Hi, I’m Gina.

Welcome to Oxford Online English!

In this lesson, you can learn how to answer job interview questions in English.

Have you ever had a job interview in English?

If English is not your first language, answering job interview questions in English can add

stress to the experience.

However, there are some simple, effective tips you can use to give better answers to

job interview questions in clear, natural English.

You’ll learn about these tips and tricks during this lesson!

You’ll see eight common job interview questions and four different techniques you can use.

You’ll see how to answer these common job interview questions, using the techniques

we’ll show you.

Let’s start with our eight common job interview questions.

Tell me a little about yourself.

Where do you see yourself five years from now?

What are your strengths/weaknesses?

What is your leadership style?

Can you tell me about a time when you demonstrated ----?

--> For example, can you tell me about a time when you demonstrated strong leadership?

Or, can you tell me about a time when you demonstrated excellent customer service?

Tell me about a time you dealt with a challenging situation at work.

Why do you want this job?

Why should we hire you?

What does concise mean?

It means that you don’t waste words.

If you speak concisely, you get right to the point and don’t add anything unnecessary

to your answer.

Let’s look at two questions in this section:

Tell me a little about yourself.

Where do you see yourself five years from now?

These are very common job interview questions, and they’re also very open questions.

Open questions can be dangerous.

Do you know why?

It’s because you might ramble.

Ramble means to talk a lot without saying much.

This won’t give the interviewer a good impression!

Let’s start by looking at a sample answer to the question tell me a little about yourself.

Well, I was born in a small town in northern Italy, where I also went to school.

I studied engineering at university and then…

So, after I graduated…

I mean, I did a master’s degree first, but then I worked for a small firm in my hometown

for a few years, which was great fun.

After that…

Okay, we can stop there.

Do you think this is a good answer?

Why or why not?

It’s not a very good answer.

Why not?

There are three things the candidate does which you should try to avoid:

One: the candidate includes lots of unnecessary details.

Two: he doesn’t speak in full sentences.

Three: he doesn’t have any clear direction.

If you do these things, your answer to this answer will be long and unfocused.

What’s the solution?

You need to be more concise.

But how?

First, avoid unnecessary details.

Don’t give your entire work history; the interviewers can get that from your CV if

they want it.

Secondly, speak in full sentences with a clear beginning and end.

This means you need to be thinking ahead while you speak.

Thirdly, think about what you want to highlight in your answer, and put it at the beginning.

This will give your answer a clear direction.

Let’s look at some examples of this:

I’ve always loved designing and building things, so I suppose it’s natural that I

became an engineer.

I’ve worked in a variety of roles and companies, which I’ve learned a lot from, but now I’m

ready for a new challenge.

What do you think?

Better?

It’s much better.

Let's look at the start.

Immediately, the candidate identifies a key feature (he loves designing and building things),

and links it to his engineering career.

The candidate’s answer is very concise: there are no unnecessary details, and it also

has a clear end.

What about our second question?

Here’s one possible answer:

There are many things I could be doing.

I’d like to have, you know, some sort of progress…

What I mean is that I don’t just want to be doing the same things I’m doing now.

I like to be moving forward in my career, for example…

Err…

I definitely see myself in a better position than I am now.

Good answer?

Bad answer?

Okay, it’s not terrible, but it could be much better.

The candidate is rambling.

She doesn’t make her point clear, she doesn’t speak in full sentences, and she wastes words

on unclear and unnecessary ideas.

Here’s a better answer:

I don’t know exactly, but the most important thing is that I continue to learn and grow

in my career.

I’m the kind of person who needs new challenges to stay focused.

I might even start my own business, because that’s something I’ve always wanted to

do at some point in my life.

This is much more concise.

The candidate’s answer has a clear beginning and end, and doesn’t waste words.

So, what can you do to make your answers more concise?

The best way to practise is to record yourself speaking.

You could record yourself answering these two questions.

Then, listen to yourself.

Try to find sentences which you don’t finish, or words which don’t add anything to your

meaning.

Then, try again.

Keep practising until your answer is clean and focused.

Next, let’s look at another point which will make your answers clearer and more structured:

signposting language.

Signposting language means words and phrases which show your listener where you’re going.

For example, the words ‘for example’ are signposting language.

When I say for example, you know I’m about to give you an example.

Simple, right?

Yes, but it’s also very important.

Without signposting language, longer answers can lose focus and be hard to follow.

You’ll see answers to two questions in this section:

What are your strengths and weaknesses?

What is your leadership style?

Let’s look at a sample answer to the first question.

I’m very good at working with other people.

In my last job, I always tried to encourage my colleagues and create a good atmosphere.

I suppose I can be a little bit careless sometimes.

I’m not the kind of person who focuses on details.

I’m very calm, and I can keep a cool head in very stressful situations.

What do you think?

It’s not bad, but it could be hard to follow.

The candidate jumps around a lot.

Adding signposting language can make a big difference.

Let’s see how. Notice that the content is exactly the same.

We haven’t changed the candidate’s basic ideas at all.

However, the answer is now much clearer and easier to follow.

Using signposting language like this can make a big difference!

Let’s look at our second question for this section.

What is your leadership style?

Look at a sample answer which doesn’t use signposting language.

I’m quite a hands-off manager.

