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How to answer what are your weaknesses in an interview

How to answer the classic interview question "What is your greatest weakness"? And do you really need to prepare your weaknesses for job interview? Believe us, you do! Because knowing your weaknesses is equally as important as knowing your strengths. When it comes to job interviews, we're constantly encouraged to present our finest selves to seem like the absolute best candidate for the job. So talking about your flaws may seem counterintuitive. Yet, this question seems to be one of the recruiters' most favourite. That's why it's a good idea to get ready for this eventuality and prepare yourself to frame the answer in your favour. If you want to learn more, keep reading our article and discover: Why are recruiters asking this question; How to know what is your greatest weakness; What NOT to say when answering; A list of good weaknesses for a job interview; Examples of how to answer "What is your greatest weakness?" What the recruiters really want to know Honestly, this feels like a trap, inviting you to reveal your shortcomings and ruin your chances at getting hired. But, regarding job interviews, nothing is ever haphazard! So, you probably won't be too surprised when we tell you that there's more to this question than meets the eye. When recruiters ask about your weaknesses, here's what they actually want to know: Whether you're self-aware and capable of introspection. Can you look at yourself and recognize your deficiencies? And can you be self-critical? Because both of these are key qualities of anyone's dream employee. Whether you're reliable. Not in the sense of being able to do anything and everything. But in the sense of knowing your limits and being honest about communicating them. Because employers need to know that you won't bite off more than you can chew. Whether you have a "growth mindset". Next is their interest in your ability to face challenges. Do you perceive them as opportunities to grow and develop professionally? Or avoid them completely? Whether you're a good fit for the company culture. Lastly, they want to gauge how well you work with others. For example: Would you be able to own up to your mistakes, learn from them and move on? Or are you more likely to play the blame game? As you can see, your response can offer a glimpse into your resilience, workplace attitude and adaptability. Qualities that are invaluable in any professional setting. Top 10 good weaknesses for a job interview A "good weakness" is one that isn't core to the job in question, is believable, and is possible to work on. Of course, there's no one-size-fits-all set of weaknesses because everyone's experiences and challenges are unique. However, there are a couple of common vulnerabilities that you may find relatable AND are suitable. In case you're struggling to identify yours, this list may help you find it: Lack of professional experience with non-essential skills. Taking criticism too personally. Imperfect presentation skills. Struggling to ask for help. Discomfort with giving criticism. Difficulties delegating tasks to others. Impatience with slow processes. Difficulties with prioritizing tasks. Inability to let go of projects. Being too blunt. And now, let's look at each of these in more detail. Plus, we'll also briefly discuss how you can try to fix them. #1 Lack of professional experience with non-essential skills In other words, not having a deep understanding of a skill that may be beneficial, but not indispensable. For example, while a project manager isn't required to have proficiency in graphic design, knowledge of Illustrator may be useful for creating simple visual materials for presentations. This weakness is relatively safe, yet it still communicates your "growth mindset." Plus, it's an easy fix - just mention a particular course that targets the skill in question. #2 Taking criticism too personally This one is pretty real and believable. The ability to receive feedback and objective criticism is necessary for any professional, yet it's not something that comes naturally to many. For instance, you could say that in the past, it was difficult for you to distinguish between criticism of you as an employee, and criticism of you as a person. But through a conscious shift in mindset, you came to recognize it for what it really is - an opportunity to improve. #3 Imperfect presentation skills Another fairly common weakness is the fear of public speaking. Whether it be presentation for teams, your management, or clients, some degree of public speaking is necessary for pretty much any corporate position. To improve upon this weakness, you can enroll into a course (such as this Harvard University course via EdX) where you can hone these skills and earn a certificate. #4 Struggling to ask for help You simply can't be a lone wolf in a corporate setting. So you can talk about your inability to ask your colleagues or supervisors for help because you don't want to add to their workload and seem like a burden. But after several negative experiences you've realized that seeking assistance is the responsible thing to do, because it facilitates the completion of projects. So, you've decided to work on your communication skills, and now you've become more productive. #5 Discomfort with giving criticism If you happen to occupy a