

6 Open-Ended Questions



Introduction

There are six behavioral questions that interviewers ask in almost every interview, no matter what position you are pursuing. Interviewers usually ask all of these questions in some form. They may ask them in the exact way described here or the interviewer may use different words, but the intention is the same.

These questions are difficult for everyone to answer because they are ambiguous. If you don't know what the interviewer is looking for, you may not be able to provide the information the interviewer is seeking. But don't worry, we are here to help you.

We have developed frameworks that show you how to answer these questions step-by-step, and examples of how you apply these frameworks to create your answer. If you follow these steps to write, and practice, your own answers for these 6 questions, you will be in excellent shape to nail your next interview!

Tell Me About Yourself.

What Do They Want To Know?

“Tell me about yourself” may seem like just a conversation-starter, but it’s really a way for the interviewer to learn:

- Your background and professional experience
- Whether or not you’re a good fit for the role
- Your likelihood of success

You need to be able to respond succinctly, in less than two minutes, or risk losing the interviewer’s attention.

The best way to answer this question is to construct it as an elevator pitch. You need to quickly explain who you are professionally, mention professional accomplishments relevant to the job, and end it by stating why this job is the next step for you.

Step-by-step Framework



Who you are

Summarize your professional background starting with your current or latest position and add breadth/depth of experience.

Example

“I am an experienced customer service manager with four years of experience working in the retail apparel industry.”

Your accomplishments/competencies

Pick accomplishments or competencies that are tailored to the job description. You can list key accomplishments from one or several positions you had in the recent past.

Example

“I spent the last four years developing my skills as a customer service manager at Haute, where I won several awards, and I have been promoted twice. I love managing teams and solving customer problems.”

Why you are here

Explain why this is the next step for you in your career; express enthusiasm for the position.

Example

“Now I am looking to apply my expertise in creating new customer experience programs in the retail industry but in a more senior management position, where I can have a greater impact managing larger teams. And I know I can do that at Mercado.”

Putting it all Together

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Now I am looking to apply my expertise in creating new customer experience programs in the retail industry but in a more senior management position, where I can have a greater impact managing larger teams. And I know I can do that at Mercado.”

Your turn! Try writing your answer below.

Why do you want to work here?

What Do They Want To Know?

When interviewers ask this question, they are trying to find out two things:

- They want to see if you are genuinely excited to work for them
- They want to know if you did your research about the company

To deliver an effective answer to this question you need to:

- Explain why this company appeals to you
- Demonstrate why working there is the logical next step for you

But before you can answer this question, you need to do some research about the company, including the products or services it sells, company mission and values, company leadership, and any recent news about them. See what connects with you and how your professional interests align with what they do.

Step-by-step Framework



Have something interesting to say about the company

Explain how it fits with your experience or goals.

Have something interesting to say about the company

If you did your research on the company, you probably found out some interesting information. It could be a story, their mission, press release, etc. Explain what was interesting to you, and how that connects to your professional experience and interests.

Example

“Just last year, I read an article about Granja and how far they would go for their customers. One particular story was about how in the middle of a stormy day when no other stores were delivering, Granja was the only store that made an exception to deliver groceries to an elderly customer who was snowed-in. His daughter had called the store for help, as she was in another state. Granja not only delivered the groceries but didn’t charge extra for it.”

Explain how it fits with your experience or goals

Say something about yourself in terms of your professional experience or goals that relate to what impressed you about the company.

Example

“I would like to work for a company that values people to the point of going the extra mile to keep them safe or happy. That is who I am, and why I am excited to be here.”

Putting it all Together

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Your turn! Try writing your answer below.

