe your role in the project and what your goal was. Action. Describe the actions that you took towards your goal. This should be specifically about your contribution, not the team's. Result. Talk about the outcome of the actions you took. If you can, slip some numbers in here to make things more concrete. While this method would typically be used when talking about your positive traits and achievements (after all, that's mostly what you want to be doing in an interview), it's still useful when talking about your weaknesses. It helps keep your examples concise and engaging. The interviewer can easily follow your scenario from start to finish, getting all the important details along the way. You can read more about the STAR technique, including how to use it most effectively, and find some example answers in our dedicated article on the STAR technique.What Is Your Greatest Weakness?Always keep the STAR method in mind when describing your weaknesses in an interview. Answers to Avoid 'What are your weaknesses?' is a linefeed of a question and here are plenty of answers that really won't do. Learn what these answers are and what they have in common so you can be sure you never commit these interview sins: Giving a Weakness That Is Actually a Strength I'm just such a perfectionist. I don't like substandard effort so I make sure all my work is perfect. This might mean that I work too hard but it's worth it to me because it's so annoying finishing work that's less than perfect. This candidate shows no humility and – more importantly – no evidence of self-reflection. It will be clear to the interviewer that they are trying to dodge the question while at the same time over-selling themselves. Giving a Weakness That Reflects a Bad Attitude My weakness is that I just hate getting up in the morning. I snooze the alarm like ten times before finally dragging myself up. I look forward to the weekends so I can have a lie-in without worrying about getting up for work. Almost no-one likes getting up early in the morning. This is not a weakness that reveals anything about you professionally. Moaning about it won't earn you much sympathy, especially when it implies that you might be late to work when your penchant for snoozing gets the better of you. Furthermore, this answer shows no willingness or proactive drive to resolve the issue. Giving an Answer That Undermines Your Ability to Do the Job I'm not a great team player. I find it difficult to get along with people – I don't really like taking orders from my superiors and I respond badly to any negative feedback. Unless you're applying for a job where you will be working in almost total isolation, this kind of answer will ring some major alarm bells. While your answer should be honest, you do not want to reveal a weakness that would severely hinder your performance. Giving a Weakness That Has Little or No Bearing on Your Professional Competencies I'm scared of dogs. I got bitten by one as a child and now I can't stand being around them. Sometimes it makes it quite awkward when I have to meet someone who I know has a dog. Unless you're applying for a job working with animals, this weakness is just irrelevant. For the purposes of this question, save your childhood traumas for the therapist. It doesn't tell the interviewer anything and will either sound like you're oversharing (which could become awkward) or that you're dodging the question. Refusing to Answer the Question I don't really have any weaknesses, to be honest. In my last role, I performed really well and can't see where I could have improved. Everyone has weaknesses. Everyone. From the fresh graduate to the most experienced CEO. Giving this answer either paints you as dishonest or deluded, and neither of those are positive traits. It also displays a critical lack of self-reflection and can easily come across as arrogant. In addition, avoid very vague or general answers that don't give any relevant information. These will tell the interviewer that you can't think on your feet. If your answer isn't honest, doesn't reflect on your skills and your gaps, and doesn't demonstrate a willingness to improve, then it needs some work. Follow-Up Questions You've answered the question. Phew, that's that out of the way. Or is it? Don't get caught out by the follow-up question. There are many reasons why an employer might ask a follow-up question. It could be because your answer was particularly good and interesting, or it could be because it lacked something. Or they might want to see how you think on your feet under pressure. Here are a few examples of how the interviewer might follow up on your answer: "How Has That Weakness Set You Back in Previous Situations?" Here, they want a concrete example. This could be because your answer sounded more like a strength dressed up as a weakness or it could be because your weakness sounded a little vague. Regardless, they want to hear a definite example and a little more self-reflection on how your weakness has affected you. "That Sounds More Like a Positive. Give Me an Actual Weakness." You'll get a response like this if they think you are reluctant to talk about a real weakness. If it was a real weakness, consider how you worded it. Did