### **1. Tell me about yourself.**

This is one of the first questions you are likely to be asked. Be prepared to talk about yourself, and why you're an [excellent fit for the job](https://www.thebalancecareers.com/what-is-candidate-fit-2060038). Try to answer questions about yourself without giving out too much, or too little, personal information. You can start by sharing some of your personal interests and experiences that don't relate directly to work, such as a favorite hobby or a brief account of where you grew up, your education, and what motivates you. You can even [share some fun facts](https://www.thebalancecareers.com/mentioning-fun-facts-about-yourself-in-job-search-4148373) and [showcase your personality](https://www.thebalancecareers.com/how-to-show-your-personality-at-an-interview-2061310) to make the interview a little more interesting.If it feels daunting to generate this information from scratch, you can rely on a simple formula to construct your answer. The ‘present-past-future’ formula is a way to share key background points while ending on a high note. Begin with a brief overview of where you are now (which could include your current job along with a reference to a personal hobby or passion), reference how you got to where you are (here you could mention education, or an important experience such as a past job, internship or volunteer experience) and then finish by touching on a goal for the future.Bonus points if you’re able to identify how the position you’re applying for aligns with how you envision your future.No matter how you choose to respond, write out your answer in advance and then read it aloud to ensure it sounds natural. Try to keep it short and sweet, as you don’t want to come across as the type of person who endlessly drones on about themselves. One option for your response is to share some of your personal interests which don't relate directly to your career. Examples might include a hobby which you are passionate about like quilting, astronomy, chess, choral singing, golf, skiing, tennis, or antiquing.Interests like long-distance running or yoga which help to represent your healthy, energetic side are worth mentioning.Pursuits like being an avid reader or solving crossword puzzles or [brain teasers](https://www.thebalancecareers.com/brain-teaser-interview-questions-2061249) will help to showcase your intellectual leaning. Interests like golf, tennis, and gourmet food might have some value if you would be entertaining clients in your new job.Remember, as with "[tell me something about yourself that's not on your resume](https://www.thebalancecareers.com/something-not-on-resume-2059963)," one of the goals of this question is to get to know you a little bit beyond your career and on-the-job attitude and experience.

### **2. Why should we hire you?**

Are you the best candidate for the job? Be prepared to say why [you're the applicant who should be hired](https://www.thebalancecareers.com/why-are-you-the-best-person-for-the-job-2062760). This is not the time to be modest (although neither should you be conceited). Make your response a confident, concise, focused [sales pitch that explains what you have to offer](https://www.thebalancecareers.com/how-to-sell-yourself-during-a-job-interview-4153288) the employer, and why you should get the job. This is another good time to review the qualifications and the requirements in the job listing, so you can craft a response that aligns with what the interviewer is looking for.When you’re getting ready for the interview, take a moment to review the job description. Make a list of the [requirements for the position](https://www.thebalancecareers.com/what-are-job-requirements-3928054), including personality traits, skills, and qualifications. Then, make a list of the qualities you have that fit those requirements.Select five to seven of your [strengths](https://www.thebalancecareers.com/resume-strengths-list-2063804) that correspond closely to the job requirements, and use these as the core for your answer regarding what distinguishes you as a candidate.Don’t forget to think beyond the job description and consider which of your [skills and accomplishments](https://www.thebalancecareers.com/list-of-the-best-skills-for-resumes-2062422) make you a better candidate than the competition. For example, maybe you have an additional certification that makes you more knowledgeable about the company’s product than the typical salesperson. When you’re honing your pitch, remember to be positive and to reiterate your interest in the company and the position.

For example, here's a job posting; a list of a candidate’s relevant qualities, skills, and accomplishments; and a sample response describing why the company should hire the person.

**Job Posting:**Looking for an administrative coordinator for our small but growing tech startup. Requirements include 2-3 years of relevant experience (including website management and record maintenance), excellent interpersonal and communication skills, ability to work independently, and strong prioritizing skills.

**List of Relevant Strengths:**

* Strong communication skills (written, verbal, nonverbal)
* Friendly
* Enthusiastic
* 3 years of experience in administration
* Experience using multiple content management systems
* Expert in multiple spreadsheet suites

***Sample Answer:****Based on what you’ve said and from the research I’ve done, your company is looking for an administrative assistant who is both strong in interpersonal skills and in tech skills. I believe my experience aligns well with that and makes me a great fit. I'm an effective communicator who is skilled in giving oral presentations, speaking on the phone, and communicating via email. I'm also fluent in a number of relevant software programs, including content management systems and spreadsheet suites.I’d really love to bring my diverse skill set to your company.*

### **Focus on Your Uniqueness**

The interviewer wants to know how you stand out among the other applicants. It’s important to focus on one or two qualities you possess that are different from what other interviewees might offer, or are more difficult to find in candidates generally.Also, think about any other skills you may have that would add extra value, or any previous professional, personal or volunteer experiences that provide you with a unique perspective. Ultimately, this is your chance to tell the interviewer why you would be an invaluable employee.