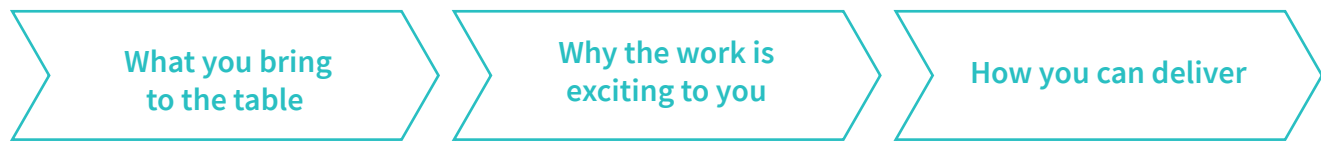
Why are you interested in this role?

What Do They Want To Know?

Companies want to hire people that are going to be productive from day one. The most productive hires are those engaged and motivated because the work itself interests them. Employers want to make sure you understand what the job entails and want to know if you are enthusiastic about it. When answering this question, we recommend that you:

- Demonstrate what you bring to the table
- Are clear about why this job is exciting to you
- Show you can deliver results from day one

Step-by-step Framework



What you bring to the table

State your value.

Example

“I have 5 years of experience working as the Special Guests Customer Experience manager at Keiko Hotel. I won the top customer experience officer award last year for creating delightful and memorable moments for our guests.”

Why the work is exciting to you

State what excites you about it.

Example

“I love this work because it brings me joy to create unique experiences for people. This position of ‘Chief Officer of Customer Experience’ at your boutique hotel is very exciting to me because it offers the opportunity to continue doing this but in a more focused way.”

How you can deliver

End with a reason.

Example

“Just like I created award-winning experiences for Keiko Hotel, I know I can create amazing experiences for your guests.”

Putting it all Together

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Your turn! Try writing your answer below.

Why should we hire you?

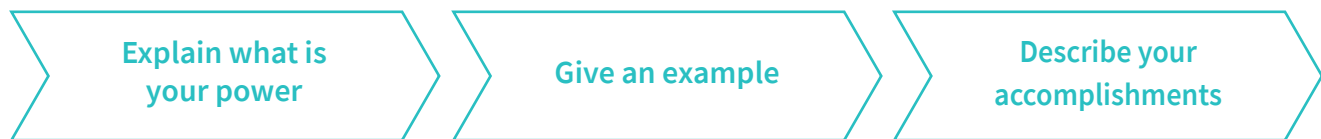
What Do They Want To Know?

This is a similar question to “What is your greatest strength?” The interviewer wants to know:

- Are you aware of what they are looking for in a candidate?
- Can you do the job if they hire you? Do you have the skills?
- What sets you apart from other candidates?

To answer this question effectively, you should read the job requirements very carefully and identify the key requirements. Determine which hard/soft skills are desired, and then match your own skills with the requirements as much as possible. Then write out an example of how you’ve applied those skills in a previous job to get results. If you were awarded for your results, mention that.

Step-by-step Framework



Explain what is your power

Tell the interviewer about a skill you excel at that also matches a key skill in the job requirements.

Example

“Something that I excel at is solving customer issues effectively, and the reason I excel at it is my empathy for customers and my ability to develop processes and tools to improve the customer experience. This position at Avido requires someone with these skills, and I bring a depth of experience in solving customer problems.”

Give an example

Talk about an example that shows your strength in action.

Example

“Let me give you an example of how I have interacted with customers in the past to solve their problems. At Connor, when I started working, customers reached my department upset, because they had already talked to one rep, and had to describe their problem to us again. Instead of focusing on solving their problem, we had to ask them the same questions to diagnose the issue. Unlike other reps, my approach was different. Instead of starting with questions, I started by apologizing for having to ask the same questions and explained the reason. Doing this helped the customer calm down. Wanting to improve the customer experience, I brought this issue to my manager and recommended putting a system in place to track customer calls and transcripts of the conversations. If the customers were switched to a different customer rep, they wouldn't have to be asked the same questions. I worked with the core product team to specify the functional requirements for a new internal product, which was released a few months later.”

Describe your accomplishments

Lastly, state what the results were.

