Don't just read these questions—practice and rehearse the answers in advance. Don't let the employer interview be the first time you actually formulate an answer in spoken words. It is not enough to think about them in your head—practice! Sit down with your teammates and go through all the questions. Make the most of every single practice interview opportunity by being fully prepared!

Remember to answer each interview question behaviorally, whether it is a behavioral question or not. The easiest way to do this is to use an example from your background, experience, and profiles. Then use the S-T-A-R approach to make the answer a STAR: talk about a Situation or Task (S-T), the Action you took (A) and the Results achieved (R). This is what makes your interview answer uniquely yours and will make your answer a star!

Tough Interview Question - What is your greatest strength?

Similar interview questions:
What do you do best?
What is an area where you are considered to be an expert?
Is there an area where you are the go-to person on your team?

Why the interviewer is asking this question:
The interviewer is attempting to identify your core competencies and whether they align with the needs of the role. The interviewer is also attempting to find out if you have an accurate view of self in relation to what is truly your greatest strength. Most practiced interviewers are aware that candidates often present false strengths in hopes of falsely aligning with the position, so a typical behavioral follow-on question is: "Can you give me an example of how you've used that strength in your job?" Or an even tougher question is to time-bound the behavioral question: "Can you give me an example of how you've used that strength in your job in the past week?" So don't try to fake your way through the answer. Another experienced interviewer method to get past your practiced answer is to ask: "What is your second greatest strength?" and "What is your third greatest strength?"

The best approach to answering this question:
We all have multiple areas of strength, so the key is to select behavioral traits which align with the needs of the role and have examples to show these traits as strengths. Do your research in advance of the interview to know what the core competencies are for the role. Give an example of applying your strength in your current role.

An example of how to best answer this question:
"I have quite a few strengths…(pause to think)…probably my greatest strength is my reliability. Part of my reliability is consistently being there, I have a 100% on time record at work and have had it for the last three years. But it's more than that. People know that they can trust me to do what I say I will do, they trust me to deliver. For example, my boss had a difficult project that needed to be completed in a short amount of time. He asked me in a meeting with the rest of our team to take on this project. After the meeting, he told me that he gave me the project because he knows that I will deliver on time. He's right. I just delivered the project yesterday, a day ahead of schedule. And it was right the first time, no corrections needed."

An example of how you should *not* answer this question:
"Well, I think I'm pretty much awesome in any and every area you can think of. You name it, I have it covered. In fact, I really don't have any weaknesses, pretty much everything is my strength. So if you were going to ask that question about what is my greatest weakness, don't, because I don't really have any. That really bugs me when people ask that question, because it assumes that I have a weakness of some sort and I don't. If you look up "awesome" in the dictionary, my name will be there."

Tough Interview Question - What is your greatest weakness?

Similar interview questions:
In what areas are you the weakest?
What are the areas where you need to improve your skills the most?
Are there areas where you need to develop your skills further?
What would your boss say is the area where you need further improvement?

Why the interviewer is asking this question:
The interviewer is exploring three things in this one question: 1) whether you are self-aware; 2) whether you are honest; and 3) whether you seek to improve. This is the question where many interviewees somehow think it is permissible to lie, yet an experienced interviewer can nail someone in their lie pretty quickly. Most interview books say to give a strength, but present it as a weakness, such as: "I work too much. I just work and work and work and don't know when to stop." Here's how a practiced interviewer will pierce through that lie: "So you think working too much is a weakness? So you want to be working less?" There is no good response when you are caught in a lie.

The best approach to answering this question:
Be truthful. That doesn't mean you need to present your greatest life weakness or something personal about you. Keep the interview focused on your education and experience. Choose a true weakness, yet choose one which you are actively working to change and improve.

An example of how to best answer this question for experienced candidates:
"I have had problems in the past with taking on too much work and then not delivering a quality and timely product because I was stretched too thin in too many areas. I know it's a weakness, because it reflects negatively on my end deliverables. I want to deliver quality in everything I do, but I have not always been able to do so when multiple priorities stack up. Part of the difficulty is that work was coming from outside groups and my boss did not have visibility into the requests being made. So I developed a project prioritization spreadsheet that I would review with my boss whenever a new request came in for additional work. My boss would review and approve moving projects up and down in priority based on the new requests. That way it allowed me to focus on completing what is most important to my boss with the highest quality, while moving the less important projects off to the side until time is available for completion. This is still a work in progress for me and I still need to get better at this, but it's an area where I am focused on continuously improving."

