

## 3 Ways to Answer ‘What Are Your Weaknesses?’ in a Job Interview

Making it to the interview stage is a huge win during a job search. But what happens when they ask, “What are your weaknesses?” It’s a tough one—because not only is it hard to admit your faults, but you also don’t want to hurt your chances of getting hired. Luckily it’s one of the most common interview questions, so, knowing that, you can prepare a rock-solid reply before you’re even asked.

Our friends at NerdWallet suggest practicing these three answers to blow your interviewer away, plus they share a few tips on how to prepare your own killer response:

### **Response No. 1: Show how you overcame a challenge.**

Answering “What are your weaknesses?” is a great chance to show how you take initiative and deal with setbacks. Take this opportunity to share how you met an obstacle in the past.

A nice sample response: “At my summer internship, I had a really hard time letting my manager know I was overloaded with work. I was close to burning out at the end of each week, so we came up with a plan to share my duties with another intern. I realized that telling the truth didn’t make me seem inefficient; it improved the quality of my work and of the company’s output overall.”

This is a great answer because you admitted there was a problem, but you ended on a positive note. You snuck in an example of teamwork and working well with management, too.

### **What not to say: “I don’t have any weaknesses.”**

Steer clear of this answer in a job interview. Your employer wants to hear not only what your limitations might be in the workplace, but also how shrewdly you approach such a hard question. A sharp, well thought-out response will win you serious points at this important stage in the hiring process. On the flip side, showing you’re not aware of your own limitations can count against you, says Susan Hosage, a human resources consultant based in Scranton, Pennsylvania.

“Unfortunately, such job hopefuls can frequently be resistant to initial training and ongoing development and, for that reason, often do not make the best hires,” she says.

### **Response No. 2: Point out a skill you’re actively working on.**

As long as you say you’re committed to continuously improving, there’s no harm in pointing out a skill you haven’t mastered yet. Mentioning you could further develop your industry knowledge or your understanding of advanced applications in Excel are both good options, Hosage says.

A strong potential response: “As an English major, I didn’t get the chance to use Excel to balance a budget or manage ongoing projects. But since graduation, I’ve been using it to keep track of my expenses, and it’s really helpful! I’d like to take an online class to get even better at it.”

You’ll get bonus points for adding that you like to learn new things, especially if it shows you’re willing to expand the scope of your knowledge beyond what you studied in school. English major to aspiring Excel whiz is an impressive jump.

**What not to say: “I’m a perfectionist.”**

One approach lots of people take is to answer with a weakness that’s a strength in disguise, like the classic “I’m a perfectionist” or “I work too hard.” But talking about what you could improve on is an opportunity to show you’re sincere. Employers will want to see that you’ll be honest and straightforward in the workplace.

**Response No. 3: Choose a weakness that won’t seriously affect the job.**

It’s a safe bet to point out a weakness that won’t be a huge obstacle in your new position. If you apply for an assistant publicist job at a public-relations firm that requires you to cold-call media outlets and write press releases, your employer won’t want to hear that you get nervous on the phone or have trouble meeting deadlines. But as a recent graduate, it’s unlikely you’ve had much experience managing others.

So it’s less problematic to say, “Since I’ve never had a managerial role, sometimes I’m uncomfortable asking others to take on a task. But since I’d like to run my own PR firm one day, I’m excited to learn from my supervisors what strategies work best for managing others.” You were able to include a reference to your future plans, which your employer will be glad to hear you’re thinking about.

Talk about your weaknesses the right way, and you’ll demonstrate that as an employee, you’ll be self-aware and committed to your own development—qualities any boss would love.

*This article originally appeared on NerdWallet. Brianna McGurran is a staff writer covering education and life after college for NerdWallet.*

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