you dress it up as a strength or severely undersell it? If so, consider clarifying your answer and explaining why it is a weakness – ideally with a specific example to back it up. Otherwise, this is the time to just be honest. Perhaps start by saying "Fair enough, you're right, this question is always hard to tackle in interviews" and then follow up with a candid answer that really does reflect a weakness. "If You Had to Pick Another Weakness, What Would It Be?" Your answer might have sounded too rehearsed and they want to see if you can think on your feet. This potential follow-up is the reason you need to prepare more than one weakness. If you get this follow-up and haven't prepared a second answer, you'd better be good at being spontaneous. Don't risk it. What If You Don't Know Your Weaknesses? If you're struggling to come up with any weaknesses, it's probably not because you're perfect. After all, who is? But it can certainly be tricky to think about your own weaknesses. Start by thinking back to your previous roles, projects, school or volunteer work. What did you struggle with? Perhaps you found it difficult to manage your time. Maybe you found leading a team more difficult than you expected. Maybe you don't understand how your client-facing colleagues come across so effectively. You might consider: Tasks or work-related skills that you find difficult or dislike Times you have failed or underperformed at work Any criticism you have received from supervisors Anything you have been told you need to work on Common areas that might be applicable include: If you find it tricky to assess your own personality, ask someone else to help. Try asking someone who knows you well (such as a friend or colleague) to be really honest about your areas of weakness. Make a list of all your possible weaknesses. Just put down everything, big or small. Then, assess each of them by the criteria above: Is this weakness fundamental to the role I'm applying for? Is it a relevant weakness? Am I taking steps to improve in that area? If a weakness passes each of those tests, then it should be a good one. Final Thoughts Questions along the lines of "What are your greatest weaknesses?" can be intimidating. However, they can be answered positively and even present you in a favourable light if you remember some key points. Your answer should show self-awareness and a willingness to address your weaknesses. Pick a weakness that is relevant, not crucial to the job and fixable. Demonstrate how you are working on effectively addressing the weakness. Practise the STAR method to structure an effective answer. Remember the interviewer may use different terms when posing this question – make sure you understand what they are really asking. Be prepared for follow-up questions. The interviewer might ask you to elaborate or describe further weaknesses. When preparing for a job interview, one of the most challenging questions you might face is "What is your greatest weakness?" While it can be tempting to give a clichéd answer or try to spin a positive trait as a weakness, interviewers are often looking for genuine and thoughtful responses that showcase self-awareness and a willingness to grow. Let's discover the perfect answer for your situation. Related: 50+ Best Examples: 'What Are Your Strengths and Weaknesses?' 5 Best Answers to 'What Areas Need Improvement?' 35 Best Answers to 'What Are Your Strengths?' Why Employers Ask About Your Greatest Weakness As a job candidate, you might wonder why employers ask about your greatest weakness. The purpose of this question is not to trip you up or embarrass you. Instead, the goal is to assess your self-awareness, honesty, and your ability to handle criticism. By sharing a genuine weakness, you demonstrate that you can honestly evaluate your own abilities and recognize areas for improvement. It also gives the employer an opportunity to see how you handle discussing an issue in your performance. They are interested in your problem-solving skills and if you have a plan to overcome the weakness. This question allows interviewers to learn more about your character, work ethic, and attitude towards professional growth. They want to make sure that you are well-suited to succeed in the role and within their organization. So when they ask about your greatest weakness, take it as an opportunity to display your self-improvement mindset and your commitment to learning from challenges that you've faced. Choose a genuine weakness that is relevant but not detrimental to the role Explain how you have recognized and acknowledged the weakness Describe the steps you have taken or plan to take to overcome it Always maintain a professional and positive tone throughout your response When discussing your weakness, it's important to strike a balance between being honest and avoiding oversharing or dwelling on the negative. By doing so, you'll show employers that you are both self-aware and proactive about addressing any issues that may impact your work. How to Choose Your 'Type of Weakness' When discussing your greatest weakness in an interview, it's important to be aware of the different types of weaknesses. This will help you choose one that is relevant and presents