An example of how to best answer this question for entry level candidates:
"I have had problems in the past with taking on too many projects and then not delivering quality and, in some cases, not delivering on time. I was simply stretched too thin in too many areas with not enough time to deliver in a quality manner. I think that's the opportunity that is there as a new college student, you want to do everything and be involved in everything. However, I've learned that I'm not at my best when I have too many conflicting priorities. I've had to cut back on some of the less important extracurricular activities to focus on delivering my academic projects with the highest quality. This prioritization of my work has carried over to my work life with my recent internship. I had several key deliverables that were due the same week, so I met with my boss to prioritize the delivery schedule. She helped me focus on both the timing and the quality of the

delivery. In the end, all three projects were delivered with high quality results. Would you like me to tell you more about them?"

An example of how you should *not* answer this question:
"My greatest weakness is that I'm a workaholic. I don't have any balance in my life and tend to stay late at work to complete all of my projects, often until 3 in the morning. I'm usually the first one in and the last one to leave. I know I should probably address my workaholic tendencies, but I know they help me to get everything completed. So I just keep on working, even when I'm not at work. As a result, my personal life has suffered, I'm recently divorced, my kids say they never get to see me, which is true. My life is a train wreck due to working all of these crazy hours. I just keep working and working."

Tough Interview Question - Do you handle pressure well?

Similar interview questions:
How do you react when under pressure?
How are you with making deadlines?
How do you respond when you need to deliver something without having enough time to do the job correctly?
How do you respond to stress?

Why the interviewer is asking this question:
Most jobs involve some amount of pressure or stress. However, by the interviewer asking this question, it is an indicator that the job has some level of pressure or stress. It may have been why a past person has not performed well in the role, so it is being used now as a gating question for potential candidates. The interviewer is looking for your personal assessment of how well you respond to pressure and stress in delivering in your role.

The best approach to answering this question:
Use a specific example of when you successfully delivered under a deadline or under pressure to deliver. Use an example where you not only delivered on time, but also exceeded expectations.

An example of how to best answer this question for experienced candidates:
"I do handle pressure well, in fact, let me give you example. We recently had a request for a new feature to be added to our product. We had already mapped out the release schedule without this feature, then management decided to add the feature and keep the release cycle. As the lead for the team, it was my responsibility to deliver a bug-free product on time. Let me tell you what we did to meet this new schedule…"

An example of how to best answer this question for entry level candidates:
"I do handle pressure well, in fact, let me give you example. In my recent internship, I was asked to add a new feature halfway through the product development cycle. This was not part of the original scope and it meant that it would take extra work on my part to deliver it by the end of the internship. Here is what I did to deliver this expanded request by the end of my internship…"

An example of how you should *not* answer this question:
"There are lots of times that there is pressure to deliver in my job and most of the time it is due to management not knowing what I actually do and how long it takes to deliver. So I have started wearing ear buds and just ignoring people when they stop by my cube. If they try to interrupt me, I just point at my screen to tell them I am busy. That has reduced a lot of the stress and pressure in my work…"

Tough Interview Question - Why are you interested in our company?

Why are you interested in our company?

Similar interview questions:
What is it about our company that you find interesting or attractive?
Is there a specific part of our company where you have interest in working?
Are you interested in our company specifically or just in the job?
Why do you want to work for us?

Why the interviewer is asking this question:
This is a reverse sell question. The interviewer is getting ready to sell you on why the company is a great place to work, but before doing so, gives you the opportunity to take that sell as far as you can on your own. Asking this question is usually a good sign, since the interviewer is ready to go into sell mode. However, this question can sometimes be asked as a standard part of the entry level interview slate, so it's not always a final indicator.

The best approach to answering this question:
This is one step beyond the "What do you know about our company?" question by asking you specifically why you are interested. So it may be a follow-up to the "What do you know…" question or may be asked as a combo question. Either way, you need to have completed your detailed employer research in advance and be able to make the sell to the interviewer on why you are a great fit for the company's needs.

An example of how to best answer this question for experienced candidates:
"I'm interested in Google at a high level, but also specifically for what's being done in the department for this role. My electrical engineering experience has been heavily software focused and my recent background working with Tesla directly aligns with Google's needs for this role within the Self-Driving Car Project…"

An example of how to best answer this question for entry level candidates:
"I have read about your company's reputation for building and growing your leadership talent from within. There are not many companies who can say that their current CEO was a college grad hire, yours is one. So it is your company's commitment to not only that first entry level job, but also the commitment to career development at each subsequent stage of my career that interests me the most. I want to work for a company where I do not have to change employers to advance in my career…"

An example of how you should *not* answer this question:
"My uncle worked for General Motors and it seemed to be a solid employer for him until he got laid off in a downsizing. I don't think that was his fault. But everyone knows GM and even though they've fallen behind the foreign auto makers, it is probably one of the better US auto makers…"

Tough Interview Question - Tell me about how you persuade people to accept your point of view

Tell me about how you persuade people to accept your point of view.