leadership position, it doesn't matter to what capacity, there are times when you have to put your foot down if something isn't working. And not everybody is comfortable with that. There might've been situations where you avoided giving your junior colleagues criticism out of fear of being too harsh. But mention that you're working on this problem by going through a leadership and communication programme. #6 Difficulties delegating tasks to others Another weakness you could mention is reluctance to pass tasks to others. Whether it stems from your desire for perfection, not wanting to increase your colleague's work load , or your need to have things under control, this weakness of yours has caused a decrease in overall team efficiency. But soon enough you've come to recognize your own faults. You've started by delegating small, low-risk tasks at first. Gradually, you've established open communication or any question or feedback, and learned to trust your colleagues more. As a result, the productivity, efficiency and job satisfaction of your entire team increased. #7 Impatience with slow processes For instance, your lack of patience manifested whenever you felt that your own work pace was hindered by your colleague's slower tempo. And sometimes, it caused tensions within the team. So, you did a bit of research and discovered that there are stress-reduction techniques you could learn that target your impatience management. Additionally, you developed a habit of using the extra time between projects by tackling smaller tasks which keep you occupied and productive. #8 Difficulties with prioritizing tasks Maybe you're that type of person that says "yes" to everything and then ends up struggling to juggle all the tasks you took on. Because of this, you've reached out to a professional who advised you to work on your time management skills. Maybe you've been able to show how your newly sharpened tools contributed to your team or project. And don't be afraid to acknowledge that you're still working on them, if that's the case. Although this structure is fairly simple, it works wonders! Feel free to use it when preparing your answers. And remember, the narrative is entirely in your hands! What is your greatest weakness sample answers And finally, we should take a quick look at these 4 example answers. Notice that all of them follow the structure we've outlined above (weakness, context, improvements, results). And if any of these correspond with your own weaknesses, you can just copy and tweak them so that they reflect your own experience. Weaknesses for job interview: Presentation skills"My biggest weakness is my presentation skills. It was only last year that I realized my public speaking skills needed improvement. I was really struggling to overcome my nervousness during team presentations. I realized very quickly that I have to address my nervousness to get better at it. So I enrolled in a public speaking course and practiced at every opportunity I got: presentations, reports, even family gatherings! After two months I noticed that I became more confident and comfortable during presentations. I'm by no means perfect, but I received positive feedback from my clients recently." Weaknesses for job interview: Delegating tasks "The thing I really struggled with in the past was my ability to delegate tasks to my co-workers. I've always felt that my team knows that they can turn to me with any questions. After some time, our relationships and mutual trust improved. And we were able to complete complex projects well ahead of deadlines. If I recall correctly, our overall productivity improved by some 20%." Weaknesses for job interview: Asking for help "I remember that when I started out as an accountant, I suffered from a serious imposter syndrome. I was self-conscious of my lack of experience, so I felt that I needed to prove myself. Plus, I really didn't want to seem like a burden, so whenever I was struggling with new systems or processes, I simply wouldn't ask anyone for help. Of course, now I know how unfounded and unprofessional this behaviour was. The key thing I've changed was my own mindset. I started to look at these challenging moments as opportunities to foster stronger teamwork. I feel that by reaching out to others, I learned a lot about the importance of collaboration. And it also made me more patient with newcomers! Now, I always make sure they know that they can reach out to me with anything and not feel bad about it." Weaknesses for job interview: Being too blunt "When I look back on my previous work experience, I can definitely say that I used to be pretty blunt when it came to giving feedback to my colleagues. See, I've always valued honesty and transparency above everything. And I thought that that's what makes effective workplace communication. But I was so wrong! My co-workers often felt that I'm being too insensitive, and that caused tension between us. To address this, I enrolled in a leadership programme that taught me how to better phrase my concerns. I've found the 'praise-criticism-praise' technique especially useful! Soon, all that awkward energy was gone. And my co-workers actually became more receptive to my feedback and we worked much better together as a team." How NOT to answer "What is your greatest weakness?" Now that we've gone over the best answers, let's also talk about how NOT to present your