

Interview Coaching

Seven Commonly Asked Questions in Interview continued

1. Tell me about yourself?

THIS IS YOUR ELEVATOR PITCH. WHAT IS AN 'ELEVATOR PITCH'?

Imagine getting into an elevator with the director of a company that you have always dreamt of working for.

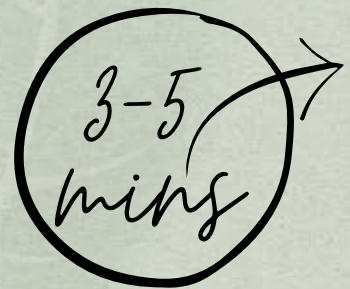
They turn to you and say that you have until the elevator stops to convince them as to why you would be the best choice for a role in their company.

You have three to five minutes, tops, to convince them of your suitability.

1. HOW WOULD YOU USE THAT TIME?

2. WHAT WOULD YOU SAY?

This is an 'elevator pitch' - a succinct sound bite which is a summary of why you should be hired - and it's very relevant to an interview situation.



Questions such as "tell me about yourself" and "why should we hire you?". These are all scenarios which allow you to use an elevator pitch.

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ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF AN ELEVATOR PITCH

An elevator pitch is clear, concise and uses powerful and targeted action words. It is a summary of your key skills, education, attributes, why you are interested in their company and how you can use your skillset to help drive the business.

Ensure that it puts a focus on where you have been, where you are and where you are going, always keeping it relevant to your audience.

In order to impress with your elevator speech, you need to ensure that it rolls off your tongue. You should show your personality, sound enthusiastic, speak confidently and make eye contact.

STRUCTURING YOUR ANSWER

Summary of qualifications and education, followed by key areas that you have worked in or gained experience of relevant to the role.

Include attributes again relevant to the role for instance:

"My previous employer would probably describe me as flexible and adaptable with a genuine desire to learn and develop and add value to the organisation"



- Look at several job descriptions for similar types of roles and try and get an understanding of the types of attributes that they place a value on.
- Ensure what you are feeding back in this answer is similar.
- Finally finish your answer with the reason that you have applied for this role, this allows you to demonstrate your genuine interest and excitement for this role. This will help you to stand out.

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2. What are your strengths? Why you for this role?

- Again ensure that you have done your research and that you understand from your analysis of the job description and the role itself what strengths are valued in this role.
- Choose 3/4 and remember to give an example of how or where you have demonstrated this strength in your previous work history / academic experience or voluntary or sports capacity.
- Remember always compensate for a lack of experience with enthusiasm so passion and commitment to learning and developing can be a very useful strength to highlight.

EXAMPLES OF STRENGTHS - DON'T FORGET YOUR EXAMPLES

- **Problem solving and analytical skills** - Identifying, Prioritising and solving problems, individually or in groups. The ability to ask the right questions, sort out the many facets of a problem and contribute ideas as well as answers regarding the problem.
- **Technical skills** - Skills needed to deal with the technical tasks required by the job. Remember to list them.

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- **Written communication** - Effective transfer of written information either formally through reports and business correspondence or informally through memos and notes.
- **Personal organisation and time management** - Managing several tasks at once, being able to set priorities and to allocate time efficiently in order to meet deadlines.

3. What is your Weakness?

WHY DO YOU EMPLOYERS ASK THE WEAKNESS QUESTION?

- Generally it is to measure your level of self-awareness. It is a relatively easy question to answer if you have spent some time considering your answer.
- Choose an obvious weakness for the role, for instance for many people it is a lack of experience. Highlighting this as a weakness is an opportunity to turn this into a positive and demonstrate your commitment to learning and developing and that you understand the challenges that may be ahead. Again, always compensate for a lack of experience with enthusiasm.
- If asked specifically for a personal weakness choose a weakness that you have already recognised in the past and demonstrate how you have worked on it and it is no longer an issue. Ensure that you avoid any weaknesses that may raise red flags for the interviewer.

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4. Questions for the Employer?

WHAT TYPE OF PERSON DOES WELL HERE?

This is an excellent opportunity to ask a question that will give you a glimpse of what the employer places a value on.

HOW DO THEY DESCRIBE THEIR IDEAL CANDIDATE?

IS THIS YOU?

- Remember to feed this information back in the 2nd round interview.

5. Why do you want to work here?

- This is the question that employers will use to ascertain if you have done your homework. You have already touched on this in your elevator pitch when you mentioned why you had applied for this role.
- This is an opportunity to demonstrate that you know the industry, competition and the direction that the company seems to be going in. Know their values and mission statement and if possible demonstrate that you can align yourself with them.

Seven Commonly Asked Questions in Interview continued

6. Talk me through your CV?

Remember this is not the same as “Tell me about yourself”.

- This is an opportunity to sell back your experience to date.
- Tell them where you are going to start and then take them through your roles but this is not about telling them about everything that you have ever done.
- Be strategic, in advance of the interview as with the rest of the questions write out this answer using the following format.
- Summary of the role, key skills gained relevant to the role that you are applying to and key achievements.
- This is an opportunity to create your narrative and highlight a common thread throughout your journey.
- Don't underestimate your opportunity to sell your suitability here, always remember to tie back to the role that you are applying to.

7. Salary Expectations

- This is a challenging question; the first thing to do is research salary ranges in your field. Check out the range of salary guides produced yearly.
- Avoid discussing salary if possible in the interview as in the first instance it is very easy to oversell or undersell yourself.
- An answer that works very well is *“This is a role that I really want and if you were to make me a fair offer, I would be more than happy to accept”.*