

Personal

Tell me about yourself?

10 Good Ways to 'Tell Me About Yourself'

By Scott Ginsberg

'If Hollywood made a movie about my life, it would be called...' and nine more memorable answers to this dreaded job interview question.

You know it's coming. It's the most feared question during any job interview: Do you think I would look good in a cowboy hat? Just kidding. The real question is: Can you tell me about yourself? Blech. What a boring, vague, open-ended question. Who likes answering that? I know. I'm with you. But unfortunately, hiring managers and executive recruiters ask the question. Even if you're not interviewing and you're out networking in the community — you need to be ready to hear it and answer it. At all times.

Now, before I share a list of 10 memorable answers, consider the two essential elements behind the answers:

The medium is the message. The interviewer cares less about your answer to this question and more about the confidence, enthusiasm and passion with which you answer it.

The speed of the response is the response. The biggest mistake you could make is pausing, stalling or fumbling at the onset of your answer, thus demonstrating a lack of self-awareness and self-esteem.

Next time you're faced with the dreaded, "Tell me about yourself..." question, try these:

- 1) **"I can summarize who I am in three words."** Grabs their attention immediately. Demonstrates your ability to be concise, creative and compelling.
- 2) **"The quotation I live my life by is..."** Proves that personal development is an essential part of your growth plan. Also shows your ability to motivate yourself.
- 3) **"My personal philosophy is..."** Companies hire athletes – not shortstops. This line indicates your position as a thinker, not just an employee.
- 4) **"People who know me best say that I'm..."** This response offers insight into your own level of self-awareness.
- 5) **"Well, I googled myself this morning, and here's what I found..."** Tech-savvy, fun, cool people would say this. Unexpected and memorable.
- 6) **"My passion is..."** People don't care what you do – people care who you are. And what you're passionate about is who you are. Plus, passion unearths enthusiasm.
- 7) **"When I was seven years old, I always wanted to be..."** An answer like this shows that you've been preparing for this job your whole life, not just the night before.
- 8) **"If Hollywood made a movie about my life, it would be called..."** Engaging, interesting and entertaining.
- 9) **"Can I show you, instead of tell you?"** Then, pull something out of your pocket that represents who you are. Who could resist this answer? Who could forget this answer?
- 10) **"The compliment people give me most frequently is..."** Almost like a testimonial, this response also indicates self-awareness and openness to feedback.

Keep in mind that these examples are just the opener. The secret is thinking how you will follow up each answer with relevant, interesting and concise explanations that make the already bored interviewer look up from his stale coffee and think, "Wow! That's the best answer I've heard all day!"

Ultimately it's about answering quickly, it's about speaking creatively and it's about breaking people's patterns.

I understand your fear with such answers. Responses like these are risky, unexpected and unorthodox. And that's exactly why they work. Otherwise you become (yet another) non-entity in the gray mass of blah, blah, blah. You're hireable because of your answers. When people ask you to tell them about yourself, make them glad they asked.

Now write your answer to, "tell me about yourself."

Why are you looking for a job? Why do you want to do an internship?

What made you apply for this job at our company? Do you know what we do here?

To answer this question effectively, do your research. Google their business name to see if there are any recent news stories about them. Go to their website and familiarize yourself with their products and/or processes. Look to see how long they have been in business. Also look to see if they have a "mission." Most businesses have a mission statement that explains their purpose and what is important to them. Use all this information to answer this well. For example, if you find out the business has been around for over 100 years, you could say one of the reasons you would like to work for them is their proven stability in the industry. If they have not been around for very long, you could say you would like the challenge of helping them establish the business as a successful competitor in its market.

Do you like your high school?

What are your favorite classes/subjects and why?

What clubs, organizations or extracurricular activities are you a part of?

What have you learned from your hobbies, interests and outside activities?

What qualifications do you have for this job?

If you do not have actual work experience pertaining to the job, then reference experience you have gained in your classes. Also point out any positive characteristics you have that would pertain to the job such as: I am punctual, loyal, reliable, team player, quick learner, adaptable, etc. Be prepared to give specific examples to back these up...such as a good attendance record at school, or a time when you had to do a group project in a class.

Cooperation

How do you feel about working with others and as part of a team?

Again, give an example of when you had to work on a team, whether in sports, classroom or work setting.

Do you follow instructions easily?

Give an example of when you have followed instructions well.

How do you work under pressure?