Example

“Because of this new process, our Customer Service department increased its customer satisfaction score by 50%.”

Putting it all Together

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Because of this new process, our Customer Service department increased its customer satisfaction score by 50%.”

Your turn! Try writing your answer below.

What is your greatest strength?

What Do They Want To Know?

When interviewers ask this question, they are trying to find out:

- What sets you apart?
- Do your strengths align with the company's needs?
- What do you like to do day-to-day?
- What are your competencies?
- Can you do the job?

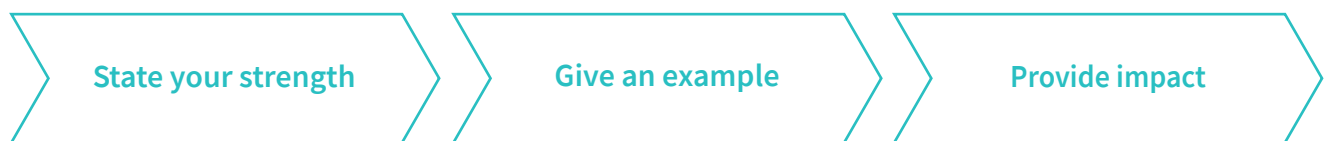
To prepare an effective answer to this question, you need to identify which of your strengths aligns best with the job description, and recall past experiences as evidence.

Before your interview, make a list of your key strengths across two categories: hard skills and soft skills. Hard skills are skills that are taught. They are measurable and often learned in school or on the job. Hard skills are specific to each job and usually considered job requirements. Soft skills are typically interpersonal skills that revolve around character, teamwork, communication, and work ethic.

Examples of hard skills are: Driving a vehicle, office program skills, research, typing, writing, account reconciliations, expertise with a software such as a CRM, a manufacturing skill such as Six Sigma processes.

Examples of soft skills are: Detail-oriented, superior time management, work well under pressure.

Step-by-step framework



State your strength

Pick a strength that is relevant to the job and state it.

Example

“One of my greatest strengths is knowing how to use CRM tools to improve customer relations.”

Give an example

Provide an example of how you used your strength.

Example

“When I joined the startup company I currently work for, CounselNow.com, they did not follow-up with potential customers in a methodical way. So I recommended using Salesforce CRM to automatically route emails to appropriate customers based on workflow rules.”

Provide impact

State what positive result your action had.

Example

“The CEO asked me to manage the installation and operations of this tool, and as a result the company was able to follow leads and increased its subscriptions sales by 100% in just a month. The CEO was so happy, I got promoted from customer service representative to email marketing manager.”

Putting it all Together

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Your turn! Try writing your answer below.

What is your greatest weakness?

What Do They Want To Know?

When interviewers ask this question, they are trying to find out three things:

- Are you self-aware?
- Are you honest?
- Are you proactive in trying to improve?

To deliver an effective answer to this question you need to:

- Be authentic, share a weakness that is real but also acceptable for the job requirements. For example, if you are interviewing for an accounting job, don't say you are not good with numbers.
- Pick a relevant weakness that is fixable. For example, saying that you are not a great driver is not relevant for an accounting interview, so don't use that weakness.
- Be concise and neutral.

Step-by-step framework



Describe a weakness

Pick a weakness that is real but acceptable for the job.

Example

“I am very self-reliant and have multiple skills that have allowed me to complete projects without the need to rely on others. But once I was promoted from individual contributor to group manager, that self-reliance became a weakness when needing to delegate work.”

How are you improving?

Explain with an example, how you are dealing with this weakness.

Example

“In order to improve my ability to delegate, I created a system for myself to prioritize the work that I needed to do, and the work I could not do, if I wanted to meet my deadlines. This has allowed me to clearly see that I must delegate work to the team in order for us to succeed. Before I had this system in place we missed the first deadline as a team. But now we are meeting all our deadlines, and needless to say, the team is much happier.”

Putting it all Together

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