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# Job interview? How to answer "What's your biggest weakness?"

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(MoneyWatch) Have you ever been asked "What's your greatest weakness?" during the course of a job interview? Interviewers consider it to be an oldie but goodie. "As a hiring manager, 'What's your biggest weakness?' is a question I love to ask because how a candidate answers usually tells me three things: 1) The level of self-awareness of the candidate, 2) How they handle obstacles and respond to issues, and 3) How much they know about the position for which they are interviewing," says Lisa Quast, founder of the consulting firm [Career Women, Inc.](#)

On the flip side, this question continues to be one that stresses and stumps candidates. You don't want to answer insincerely, but you also don't want to highlight something that could be a real concern for your interviewer. Job interviews aren't an exact science, so there is more than one way to skin this cat. Here are three:

## Mention something unrelated to the position

"One of the best ways to answer questions about your weaknesses is to mention a skill that isn't an essential requirement for the job," suggests Alison Doyle, job search expert for [About.com](#) and author of [Alison Doyle's Job Search Guidebook](#). When you prepare for the meeting, take time to analyze the key skills required for the job. Then, come up with a shortcoming that's not essential for your success in that position. "Even though you are acknowledging that you need to improve, it won't be in an area that is critical," says Doyle.

## Note something you're actively working on

Showing that you're self-aware and have pinpointed a personal weakness isn't a bad thing -- as long as you're working to correct it, says Quast. She gives this great example: "I used to be incredibly nervous when it came to public speaking. Last year I joined Toastmaster's and realized how much fun it could be once I better understood the process and how to prepare for presentations. Now I actually look forward to speaking in front of groups." Suddenly, your weakness is working for you.

## Avoid the word "weakness"

In an interview situation, it can be helpful to repeat the question. But in this case, avoid vocalizing the word "weakness," says Doyle: "Even though the interviewer is trying to get your weak areas, you don't want to advertise the fact that your skills may be lacking."

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