weakness. To sum it all up, the weaknesses for job interview question isn't a strategy to reveal your faults, but an opportunity to show that you're self-aware, introspective, and determined to continue improving on your weak areas. When preparing your answer, try sticking to this simple, yet effective structure: Introduce your weakness. Provide a real-life professional context. Demonstrate your effort and determination to improve. Mention the results of your improvement (if possible). In case you don't know what your weaknesses are, you can draw inspiration from our list of the most appropriate weaknesses for a job interview: Lack of professional experience with non-essential skills. Taking criticism too personally. Imperfect presentation skills. Struggling to ask for help. Discomfort with giving criticism. Difficulties delegating tasks to others. Impatience with slow processes. Difficulties with prioritizing tasks. Inability to let go of projects. Being too blunt. If you're preparing for a job interview, be sure to also check out how to answer these common questions: You've polished your resume and picked out the perfect interview outfit. All you need to do is practice those common interview questions to land your dream job.But one interview question can make even the most practiced and skilled interviewee break into a sweat. It's the all-time classic, "What's your biggest weakness?"The question is designed for hiring managers to get an accurate analysis of you and give them insight into what challenges you might experience with the position. However, this question can also be an excellent opportunity to showcase your personality and ensure the job is a good fit for you.Let's explore why interviewers love this question, some tips for answering it, and 17 ideas that can help inspire your perfect answer to this age-old interview question.Why do interviewers ask about your strengths and weaknesses?Most interviewers won't ask about your weaknesses without asking about your strengths. The two questions help them assess whether your skills and personality align with the job requirements. Your strengths will tell them about your abilities and experience that will help you excel in the role. They can also show the interviewer whether you'll fit in with the company culture.Asking about your weaknesses, however, can tell the interviewer even more about your personality and work style. Discussing your shortcomings can reveal your self-awareness and willingness to discuss the areas where you need to improve. Being honest about your weaknesses can show an interviewer that you:Your answer may also help them determine how you'll fit into their current team structure.Your answers to these questions can help you stand out in a sea of candidates. They can become great conversation starters and discussion points, allowing interviewers to get to know you beyond what's written on your resume. Preparing thoughtful responses to these questions can show interviewers you've spent time considering the answers and are ready to admit to your weaknesses and celebrate your strengths.17 potential answers when asked about your weaknesses in an interviewWhat should you say when an interviewer asks you about your biggest weakness? Here are 17 possible answers to help you create your perfect response.1. I focus too much on the details Attention to detail can be a prized skill for many professions. In others, it means you get bogged down in the nitty-gritty and struggle to maintain efficiency in your work tasks. If you focus too much on details, share how you are working to maintain focus on the bigger picture and let go of perfectionism.2. I have a hard time letting go of projectsYou are dedicated to your work's quality and take your responsibilities seriously. Employers love that! But sometimes, you need to figure out when to call something "finished." Highlight how you are improving on this weakness and getting better time-management strategies or delegating some tasks.3. I have trouble saying noTelling an employer you have trouble saying no can show them you are a good team player willing to go the extra mile for the team. It also indicates you are eager to take on new challenges. However, it might signify that you're prone to burnout. You probably aren't maintaining a good work-life balance if you never say no. Additionally, employers may see this weakness as an inability to prioritize or get your work done on time. Talk about how you are working to set boundaries and prioritize tasks to manage your workload effectively.4. I get impatient with missed deadlinesYou are committed to timeliness and have a result-oriented mindset. You also hold yourself to a high standard regarding your time-management skills. Still, you struggle when working with others who have a more laid-back approach to a looming deadline. Talk about how you are developing your communication skills to better collaborate with team members and set more realistic goals. Also, mention your efforts towards working on flexibility and adaptability.5. I could use more experience in...If you have a gap in your skill set, this is a great thing to incorporate into your answer about your weaknesses. It shows the interviewer you know you may need to be stronger in a particular area and demonstrates that you're willing to work on it. It also gives the employer a chance to think about training