

Interviewing Basics - Tell Me About Yourself

One of the most common opening lines on interviews is the open-ended question, “*Tell me about yourself.*”

A lot of candidates dread this question and fumble for how to respond, so let’s look at some right ways and wrong ways of answering this opening probe, which often sets the tone for the remainder of the interview.

Remember that you are on a job interview, so shape your reply accordingly. Save personal anecdotes for cocktail party conversations, not job interviews.

Use your answer to your advantage by telling the interviewer what you want her to know about you. If answered correctly, the remainder of the interview questions often follows from how you answered this opening probe, thereby allowing you to control the direction of the conversation.

Before the Interview

- Always prepare for this question; it comes up quite often.
- List ALL of your key strengths, experiences and accomplishments.
- Select at least three examples germane to the opportunity for which you are interviewing. Your selection may be different for different interviews, depending upon the position for which you are applying.
- Shape a response suitable to the interview. How you do this will depend upon the relationship of your skills, experience, and accomplishments to the opportunity for which you are applying. This is not one-size-fits-all.
 - Talk about how your skills and experiences in your current job make you the ideal candidate for this opportunity when seeking a comparable position.
 - Demonstrate how your current accomplishments have prepared you for the next level when interviewing for a higher level position in your same profession.
 - Highlight transferable skills when applying for a totally different line of work.
 - Discuss how your college coursework and internships prepared you for this job when applying for an entry-level opportunity.
- Keep your response short. This is the 30 second elevator speech, not a 5 minute rambling presentation.
- Verbalize your answer either by yourself or with a colleague.

Successful candidates anticipate interview questions and have carefully prepared and rehearsed monologues in their back pockets. “Tell me about yourself.”

Rehearse, refine, and then practice again until it flows naturally



During the Interview

- Pause slightly before answering, otherwise you will appear “too scripted.”
- Support your response with convincing body language. Don’t slouch; remember to maintain eye contact.
- Go into your delivery with razor-sharp confidence. Don’t memorize, lest you forget.
- Close your answer with a directional question for the interviewer; “Which one of those attributes would you like me to discuss?”



You’ve now caught the attention of the interviewer with your opening remarks, and set the direction for her next question.

You did prepare for the follow up question, didn’t you...?

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