For example, here is a sample answer for the job posting listed above. This time, the interview includes focuses on their uniqueness.

***Sample Answer:****I think that my experience with technology and, in particular, my ability to maintain and update websites, make me a good match for this position. In my most recent position, I was responsible for maintaining our department web page. This required updating student and faculty profiles, and posting information about upcoming events. In my free time, I learned to code in JavaScript and Swift. I then used my coding skills to revamp our homepage and received praise from our department head and the Dean of Students for my initiative.I would love to bring my coding skills and my general passion for learning new technologies to this position.*

Use these templates to construct your own answer to the interview question, “Why should we hire you?”

* *Based on what you’ve said and from the research I’ve done, your company is looking for an employee who has [list top two qualifications/skills]. I believe my experience aligns well with that and makes me a great fit. I am [list your top two matching qualifications/skills]. I’ve exemplified this in the past when I [provide a brief real-life anecdote/example]. I believe I can add great value to this position, and I’d really love to continue to build upon my skills and grow with your company.*
* *I think that my experience in the [your field] industry and my ability to [mention a unique, work-related skill/ability you have] make me a good match for this position. In my recent position, I [explain how you used this skill/ability to achieve a positive outcome].*
* *Your company provides many services that I have had experience with, in a variety of capacities. [Offer a few specific examples.] I believe that my familiarity with the industry would make me a good fit for this position.*

### **3. What is your greatest strength?**

This is one of the questions that employers almost always ask. When you are asked about your greatest strengths, it's important to discuss the attributes that will qualify you for the specific job and set you apart from the other candidates. Take the time before the job interview to make [matches between your qualifications and the requirements](https://www.thebalancecareers.com/how-to-match-your-qualifications-to-a-job-2060941) as stated in the job announcement. This way, you will have examples ready at hand to demonstrate your suitability for the job.

It can be helpful to remember the tip “show, don't tell.” For example, rather than stating that you are an excellent problem solver, instead [tell a story that demonstrates this](https://www.thebalancecareers.com/anecdotal-interview-questions-2061159), ideally drawing on an anecdote from your professional experience.

How should you answer questions about your strengths? The best way to respond is to describe the [skills](https://www.thebalancecareers.com/list-of-the-best-skills-for-resumes-2062422) and experience that you have which directly correlate with the job you are applying for.

Be prepared to answer by [making a list of the qualifications](https://www.thebalancecareers.com/how-to-match-your-qualifications-to-a-job-2060941) mentioned [in the job posting](https://www.thebalancecareers.com/job-listing-guidelines-2061395).

Then, make a list of your skills that match those listed. This list can include education or training, soft skills, hard skills, or past work experiences. Narrow your list of skills down to between three and five particularly strong skills. Next to each skill, note an example of how you have used that strength in the past.

This will prepare you for when the employer asks you to elaborate on a particular strength. When you answer, you will be sharing strengths that match the qualifications the company is seeking. Also incorporate these [power words that help make a good impression](https://www.thebalancecareers.com/powerful-words-for-job-interviews-4123781) into your responses. The more closely your skills match the stated job qualifications, the more likely you'll be to get a job offer.

### **Examples of the Best Answers**

Review these examples of answers, and tailor your responses to your credentials and the job requirements of the position.

* *I have an extremely strong work ethic. When I'm working on a project, I don't just want to meet deadlines. Rather, I prefer to complete the project well ahead of schedule. Last year, I even earned a bonus for completing my three most recent reports one week ahead of time.*
* *I have extremely strong writing skills. Having worked as a copy editor for five years, I have strong attention to detail when it comes to my writing. I have also written for a variety of publications, so I know how to shape my writing style to fit the task and audience. As a marketing assistant, I will be able to effectively write and edit press releases and update web content with accuracy and ease.*
* *I pride myself on my customer service skills and my ability to resolve potentially difficult situations. With five years of experience as a customer service associate, I have learned to effectively understand and resolve customer issues. On a related note, I also have strong communication skills, which help me work well with customers, team members, and executives. I am known for being an effective team member with a talent for giving presentations.*

**Don't Say:**

* *I am probably the most gifted applicant you will encounter. Everyone says that I am extremely intelligent, hard working, and a fabulous communicator.*
* *My greatest strengths are writing, project management, quantitative research, event planning, budget development, and social media.*
* *I'm a talented musician, the life of the party, and a great joke teller. I roll with the punches and don't take defeats too seriously.*
* *I should tell you about the time when our fraternity was under pressure. The president had mismanaged some money and a lot of the brothers had gotten into trouble for hazing and partying too much. The Dean called all the officers into her office and they had a hearing about all our transgressions. I took over the leadership and turned things around, and we are now a well-respected fraternity with no problems.*

### **4. What is your greatest weakness?**

Another typical question interviewers will ask is about [your weaknesses](https://www.thebalancecareers.com/list-of-weaknesses-2063805). Do your best to frame your answers around positive aspects of your skills and abilities as an employee, turning seeming “weaknesses” into strengths. For example, you might say something like, “I’ve always struggled with perfectionism – I truly want to do the job correctly the first time, but this sometimes means that I devote more time to a project than is necessary. I’ve learned to balance this drive with the equally important responsibility of meeting deadlines.”