opportunities they can provide you to help you upskill.6. I sometimes lack confidenceSaying you sometimes lack confidence shows you're self-aware and interested in personal growth. Share with the interviewer that you are working on cultivating your confidence through mentorships, attending training sessions, or setting affirmations. This is a relatable weakness, and admitting it shows you are ready to build it up. Be prepared to explain how and when you feel a lack of confidence.7. I have trouble asking for helpThis is a weakness that also highlights your strengths. It can signal to an interviewer that you are self-reliant and happy to figure things out independently. It also shows you are a problem-solver and self-motivated. But you also need to show that you know when you are in over your head and need to ask for help before a task or project begins to go off track. Clarify that, while you may be hesitant to ask for help, you are improving your willingness to seek assistance and collaborate with others when needed. This can show that you're developing your skills as a team player and can work collaboratively and independently.8. I have trouble working with certain personalitiesThere are always some personality types that rub us the wrong way. Knowing you struggle with certain personalities shows self-awareness. It also helps a potential employer determine whether you will be a good fit. If you struggle to deal with Type-A personalities and the interviewer knows their team is full of these types, you won't be happy in the position. Admitting to this weakness can help you find a team that's a good fit. Use this one sparingly. Be sure to share how you work with different personalities and what you do to avoid conflict or manage it.9. It can be challenging for me to find a good work-life balanceIf you end up working more than your contracted hours or taking work home with you on the weekends, there is a good chance you won't maintain a good work-life balance. While you might think employers will love your dedication to the job, this weakness signifies that you are prone to burnout. Most employers know maintaining a good work-life balance is essential to long-term employee happiness, so they'll be pleased to hear that you are working to overcome this by maintaining firm boundaries and not checking email during scheduled paid time off.10. I am uncomfortable with ambiguityMany roles require you to manage a certain amount of ambiguity. You might not know exactly when a supplier will deliver or have firm guidelines on the client's expectations. Knowing you struggle with ambiguity and admitting this fact can help you build up a tolerance for the unknown. Share with the interviewer that being uncomfortable with ambiguity has made you an excellent communicator. You are working on becoming more adaptable when ambiguity is unavoidable.11. I take on too muchSometimes, taking on a task ourselves, rather than delegating it, feels easier because we know it will be done to our exacting standards. Interviewers can see this weakness as a strength because it means you are comfortable taking ownership and accountability. However, it may signal that you could be better at setting boundaries and working as a team player. Talk about how you know you tend to take on too much and are working on your delegation skills, involving your teammates, or attempting to vocalize your need for help more within your team.12. I struggle with public speakingThis is a very relatable answer. You hasn't felt their palms sweat when speaking in a boardroom or presenting at a company-wide meeting? If the position you are applying for requires a lot of public speaking, there may be a better job for you. If it's an occasional task, though, this is a weakness you can overcome with practice. Talk about how you are pursuing public-speaking training, such as attending seminars to help build this skill.13. I am not good with sudden and unexpected changesNot many people can happily go along with many sudden and unexpected changes at work. However, in most modern work environments, it's inevitable. Owning up to this weakness can show an employer you value tradition and process, which may be highly valued in certain environments. However, you can indicate you're working on overcoming this weakness by embracing change and seeing it as an opportunity. Your willingness to face changes head-on can be seen as a positive trait by potential employers.14. I procrastinate on tasks I don't find enjoyableIt shows a lot of self-awareness to admit to a weakness that is a common challenge for many people. An employer may appreciate your honesty and ability to acknowledge this shortcoming in your workflow. Talk about how you overcome this weakness with good time-management techniques, setting priorities for tasks, and breaking down big projects into manageable steps. This shows an interviewer that you're working to overcome your tendency to procrastinate and manage your time more effectively. It's also a good idea to mention that you always meet deadlines, regardless of how quickly or slowly you set out on a task.15. I can be risk-averse at timesBeing risk-averse is sometimes good. Some employers may appreciate your commitment to playing it safe and see this as a strength. In some positions, it could signify you aren't ready to think outside the box or take chances. Talk about how you are challenging