Similar interview questions:
What do you do to influence others?
Do you consider yourself to be a leader or a follower?
How do you get others to do what you want?
Do you consider yourself to be an influencer?

Why the interviewer is asking this question:
The interviewer is asking about your persuasion skills and how they are used. A good interviewer will drill

down into specific times when you influenced others, including the circumstances of the situation, what you did specifically and the eventual outcome.

The best approach to answering this question:
You need to choose a time you influenced others on a decision which was clearly the right decision. Make it data driven, not opinion driven. If data is not available, use testing to gather the data. And recognize that you should not make it appear that you are inflexible in considering the views of others. Avoid any times where you attempted to influence others unsuccessfully or where you were attempting to influence others in questionable situations.

An example of how to best answer this question for experienced candidates:
"In my current position, my department had been continuing to work with a specific vendor for many years simply due to inertia. It was easiest to simply renew the vendor's contract each year, rather than consider other alternatives. While my manager initially objected to considering alternatives, I explained that I would like to take time to evaluate the top vendors in the field and present the alternatives. It would still be her final decision on who to work with over the long term. We considered a total of five vendors, including the incumbent. The end result was the selection of a new vendor with better features and functionality for our department at a cost savings of more than $30,000 per year…"

An example of how to best answer this question for entry level candidates:
"While working on my recent internship, I needed access to data from a different department to complete one segment of my project. The head of that department initially refused my request for access to the data on the basis of my being an intern. I went to my manager requesting assistance and she said it was a learning opportunity for me to work it out on my own. So I asked the department manager to meet in person. At that meeting, I walked him through the scope of my project, how the data would be used and how it would be kept secure. Once he understood the actual use of the data and its security, he authorized my access later that day…"

An example of how you should *not* answer this question:
"Wow, great question! Because that happens to me all the time! I spend a lot of time trying to get others to see my point of view, especially on political issues. It's amazing how many ignorant people there are in this world. So I spend a lot of time posting to Internet sites where some of these ignorant people hang out. It takes time, but I am hoping that over time my comments will finally ring true with just one or two people. If I can convert even one or two people over to my point of view, well, then it's all worth it…"

Tough Interview Question - Tell me about a time when you had too many things to do and you had to prioritize your tasks

Similar interview questions:

What do you when you cannot complete all of your work in the assigned time?
Give me an example of how you prioritize your projects.
What is most difficult for you in prioritizing your time?
Do you have difficulty with prioritization?

Why the interviewer is asking this question:

This question is both about how you handle priorities as well as working under pressure. Most jobs entail some level of inability to complete all tasks, so the ability to prioritize in a confident manner is a key work competency, both for individual contributors as well as managers.

The best approach to answering this question:

Focus on a time when you had to get others involved in setting and approving the prioritization of your work tasks and/or projects. Ideally, this would include your manager, but could also include other team members as well as external managers who are requesting your time.

An example of how to best answer this question for experienced candidates:

"My job has multiple conflicting priorities where it can be difficult to know what is most important and urgent. My boss and I worked out an important/urgent scale for rating tasks so that it is clear what takes the highest priority. If something is both important and urgent, it gets highest priority. Important but not urgent is next and urgent but not important is next, then not important and not urgent is last. My boss knows the rating system and even codes request as IU, INU, UNI and NINU when sending them to me. As a result, my overall productivity in the past year has gone up considerably as benchmarked against prior to using our prioritization rating system…"

An example of how to best answer this question for entry level candidates:

"During my summer internship, I was assigned both a primary project as well as maintenance of an existing project. However, the existing project was getting so many support requests that it made it difficult for me to schedule time for my primary project. So two weeks into my internship, I met with my boss to discuss the prioritization conflict and we were able to work out a schedule that allowed me to respond to both the most urgent and important support tasks as well as completing my primary project. The end result is that I received two awards that summer, both for my primary project as well as my quick response to several important issues with my support project…"

An example of how you should not answer this question:

"Well, I recently had to decide between going out to party with my friends or studying for midterms the following day. So I decided I would do both. I would go out to party with my friends first, then I would come home to study. Win, win, right? But I got so hammered at the party that I ended up passing out, then woke up in the middle of the night not knowing where I was. I finally found my way back home and started studying and I know what you might be thinking, but I ended up getting an A on my midterm. So I can clearly multitask my priorities…"

Tough Interview Question - What is your greatest weakness?