You can also share [examples of skills](https://www.thebalancecareers.com/list-of-the-best-skills-for-resumes-2062422) you have improved, providing specific instances of how you have recognized a weakness and taken steps to improve yourself.

### **Mention Skills You Have Improved**

Another option is to discuss skills that you have improved upon during your previous job, or that you are [actively working on improving](https://www.thebalancecareers.com/performance-improvement-strategies-1918714). This shows the interviewer that you’re committed to self-improvement.

Begin your answer by talking about where you started, discussing the steps you took to improve, then highlight the outcome.

For example, you might say, “One skill set I improved in the past was my salesmanship skills. As a product manager who works with internal teams and does not interface with clients or sales prospects, I don’t do much, if any, ‘selling’ in my role. However, since I do communicate quite frequently with the sales team, I felt it might benefit me to have a greater understanding of their strategies and tactics.” I took a sales skills course online and it not only improved how I work with sales teams.

Now, when I join sales meetings, I have a much better idea of what’s going on, and I feel more effective in communicating with the sales team. This course also helped me build upon the skills I use to ‘sell’ my vision for the product internally.”

If you use this strategy, be sure not to mention anything that you improved upon that would be critical to the job for which you are interviewing, as you don't want your qualifications for the job to be questioned.

### **Turn a Negative Into a Positive**

Another option is to turn a negative into a positive. For example, a sense of urgency to complete projects can be turned into a positive; e.g., you are a candidate who will make sure a project is done on time. Or, perhaps you find yourself with an attention to detail that leads you to triple-check every item on a spreadsheet and proofread every email you sent twice.

Show that you're self-aware.

Regardless of what you say, it is critical to indicate that you are aware and mindful of this trait, and capable of preventing it from interfering with your productivity. For instance, building on the example above, you might say, “I have a very strong attention to detail. Sometimes, this attention to detail can turn into perfectionist tendencies. In the past, I found this leading me to triple-check every item on a spreadsheet, or closely proofreading emails to ensure I’ve communicated what I’m trying to get across in a clear, concise way, or fiddling with the layout of a presentation to ensure that it is perfect.

I’ve since learned to successfully budget my time and gauge which tasks require, and actually benefit from, this precise attention to detail.”

Keep in mind that how you answer job interview questions about weaknesses matters just as much as what you say.

### **Some of the Best Answers**

It’s important to note that the term "weakness" isn't used in the sample answers — you always want to focus on the positive [when interviewing](https://www.thebalancecareers.com/what-to-expect-during-a-job-interview-2063897).

* "*Organization hasn’t always been my strongest point. I’ve always been inclined to prioritize tasks that directly impact the bottom line, and maintaining a pristine desk or an organized inbox didn’t seem to truly move the needle in terms of my output. Over time, I’ve learned that keeping a clean workspace — both physically, and digitally —*does*support my ability to focus and enhance the efficiency of my workflow. I’ve implemented a time management system that enables me to stay organized without encroaching on my other responsibilities."*
* *"When I'm working on a project, I don't want just to meet deadlines. Rather, I prefer to complete the project well ahead of when it is due. While this means I never miss a deadline, it also means that sometimes I can find myself rushed when I’m working. I’ve since learned to slow down, be more patient, and give each project the careful attention it deserves."*
* *"I like to make sure that my work is perfect, so I tend to perhaps spend a little too much time checking it. However, I've come to a good balance by setting up a system to ensure everything is done the first time correctly. I also time myself when I work to prevent myself from spending too much time on one project, and guaranteeing I’ll have enough time to get to the rest of my work."*
* *"I used to wait until the last minute to set appointments for the coming week, but I realized that scheduling in advance makes much more sense. I’m now much more proactive about scheduling meetings, and this allows me to plan and segment out my work for the week without having to guess at when I’ll need to leave time for meetings."*
* *"I've learned to make my perfectionism work to my advantage. I have become proficient at meeting deadlines, and with my attention to detail, I know that my work is accurate."*
* *"Sometimes, I spend more time than necessary on a task or take on tasks personally that could easily be delegated to someone else. Although I've never missed a deadline, it is still an effort for me to know when to move on to the next task, and to be confident when assigning others work. In my recent position, I implemented a project management tool that allowed me to easily oversee the progress of all the tasks I assigned, which helped me feel much more comfortable delegating work."*
* *"Numbers have not always been my strong suit. Fortunately, as a copywriter, I can focus most of my time on the creative process of writing. However, in recent years I have begun to familiarize myself with the digital analytics tools used in the various websites and apps I write for and found that when you add context, “numbers” can actually be quite enlightening."*
* *"I used to like to work on one project to its completion before starting on another, but I've learned to work on many projects at the same time, and I think it allows me to be more creative and effective in each one."*
* *"As an undergrad, I used to leave assignments until the last minute, but with the workload of graduate school, I had no choice but to schedule my time very effectively. This has translated into an excellent sense of time and project management in my professional work."*