Give an example of when you had to work under pressure. If you have not worked, use an example from school or another area of your life.

Self confidence

What do you consider to be your greatest weaknesses or faults?

This is a difficult question that interviewers ask for several reasons. First, they want to make sure your weakness is not a skill that you need to have for the job. Second, they want to see what you have done to overcome it and improve. Third, some employers want to see how you handle yourself under pressure. So, be honest and tell them an actual weakness and what you are doing to improve. Here is an example from job-hunt.org

(Confession)"Some people would consider the fact that I have never worked in this field before as a weakness. However, being highly trainable and open minded, I have no pre-conceived notions on how to perform my job."

(Recovery)"Working with your organization will give me the opportunity to learn the job the way you want it done, not the way I believe it is done. In addition, although I have no former on-the-job experience, I do bring with me extensive hands-on training and experience which can only enhance my ability to learn extremely quickly."

You can visit: http://www.job-hunt.org/job_interviews/answering-weaknesses-question.shtml for more examples.

What do you consider to be your greatest strengths?

Look at this list, below, of characteristics that employers prefer for their employees. Relate the characteristics you choose to the requirements of the job, with examples of how you have demonstrated the characteristic in the past:

1. *Honest/trustworthy*
2. *Intelligent*
3. *Reliable*
4. *Likeable*
5. *Positive*
6. *Independent (vs. needing close management)*
7. *Problem-solver*
8. *Detail-oriented*
9. *Hard-working*
10. *Team player*
11. *Quick learner*
12. *Good communicator*
13. *Flexible*
14. *Creative*
15. *Passionate about doing a good job*
16. *Organized*

Don't forget skills that apply directly to this opportunity.

If your teachers were here, what would they say about you? How would they describe you?

Have you ever had a conflict with a boss or teacher?

Be honest here because they are looking at how you will handle conflict with coworkers. It is highly likely you will have a conflict with someone on the job at one point in time, and an employer wants to make sure you will be able to handle it appropriately. So, give an example of a time you did have a conflict and how you handled it well. If you really cannot think of one with a boss or teacher, you could use another situation. The point is to let the employer know you will handle it well. For example, you could say that you know it is important to put yourself in the other person's shoes and try to see things from their perspective before reacting.

Why do you think you are suitable for this position? Why should we consider you instead of another applicant?

Here is another chance to list your strengths. Include character strengths and educational training.

Motivation/Initiative

How did you prepare for this interview?

What is important to you in a job?

Other than money, think about what else is important to you. Perhaps you like to be challenged, or you like working on a team. Just make sure that whatever you say pertains to the position you are applying for. You should not say you enjoy teamwork most if the position you are applying for requires you to work alone for very long periods of time.

Why would you like this job?

If you didn't understand an instruction, what would you do?

Let them know you would ask for clarification because you are aware that, if you mess up, it could cost the company a lot of money and it could possibly even jeopardize someone's safety.

What motivates you to put forth your greatest effort?

Other than money.

Describe your most rewarding experience in school.

Do you have plans to continue your education in some way? What are they? What are your career goals?

Where would you like to be in 5 years? What are your goals?

When and why did you establish your goals, and how are you preparing yourself to achieve them?

Are you okay working nights and weekends?

What kind of salary do you need?

You could say something like, "Can you tell me the range for this position?" In most cases, the interviewer, taken off guard, will tell you. If not, say that it can depend on the details of the job. Then give a wide range. If possible, try to find out what the average wage for the particular position is within the company. If this is for an internship, you will most likely NOT be paid.

REFERENCES

Please provide 3 references we may contact, preferably not related.

It is important to choose individuals that will say good, encouraging things about you! For example, do not list a teacher whose class you are currently flunking. That said, a teacher would be a great reference to list if you are on good terms. You may also consider a former employer, your coach, your pastor, your principal and your guidance counselor. If you have done any volunteer work, you could list who you did it for. Or, maybe a friend of your parent that has known you for years. Make sure you list an email address and phone number that actually is still in use.

Reference 1:

Name: _____

Title: _____

Email: _____

Phone Number: _____

Address: _____

How long have you known this individual: _____

Reference 2:

Name: _____

Title: _____

Email: _____

Phone Number: _____

Address: _____

How long have you known this individual: _____

Reference 3:

Name: _____

Title: _____

Email: _____

Phone Number: _____

Address: _____

How long have you known this individual: _____

