

Video 3.1 Communication strategies

Hi everyone. In this video, we'll talk about what you can say to communicate effectively when the interviewer asks you a difficult question. You will learn some useful communication strategies that can help you to avoid awkward pauses, when you don't know what to say, or just need some time to think.

First, you should remember that nobody knows everything. It's ok if you can't come up with an answer at once, so don't panic. The most important thing is your reaction, so ... relax, take a deep breath and use one of the following strategies.

Number 1. Ask the interviewer to repeat the question

Don't be shy to ask the interviewer to repeat the question - it's not a big deal for them. Moreover, nobody expects you to have a native-like English level. So, if you didn't get the question first time around, just say:

- *Could you please repeat the question? - or*
- *Sorry, I didn't catch that. Could you say it again? - or just*
- *Sorry?*

Remember that saying *What?* sounds very straightforward and even rude, so don't use it in a formal situation like an interview.

Number 2. Clarify that you understand the question

Do not answer the question if you doubt whether you've understood it correctly. Clarify your understanding by asking:

- *Sorry, do you mean..? - or*
- *Let me just check if I understand you correctly. Do you mean..? - or*
- *Do you want me to speak about / explain...? - or*
- *Could you explain what you mean by..?*

It's a good idea to say *thank you* after the interviewer gives some clarification, to signal that everything is clear now and you're ready to answer. Here are some useful phrases:

- *I got it. Thank you! - or*
- *Ah, I see what you mean. Thanks for clarifying. - or*
- *Now I understand. Thanks a lot.*

Number 3. Buy thinking time

Asking for clarification could also buy you some time to think about your answer. If the question is challenging, you can repeat it back to the interviewer in your own words and use this time to build your answer. For example, you get a question *What is a Data dictionary?* You could rephrase it by asking *Do you want me to talk about metadata?*

Even if you can't immediately answer the interviewer's question, it's important *not* to keep silent. If there is *no* verbal reaction, the interviewer may think that there is something wrong, or that you haven't heard the question. So, if you can't come up with an answer straight away, you could use one of the following phrases to buy yourself some time for thinking:

- *Well, let me think about that for a moment. - or*
- *I'd like to give that some thought.*

Even if you don't have the answer to the question, you should offer at least a thought, or your perspective on the question. For example, you could say:

- *I'm not quite sure. But I think... - or*
- *Well, it's difficult to say exactly, but... - or*
- *I'm afraid I don't know exactly, but here's a thought.*

So, by now you should know how to react if a question is really difficult. Shall we check it in the next task?