

How to address your weaknesses in an interview

There are many ways to address the question about your weakness. One of the most common ways has always been to turn a negative into a positive. Clever idea. At this point, though, it's an old trick and the interviewer sees right through it. Many candidates try the same song and dance. In fact, this approach may actually make the interviewer think you are hiding something.

A Good Weakness Has Two Important Parts:

Part 1) Your weakness

Briefly describe a real weakness that wouldn't be a major handicap on the job.

Part 2) How you are already working on it

This step is the critical component. Discuss your proactive efforts to improve.

This shows that you are self-aware, have a drive to be your best, and that the weakness will not slow you down.

PART 1: How to Choose a “Good” Weakness

Be authentic - Don't select a weakness just because it sounds good. You will make a better impression with sincerity. That doesn't mean you have to share a weakness that makes you look bad. If you're like most of us, you have several weaknesses and at least one of them will be interview-friendly as defined by the additional guidelines below.

Pick a weakness that is acceptable for the job at hand - Be aware of the job requirements and don't cite a weakness related to any of the required skills or desired qualities. If you're an accountant, don't talk about hating math or lack of attention to detail. If you're in sales, don't confess to being too reserved or lacking persistence.

Select a weakness that is relatively minor and “fixable.” - By fixable, I mean it's something you can improve through work and motivation.

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For example:

Fixable: “I get nervous when speaking in front of large groups.”

(You can get better through practice and learning new skills — and this is a common development area.)

Harder to fix: “I am very shy and often have trouble speaking up in meetings.”

(While there’s nothing wrong with being shy, an interviewer could assume that the candidate would have trouble collaborating in a team environment. This is a preference or personality quality that would be more difficult to change.)

Describe your weakness in a concise, neutral way - Don’t feel like you have to go into great detail.

Be brief and, most importantly, avoid sounding defensive or overly negative.

PART 2: How to Demonstrate That You Are Working on Your Weakness

In the second part of your answer, you need to describe how you have already taken steps to improve in your area of weakness. Here’s why:

1) A great candidate is always looking for ways to learn and grow

2) A fabulous candidate then takes the initiative to improve

Use your answer to demonstrate your motivation to be the best at what you do. This is how to truly emphasize the positive when talking about your weakness.

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