yourself to step outside your comfort zone, whether by learning a new skill or signing up for new projects. This shows a potential employer you are being proactive about taking calculated risks and learning to be more innovative.16. I rely too much on technical jargonEvery job comes with its own vocabulary. This can help you communicate with other people in your field more effectively. However, relying on it too heavily could be a weakness if you are applying for a customer-facing position. Using too much technical jargon could make customer discussions confusing and unproductive. Admitting this weakness shows you are aware of this shortcoming and willing to work on it. Talk about how you are working to eliminate tech speak from your conversations and are eager for more training on effective communication skills.17. I can be overly critical of my own workStriving for excellence in your work can often lead to becoming overly self-critical. While an employer will love that you aim for excellence, they won't appreciate you never feeling your work is good enough. Highlight that you are continuously trying to improve, and this weakness causes you to produce high-quality work. Acknowledge that it can also lead to you feeling frustrated or missing deadlines and that you are trying to overcome that by accepting compliments and constructive feedback in equal measure. It's a great way to highlight your openness to professional development.Tips for answering the question 'What are your weaknesses?' in an interview Once you've determined what your weaknesses are, you'll want to practice giving your answer to the interviewer. Simply identifying your weaknesses isn't enough. Use your answer to give them context, show your personality, and demonstrate that you have a plan to address your weaknesses.Here are some tips for formulating your answers:Be honest. Don't be tempted to share the answer you think the interviewer wants. Honestly evaluate yourself and determine areas you need to improve. Being honest about your answer demonstrates your ability to self-analyze. It gives the interviewer a better idea of whether you are a good fit for the position.Tell a story. One of the best ways to talk about your weakness is to share a story about it. Keep the story short and relevant, but use it as an example of how you demonstrated or overcame this weakness. Sharing a story also makes your response more engaging and memorable.Remember to get to the insight. Tell the interviewer your weakness, then expand on your answer by giving insight. Explain how you are working to overcome the weakness or what self-managing routines you implement to avoid it. Providing insight about your weakness shows your commitment to overcoming challenges.Keep it short. Refrain from dwelling on this part of the interview too much. While you want to have a great answer ready to go if asked, keep your response concise. That way, you can spend more time discussing your strengths and what you can bring to the position.Don't sweat it. Don't let the question rattle you. No one is perfect, not even the interviewer. Your ability to acknowledge your weaknesses can be a strength, and your interviewer is simply trying to learn more about you. Prepare your answer beforehand so this question doesn't trip you up.Incorporating these tips can help you craft an insightful and personal response to the question, 'What are your weaknesses?' Approaching this question confidently can make you memorable and leave the interviewer with a great impression of you and your skills.What to avoid when answering a question about your weaknessesYou'll want to avoid a few common pitfalls when developing your answer to this tricky interview question.Don't be overly negative or self-criticalWhile being honest about your weaknesses is essential, don't overdo it. Clearly state your weakness, then balance your answer with how you are working to overcome it. Be specific about what you are doing; don't simply say you're working on it. Tell the interviewer what skills you are practicing to diminish the weakness or what plans you have to help you overcome the challenge.Don't cite one of the job's core requirements as a weaknessFor example, if Python coding skills are essential to the position, don't cite your Python coding skills as a weakness. If that's the case, you may need to look for a job better suited to your strengths.Don't offer a generic responseAvoid common reactions like "I'm a perfectionist" or "I work too hard." These cliche answers can leave the impression you aren't being honest in your self-analysis.Avoid oversharingGiving an interviewer a long list of weaknesses you don't paint you in a good light, and you could end up oversharing and making the interviewer uncomfortable. Choosing one or two flaws demonstrates your ability to evaluate yourself honestly.Ready to answer the trickiest interview question? Once you've identified your weakness and prepared an answer, practice it on a friend. Going over your answer beforehand can make it feel more natural during the interview and help you feel more confident and prepared. You'll be able to avoid the panic this question can bring and impress your interviewer on the day.Remember, your biggest weakness may be a strength! Let your personality shine, answer honestly, and show how you overcome your weaknesses. You'll be in a job that you love in no time.