

Gearing up for that big job interview?

Yes? That's great! Preparation is key when it comes to succeeding at job interviews, or anything for that matter. Do as much research as you can about the job you're applying for, the company you're applying to and a bit of introspection about yourself. Crammers never get far on the hot seat, at least when it comes to sounding sincere and natural.

While you're preparing, have a look at the tips listed below, straight from the mouths – or pens in this case – of prominent career coaches on how best to answer some tough interview questions that can come up:

1. Tell me about yourself:

This question seems so simple, and yet, so many people find themselves tongue-tied on it if not fully prepared. How much information is too much, for example? Should I list out all my accomplishments, every single one? Should this interviewer know about my amazing stamp collection?

Here's career coach, Melanie Szlucha's response as cited in TheLadders.com:

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Think of your response as a movie preview. The movie preview always relates to the movie you're about to see. You never see a movie preview for an animated flick when you're there to see a slasher movie. So the 'tell me about yourself' answer needs to directly fit the concerns of your prospective employer.

2. What are your strengths?

See this question as a means of showcasing your skills, education and experience. In fact, you must find a way to get them in the interview even if it's not asked. How else would the employer know you're the best person for the job?

According to The Muse, a credible source of job advice:

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The worst response I've ever heard was a full minute-long diatribe during which the interviewee proceeded to list a string of positive attributes (outgoing, detail-oriented, hardworking, independent, friendly, easy-going, you name it) and just kept going. One of the adjectives chosen was actually 'humble.' I was speechless.

Try this instead:

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Choose one to three attributes you want to mention (depending on whether the question asks for one strength or multiple) and cap it there. You'll want to think strategically about what skills will position you as qualified for the job and a good fit for the company.





3. What are your weaknesses?

Being honest is good, but is there such a thing as too honest? Admitting our weaknesses to employers can certainly be daunting.

Here's what Alan Henry of Lifehacker thinks:

“ If you catch yourself about to spin a positive into something that could appear negative just to get through the question without looking like you actually have any weaknesses e.g. 'I'm a perfectionist' or 'I work too hard' – you've probably revealed your real issue then and there which is a lack of clarity, honesty, and capacity for self-introspection. “

In reality, the 'your greatest weakness' question is a place for you to show where you can — and would like to — grow once you land the position. Obviously you shouldn't go to an interview and say your greatest weakness is something that's core to the job you're applying for. --

4. How much would you like to earn?

The wrong answer to this can have you known as that guy who asked for the security guard or Deputy MD's salary level.

Career adviser and Forbes contributor, Lisa Quast gives these three tips:

“ 1. Arm yourself with knowledge of the average salary range for your desired job/position. Your answer would then start with "Based on my research..." “

2. Deflect the question if asked too early in the interview “

3. Discuss the salary range with the HR manager before the interview. “

5. How do you handle stress and pressure?

Even the best of us can get stressed in the workplace.

Rick Suttle of Demand Media has this to say:

“ Use one of several responses to adequately answer this question. Say that you are organized and usually plan ahead to meet project deadlines, but also allow extra time for delays or unforeseeable events. “





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6. Why did you leave your last job?

If you left your old job because your boss or colleague wasn't the best person to work with, this question can be a bit tricky to answer honestly.

Fortunately, career coach, Ronnie Ann gives this piece of advice:

“ No matter what really happened, never talk trash about a former employer. A new employer will assume that you'll do the same to them one day. So frame your answer in a way that shows you did well there (have examples prepared if at all possible) and got along well with coworkers. But for the reason(s) you select it's now time to move on. “

7. Why is there a gap in your job history?

Telling your potential employer that it took you three years to get a job can unconsciously reduce your worth or value in their eyes.

Bronwen Hann, a Boutique Procurement & Supply Chain Recruiter and Thought Leader gives this simple tip:

“ Emphasize any activities you undertook during the gap to improve your professional standing. “

E.g. certificate courses, consulting/freelance work, volunteering, personal project, etc. “

All the best at your interview!



Career Woman, Inc.