If one of my team has a project, I’ll keep an eye on things, but I don’t need to be

involved in every detail.

I’m very approachable.

I make sure my team know they can come to me with problems or questions at any time.

I like to lead from the front.

If everyone’s working late to meet a deadline, I make sure I’m there with them.

Now, look at some signposting language you could use in this answer.

Now, you have a job to do!

I want you to pause the video and put these signposting phrases into the answer you just

saw.

Go on, pause the video and do it now!

Ready?

Let’s look at the answers:

How did you do?

Were you able to use the signposting language?

Remember, signposting language might seem very simple, but don’t forget about it.

Using signposting language well makes your answers much clearer and easier to follow.

Now, let’s look at another way to make your answers more structured, clearer and

more focused.

You’ll see answers to these two questions in this section.

Can you tell me about a time when you demonstrated -----?

Tell me about a time you dealt with a challenging situation at work.

These questions are likely to need longer answers.

With longer answers, it’s really important that your answers have a clear structure.

Otherwise, your meaning might get lost!

There’s a method you can use here; it’s called the STAR method.

STAR means situation, task, action, result.

So, you start your answer by giving the context: what was the situation, and what did you have

to do?

Then, you talk about what you actually did, and what the end result was.

Let’s do an example together.

Can you tell me about a time when you demonstrated excellent customer service?

Let’s use the STAR method.

There was one time when a customer’s order hadn’t arrived, and we didn’t know what

had happened to it.

The customer was very unhappy, and I had to try to solve the problem for him.

I arranged for a replacement to be sent, thinking we could find out what happened to the previous

order later.

In the end, the customer was happy that I could solve his problem quickly and simply.

You see how following this method lets you build clear, structured answers?

situation, task,

action, result

Let’s do another example.

Think about our second question.

Tell me about a time you dealt with a challenging situation at work.

This time, you’re going to try!

Pause the video and make an answer to this question.

Your answer should be four sentences long.

Follow the STAR method, one sentence for each part.

How was that?

Did you find it easy to make your own answer?

Let’s look at one way you could answer this question.

Once, we realised three days before a project deadline that two of our teams were using

incompatible software tools.

As the project manager, I had to find a way to deal with this without causing any delays.

I talked to both team leaders and we made a plan for one team to convert their work

into a different format, with help from some staff from other departments.

It was very close but we managed to get everything done on time.

Again, you can see the STAR method in action:

situation, task,

action, result.

If you combine this STAR method with the signposting language you learned about in part two, you’ll

be able to express yourself clearly in English, even in longer and more complex answers.

Finally, let’s look at another tip you can use to impress your interviewer and increase

your chances of getting that job offer!

You’re going to learn about mirroring and how it can help you.

What does mirroring mean?

It means using some of the same words and expressions as the person you’re talking

to.

For example, if the interviewer asks you:

How do you think your values fit our company culture?

You could start your answer by saying:

I think my values are a good fit for your company culture for two reasons.

One…

Mirroring has several benefits.

First, it keeps your answers focused.

By using the same words and phrases, your answer will be relevant.

More importantly, it shows the interviewer that you’re listening and that you care

about the questions and the company.

Mirroring is powerful.

We unconsciously mirror people when we like or respect them.

Using mirroring consciously will help you to make a better impression.

You should start by researching the company you’re applying to.

How do they describe themselves?

What adjectives do they use on their website or in their advertising?

Also, read the job advertisement carefully.

Pay attention to the words they use to describe the candidate they’re looking for.

Use these words in your answers.

Let’s think about this question:

Why do you want this job?

Imagine you’re applying to a company which describes itself as ‘innovative’ and ‘forward-looking’.

In the job advertisement, they say they want someone who is ‘creative’ and ‘flexible’.

Here’s a good sample answer:

Creativity is very important to me, and I’ve always wanted to work in an environment where

I can innovate and find my own solutions to challenges.

I also feel that your company will continue to evolve in the future, and I like the idea

of contributing to that development.

The candidate doesn’t use all four words, but she does reference all four ideas.

For example, instead of ‘forward-looking’, she talks about the company evolving in the

future.

In this way, she shows that she’s in tune with the company’s values.

Let’s do one more example.

Imagine you’re applying to a company which describes itself as ‘commanding respect’

and which talks with pride about its long history.

In the job advertisement, they say they want someone who has ‘great communication skills’

and ‘passion for helping others’.

During the interview, they ask:

Why should we hire you?

Here’s a good sample answer, using mirroring.

I believe that great customer service starts with good communication, which is a strength

of mine.

I also think that in customer service, you need to care about what you’re doing.

I care about helping others and as such I believe you would find me to be a respectful

and effective team member who can fit with the established traditions of your company.

Again, the candidate doesn’t necessarily use the words directly, but he does reference

all four of the ideas.

Be careful if you use mirroring; you don’t want to sound like a robot!

This is why you sometimes need to change words and phrases slightly, instead of repeating

them again and again.

Now, you’ve seen four effective techniques you can use to give better answers to job

interview questions in English.

Remember: be concise, use signposting language, use the STAR method to structure longer answers,

and mirror key words and phrases.

We hope it was useful.

Good luck if you have a job interview coming up soon!

Thanks for watching!

See you next time!