Similar interview questions:
In what areas are you the weakest?
What are the areas where you need to improve your skills the most?
Are there areas where you need to develop your skills further?
What would your boss say is the area where you need further improvement?

Why the interviewer is asking this question:
The interviewer is exploring three things in this one question: 1) whether you are self-aware; 2) whether you are honest; and 3) whether you seek to improve. This is the question where many interviewees somehow think it is permissible to lie, yet an experienced interviewer can nail someone in their lie pretty quickly. Most interview books say to give a strength, but present it as a weakness, such as: "I work too much. I just work and work and work and don't know when to stop." Here's how a practiced interviewer will pierce through that lie: "So you think working too much is a weakness? So you want to be working less?" There is no good response when you are caught in a lie.

The best approach to answering this question:

Be truthful. That doesn't mean you need to present your greatest life weakness or something personal about you. Keep the interview focused on your education and experience. Choose a true weakness, yet choose one which you are actively working to change and improve.

An example of how to best answer this question for experienced candidates:

"I have had problems in the past with taking on too much work and then not delivering a quality and timely product because I was stretched too thin in too many areas. I know it's a weakness, because it reflects negatively on my end deliverables. I want to deliver quality in everything I do, but I have not always been able to do so when multiple priorities stack up. Part of the difficulty is that work was coming from outside groups and my boss did not have visibility into the requests being made. So I developed a project prioritization spreadsheet that I would review with my boss whenever a new request came in for additional work. My boss would review and approve moving projects up and down in priority based on the new requests. That way it allowed me to focus on completing what is most important to my boss with the highest quality, while moving the less important projects off to the side until time is available for completion. This is still a work in progress for me and I still need to get better at this, but it's an area where I am focused on continuously improving."

An example of how to best answer this question for entry level candidates:

"I have had problems in the past with taking on too many projects and then not delivering quality and, in some cases, not delivering on time. I was simply stretched too thin in too many areas with not enough time to deliver in a quality manner. I think that's the opportunity that is there as a new college student, you want to do everything and be involved in everything. However, I've learned that I'm not at my best when I have too many conflicting priorities. I've had to cut back on some of the less important extracurricular activities to focus on delivering my academic projects with the highest quality. This prioritization of my work has carried over to my work life with my recent internship. I had several key deliverables that were due the same week, so I met with my boss to prioritize the delivery schedule. She helped me focus on both the timing and the quality of the delivery. In the end, all three projects were delivered with high quality results. Would you like me to tell you more about them?"

An example of how you should *not* answer this question:

"My greatest weakness is that I'm a workaholic. I don't have any balance in my life and tend to stay late at work to complete all of my projects, often until 3 in the morning. I'm usually the first one in and the last one to leave. I know I should probably address my workaholic tendencies, but I know they help me to get everything completed. So I just keep on working, even when I'm not at work. As a result, my personal life has suffered, I'm recently divorced, my kids say they never get to see me, which is true. My life is a train wreck due to working all of these crazy hours. I just keep working and working."

Tough Interview Question - Do you handle conflict well?

Similar interview questions:

Tell me about a time where you had a disagreement with your boss or coworker.
If you see someone doing something clearly wrong at work, would you confront that person or ignore it?
How do you handle it when someone requests that you do something you don't want to do?
Do you ever get into arguments with others?

Why the interviewer is asking this question:

The reason for the question may vary based on the employer. Some employers value employees speaking up when they disagree, while other employers do not. At Amazon, we had a core value of "Will disagree and commit." Meaning that we wanted people who disagreed to voice their disagreement. Yet when the issue was fully vetted, we would commit to the final decision, even if we disagreed. So you may want to do some background on the cultural values of the employer.

The best approach to answering this question:

Focus on how you actively work through or resolve conflict. Give an example of a time when you had conflict and what you did specifically to resolve the conflict, ideally in a positive way for both parties.

An example of how to best answer this question for experienced candidates:

"Conflict can be a part of getting things accomplished. Usually I've seen conflict arise due to differing priorities, both internal and external. Let me give you an example of a recent conflict I had internally with a person in another department and what we did to work together to resolve our different priorities…"

An example of how to best answer this question for entry level candidates:

"I do handle conflict well. I try to understand the needs of the other person and look for a way where we can find a common middle ground. As an example, on my internship, there was a conflict within our team over who was going to take responsibility for one of the key deliverables…"

An example of how you should not answer this question:

"Well, conflict is why I'm leaving my current job. I don't need the stress of the constant conflict going on all around me. I tried wearing ear buds, but that didn't help, I would still get people yelling at me above my music. I tend to just walk away. So here I am…"