you in the best light. Let's take a look at three main types of weaknesses: Skill-Related weaknesses are areas where your skills could use some improvement. These can include both hard skills (e.g., computer software proficiency or foreign language fluency) and soft skills (e.g., time management or communication). To identify a skill-related weakness, think about the areas where you have room to grow and develop. Here are some skill-related weaknesses to consider: Time management Public speaking Data analysis Conflict resolution Personality Traits Personality traits are aspects of your personality that may affect your ability to succeed in certain situations. These traits are often ingrained in your character but can be worked on and improved through self-reflection and personal development efforts. Some personality trait weaknesses include: Impatience Indecisiveness Timidity Lack of tactfulness Experience or Knowledge Gaps Experience or knowledge gaps occur when there are areas in your professional history or knowledge base where additional exposure, training, or education would be helpful. These weaknesses typically reflect a lack of experience rather than an inherent flaw. Experience or knowledge gaps include: Limited experience with a specific software tool Knowledge gaps in a particular industry Lack of experience working with certain types of clients Unfamiliarity with specific industry regulations So, how to choose your type of weakness for the answer? 8 Examples: Confidently Explain Employment Gaps on Your Resume Consider focusing on one of those types of weaknesses that you're actively working to improve. Examples of Answers by Type of Weakness Answers for Skill-Related Weaknesses If your weakness is skill-based, make sure to emphasize how you're actively working to improve. Here are some examples: Time management: "I've struggled with time management in the past but have been using productivity tools and setting deadlines to help prioritize my tasks." Data analysis: "I'm not as proficient in data analysis as I'd like to be, so I've enrolled in an online course to strengthen my abilities." Public speaking: "Public speaking has always been challenging for me, so I joined a local Toastmasters club to practice and improve." Answers for Personality Traits Weaknesses When addressing a personality trait as a weakness, show how you're aware of it and working to change. Here are some examples: Impatience: "I can be impatient at times, but I've been working on taking a step back and giving others the time they need to complete tasks." Perfectionism: "I tend to be a bit too detail-oriented, striving for perfection in everything I do. I've been learning to prioritize tasks and focus on what's most important." Assertiveness: "I sometimes struggle with assertiveness, so I've been practicing speaking up and expressing my opinions more often to build confidence." Answers for Experience or Knowledge Gaps Weaknesses If you're lacking experience or knowledge in a particular area, mention that you're eager to learn and grow. Here are some examples: Industry experience: "While I don't have direct experience in this industry yet, I'm eager to learn and apply my skills to make an impact on your team." Software familiarity: "I'm not as familiar with [specific software] as I would like to be, but I'm confident in my ability to quickly learn and adapt to new programs." Certifications: "I haven't yet earned the [specific certification] required for this role, but I'm actively working towards obtaining it." Honesty is the best policy when discussing your weaknesses, but always stay focused on the steps you're taking to turn them into strengths. How to Answer 'What Is Your Greatest Weakness?': Best Answers with Explanations Acknowledge the weakness and explain how you are working to improve it. For example, "I sometimes struggle with time management, but I have been working on creating a schedule and prioritizing tasks to improve my efficiency." Spin a weakness into a positive attribute. For example, "I tend to be a bit of a perfectionist, which can sometimes slow down my work, but it also means that I am very detail-oriented and produce high-quality work." Show how you have learned from a past mistake. For example, "In the past, I have struggled with delegation, but I have learned that it is important to trust and empower team members to achieve better results." Discuss a weakness that is not directly related to the job, but still relevant to the workplace. For example, "I am not very comfortable with public speaking, but I have been taking classes and attending workshops to improve my communication skills." Be honest and show a willingness to learn and grow. For example, "I am not very experienced with a particular software program, but I am excited to learn and have been studying tutorials and taking online courses to improve my skills." Talk about a weakness that is not essential to the job. For example, "I sometimes struggle with remembering names, but I have been working on using memory techniques to improve my recall." Discuss a weakness that you have already improved. For example, "I used to struggle with public speaking, but I have taken classes and have been