

What Are Your Strengths & Weaknesses?

Cheat Sheet



DO'S:

- Take the time to prepare your answer. You know this question is going to be asked so there is no excuse not to be ready with a laser-focused answer
- Make a list of the strengths that you have, and then ask a few coworkers or colleagues to tell you what your strengths are (and make another list). Compare the two lists and decide on which strengths you want to put forward in your answer to this question
- Tailor your answer to the position you are interviewing for. Choose to discuss strengths that are relevant for the position. Decide if the strengths you came up with in the previous step apply.
- Carefully analyze the job description to discover the strengths that the company is interested in and make an effort to project them in your answer.
- Support each strength with concrete examples of you demonstrating that you have the strength.

DON'TS:

- Think you can walk into the interview and “wing” the answer to this question. Anything less than a perfect answer is a missed opportunity
- Offer up any strengths that are not related to the position you are interviewing for
- Be too cocky or overconfident
- Stuff your answer with too many strengths, especially strengths that aren't relevant to the position you are interviewing for
- Think you can be clever and offer up a weakness disguised as a strength (i.e. being a workaholic or “caring too much”)
- Make claims that you can't back up with concrete examples

Scenario 1

Applying for a sales position

A

I think my biggest strength is that I am an excellent communicator, having always been able to quickly and easily convey ideas and concepts to others while making them feel comfortable and unthreatened at the same time. I've found that this has helped me become an elite sales associate because it allows me to build trust with my clients, which leads to the exchange of information. This information then helps me identify the right "buttons to push" and ultimately paves the way to the final sale. This was most evident in my closing of the X-Tel Wireless deal, where the strong rapport I built with the CFO lead to a quick and easy close at 25% over asking price. It's this same communicative style I hope to use to my advantage as Executive Sales Manager for Turner and Associates.

Scenario 2

Applying for an office administrator position

A

Being a high-level multitasker has allowed me to quickly advance from being an entry-level part-time filing assistant to a full-time switchboard operator, and then on to administrative assistant for the CEO in my last role as Peterson Corp. In being able to balance and fulfill several tasks at one time, I've become a valuable commodity in the office environment who is known for being reliable, efficient and composed under the pressure of moving deadlines. I believe my strength in multitasking will greatly assist me in the position of Office Manager with JB Holdings and will help facilitate making improvements to the processes you mentioned in the job description.

Scenario 3

Applying for a restaurant manager

A

If you took a poll of my last three employers regarding my strengths, i believe they would all unanimously say that my greatest strength is my versatility. At all three restaurants I was hired for a single role, and at all three I finished my time having done nearly every job in the restaurant (and been given much more responsibility). I've bussed tables, been a waitress, been a hostess and a bartender. I've also been a shift manager, and a food and beverage manager, helping place the food orders for the restaurant and keeping track of budgets. There is no task that is too small for me, and I take price in being able to be counted on when my manager sends me. In hiring me to be a manager with the Crystal Lounge and Bar, you would be hiring someone that is well versed in all aspects of the restaurant business who can be depended on to get the job done, regardless of how big or small the job is.

What's Your Greatest Weakness?

Cheat Sheet



DO'S:

1. **Admit Your Weakness Honestly**
 - Don't try and outsmart the Hiring Manager...be honest! (See the #3 "Don't" below to make sure that you don't make the wrong choice though)
2. **BUT Demonstrate How You Conquered**
 - It's ok to admit a weakness if you demonstrate the steps you've gone through to correct it
 - Use a Success Story from your past to show how you conquered your weakness
3. **Be Ready For A Follow Up Question**
 - This question can often be followed up with a question like "How can I be sure your weakness won't be a detriment to my company?"
 - You need to be prepared for any follow up question to be thrown at you

DON'TS:

1. **Think You're Perfect**
 - "I don't really have any weaknesses," is not an acceptable response. This will get you crossed off the list immediately.
2. **Use a Strength As Weakness**
 - "I work too hard," "I'm a perfectionist," and other similar "weaknesses" are also not acceptable.
3. **Choose a Core Competency**
 - As we said in the "Don'ts" section, you need to be honest. But be careful not to choose a weakness that is important to the job you are applying for (ex. A "core competency". Don't say you are bad at typing if you're applying to be an administrator)
4. **Place the Blame**
 - Blaming your old boss or another coworker for your weakness is a surefire way to get a "pass" from the hiring manager. Own it!

Scenario 1

If Your Weakness Is: Shyness

A

"I think my biggest weakness is that I am a shy person, which can sometimes prevent me from speaking up in important meetings (or in front of large groups of people) or having one-on-one discussions with authority figures. I became aware that this weakness was affecting my ability to do my job at the highest level, so I began taking Toastmasters workshops and also had a few sessions with a psychologist. Both of these resources have helped me come out of my shell and have made my shyness less of a hindrance in the workplace."

Scenario 2

If Your Weakness Is: Working In Groups

A

"Coming from the computer science industry, I've grown accustomed to working long hours on my own with little need for working in a group dynamic. Because of this, I have found it challenging to work effectively in a group setting. Since so many companies rely on group work for problem solving and completing tasks, I recognized the need for myself to improve in this area. So I started by making an effort to spend more time socially with the colleagues I was asked to work with, something I had never done in the past. During this time, I communicated with them that group work was something I struggled with in the past, and asked that they offer advice and tips where necessary. Finally, I focused on keeping an open mind throughout the process and focusing my energy on how best I could utilize my skills for the betterment of the group. This strategy allowed me to become a much better communicator and more importantly, has given me the experience necessary to better understand how to succeed in a group dynamic."

What You Should Do Next:

Congratulations!

Now you're prepared for the dreaded "Greatest Weakness" interview question.

Having said that there are over 100 possible OTHER interview questions you could possibly face!

That's why you really need to get our 3-step method to answering ANY other interview question perfectly....



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