



The best ways to answer “Tell me about yourself” in an interview

The most common question is also one of the most difficult to answer. What do employers actually want to hear?

Despite it being included in almost every interview, few candidates really know how to answer the “tell me about yourself” question. As it is more often than not the first question asked, it is vital that you make a positive first impression. After all, first impressions count. Set the tone for the interview with an amazing answer, and you’ll be one step closer to filling the vacancy.

Knowing how vital the question is one thing. But knowing how to nail your answer is another. In this guide we’ll give you everything you need to know to start your next interview firmly on the front foot.

What to avoid

Paraphrasing your CV

One of the most common approaches to answering “tell me about yourself” is to simply rehash everything that is already visible on your CV. Recruiters and Hiring Managers constantly complain about candidates responding in this way. By the time you’ve got around to mentioning the most recent, relevant information, the interviewer is already bored out of their skull.

Being too modest

Whilst being bashful isn’t likely to win over many hiring managers, you can actually be too modest in an interview situation. To impress a hiring manager, you need to show them your best qualities. Playing down your achievements, or not mentioning them at all will leave you in a much worse position come the end of the interview.

If you are shy, stick to factual achievements rather than empty brags. The job market is competitive, you need to make sure that you stand out from the crowd. Create your own personal brand and sell it to the hiring manager.

Personal anecdotes

Whilst the “tell me about yourself” question is designed to glean information beyond your CV, this isn’t the time to tell the hiring manager about your pet cat and your love for haberdashery. Regardless of what job you’re going for, you should remain professional throughout the course of the interview.

The rambler

This often happens when a candidate overthinks the “tell me about yourself” question. Diving in and giving the hiring manager your life story, including personal, professional, and academic details — from the beginning of time until now — will just bore the interviewer. They don’t need your biography, they just need to know if you’re capable of doing the job, and if your personality is a good fit for the team.

How to give a successful response

Essentially, there are three parts that you need to include in any response to “tell me about yourself”. Firstly, you should tell the interviewer who you are, explain your professional experience, and then explain why you’re here and why you’re a good fit for the role.

1. Who you are

Introduce yourself professionally with a brief overview. It should highlight your strengths, as well as giving some sense of your personality. Name-dropping any significant companies, or big projects that you have worked on here is one way in which you can instantly impress the hiring manager.

2. Professional Experience

Though it is hugely important that you inform the interviewer of your significant professional experience, it is important that you don’t tell them everything about every job that you’ve ever done. Highlight the most impressive, and most recent achievements — mention awards, successes, and how your key skills were employed to achieve success. Two to three experiences should suffice here, any more and you could bore the interviewer.

3. Why you are here

This is the part of your answer that should tell the interviewer why you want to leave your current job, and what excites you about this role. It is important to not be negative about your current role, however. Tell the employer that although you enjoy your current role, but you want to challenge yourself with some aspect of the job you’re interviewing for.

Example of a good answer

I have more than 5 years’ experience as a digital marketing executive for Tate. Recently, I have completed a site audit, and implemented SEO practices that increased site visits by over 60%. I am a person who loves technological change, as well as being exceptionally forward thinking, who has proven that implementing new marketing tools can increase site traffic and conversions.

I really enjoy my current role, but I am looking for the opportunity to apply/expand my skillset working in a sector-leading company like Impellam.

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