practicing regularly, and now I am much more confident." Show how you have turned a weakness into a strength. For example, "I used to be disorganized, but I have developed a system of checklists and reminders that has made me much more efficient." Discuss a weakness that is common in your industry. For example, "I think many people in this industry struggle with work-life balance, and I have been working on setting boundaries and prioritizing self-care." Talk about a weakness that you have observed in others and are taking steps to avoid. For example, "I have seen colleagues struggle with communication breakdowns, so I make sure to regularly check in with team members and clarify expectations." Discuss a weakness that is not necessarily negative, but can still be improved. For example, "I tend to be a bit of a perfectionist, which can sometimes lead to overthinking. I have been working on balancing attention to detail with efficiency." Discuss a weakness that is related to a soft skill. For example, "I sometimes struggle with conflict resolution, but I have been working on active listening and empathy to better understand others' perspectives." Talk about a weakness that is related to a lack of confidence. For example, "I sometimes doubt my abilities, but I have been working on building my self-confidence and have been seeking feedback from mentors and colleagues." Show how you have improved a weakness through collaboration. For example, "I used to struggle with delegation, but I have been working with team members to identify their strengths and weaknesses and have been assigning tasks accordingly." How to Frame Your Answer To help you present your answer effectively, follow these strategies: 4 Common Misconceptions About Second Interviews Be Honest Attempting to disguise a strength as a weakness or providing a clichéd answer may give the impression that you're not taking the question seriously or that you're trying to avoid it. Think about a genuine weakness that you have and describe it briefly, without dwelling on it. Explain How You're Improving After acknowledging your weakness, make sure to explain how you're working towards improving it. This demonstrates self-awareness and a commitment to personal growth, which are valuable traits in any employee. Consider sharing specific strategies you've implemented or successes you've achieved in addressing your weakness. For example: Attending courses or workshops to enhance your skills Seeking out opportunities to practice and refine your abilities Working with a mentor or coach to support your development Common Mistakes to Avoid Don't give a clichéd or insincere response, such as "I work too hard." Interviewers have heard these answers many times before and will likely see through them as attempts to avoid being honest about your real weaknesses. Instead, choose a genuine weakness you have recognized and worked on improving. Another mistake is to be overly negative about your weakness. The goal is to show that you can self-reflect and develop, not to dwell on the negative aspects of your performance. When discussing your weakness, also talk about the steps you have taken to address it and how you have grown from the experience. Avoid being too vague. Instead, provide a specific example that demonstrates your weakness and your efforts to overcome it. Don't embellish or exaggerate your weakness. Be honest and sincere in your response. Resist the temptation to blame others or external factors for your weakness. Take responsibility and focus on how you have worked to improve. 20 Examples: How To List Education on a Resume Keep your response brief and straightforward. The aim here is not to convince the interviewer that you have no weaknesses but rather to demonstrate that you have the self-awareness and drive to work on your areas of improvement. Stick to the main point, illustrate it effectively, and move on, showcasing your ability to learn and grow from challenges. Final Tips for Answering 'What Is Your Greatest Weakness?' To summarize: Choose a real weakness: Instead of trying to be deceptive, select a genuine weakness that won't directly hinder your ability to perform the job's main tasks. Highlight your self-awareness: Demonstrating awareness of your weaknesses and knowing where there's room for improvement is vital to personal and professional growth. Emphasize improvement: Show that you're working on addressing your weakness, whether it's through training, practice, or seeking feedback. Avoid clichéd answers: While it may be tempting to go for the generic answers like "I'm a perfectionist" or "I work too hard," it's better to be specific and sincere about your weakness. Keep a professional tone: Stay away from using humor or saying things like "I can't resist chocolate cake" as this may come off as insincere or not taking the question seriously. Practice your response to ensure you're able to relay it smoothly and confidently during the interview. Employers appreciate candidates who are genuine, self-aware, and committed to improvement. Related: What Are Your Strengths And Weaknesses? (Answers & Strategies) 5 Best Answers to "What Areas Need Improvement?" 35 Best Answers to "What Are Your Strengths?"