

# What Not to Say in a Job Interview

***Fabulous news:*** You have a job interview!

***Not so fab news:*** Saying the wrong thing could cost you the job.

What you should say during an interview depends on the position you're applying for as well as your personal preferences, skills and experience. But some answers are definitely better than others!

Here are some traditional interview questions followed by some bad answers and better alternatives from Jennifer James, an editor for more than 30 FabJob guides.

## Why are you looking for a new job?

**Bad Answer:** My boss is a jerk and the customers are hard to deal with.

**Tip:** Keep the answer positive, in terms of where you want to go, not what you want to get away from.

**Better Answer:** I have been promoted as far as I can go with my current employer. I'm looking for a new challenge that will give me the opportunity to use my skills to help my employer's business grow.

## Why do you want to work for us?

**Bad Answer:** I'm desperate and no one else will hire me.

**Tip:** Before the interview, visit the employer's Web site to learn as much as you can about the company. When answering this question, focus on one or two flattering items to explain why you want to join this particular company.

**Better Answer:** When I read the mission statement on your Web site about giving back to the community, I felt really inspired. I was also impressed with the facts about your growth in the past three years with three new locations, and a 40 percent sales increase. That's really something to be proud of. I think it would be rewarding to be a part of a company that is such a leader in their industry and in the community.

## Why have you had so many jobs?

**Bad Answer:** I get bored easily.

**Tip:** Give acceptable reasons (frequent moves, changes in personal goals, etc.), but focus on the fact that you're ready for a permanent position now, which is what they are really concerned about.

**Better Answer:** When I was younger, I decided to sample a wide variety of careers. That way, when I was ready to choose a career path I would be absolutely certain that I had found the right one for the long-term future. Now I've settled on this industry, and that's why I'm here today.

## What are your strengths?

**Bad Answer:** I can burp on demand and keep a straight face when telling a lie.

**Tip:** Discuss three or four of your strengths as they relate to the position you are interviewing for, and give examples of times they have helped you do your work.

**Better Answer:** I have a really good eye for detail, and in the past, I have caught critical mistakes before they happened. When I worked for ABC Company, I helped the company avoid a few catastrophes this way, so they started routing orders through my office to check even though I wasn't working in the orders department. Of course, I'd be happy to apply this skill in any way you feel is suitable in this company. Another strength I can offer an employer is...

## What is your biggest weakness?

**Bad Answer:** Wow, it's hard to pick just one. I miss deadlines, I'm late for work a lot, I have trouble working in teams, I don't have good attention to detail. I guess the biggest one is that I'm lazy. But at least I'm honest.

**Tip:** Admit a minor weakness and explain what you're doing to fix it.

**Better Answer:** I sometimes feel impatient with co-workers who don't work as quickly as I do. However, I've been reading books about teamwork. I'm learning a lot about people's different work styles, and I'm trying new techniques such as helping co-workers brainstorm solutions when they're facing a challenge.

## Why should I hire you?

**Bad Answer:** I need the money to pay off my gambling debts.

**Tip:** This is your chance to reiterate your skills and relate them to the position you are applying for.

**Better Answer:** When I read your ad, I couldn't have imagined a better match for my skills and experience than this job. Now that I have spoken with you, and learned more about your needs, I'm even more certain that I'm the right candidate. I know that I can hit the ground running and exceed your expectations because of my experience with...

## **What are your short-term and long-term goals?**

**Bad Answer:** Considering how hungover I am, my short-term goal is to make it through this interview. Long-term, I hope to quit my job within a couple of years and become a ski bum.

**Tip:** Sometimes employers ask this because they want to know whether you are looking at their company for long-term employment or simply a short-term job until something "better" comes along. Other employers want to judge your ability to plan for the future. Most employers do not want to hear that in five years you hope to be retired or plan to start your own business. Your short-term goals should involve getting hired into the right position; long term is where you want to go in your profession.

**Better Answer:** Short-term, I'd like to find a position where I can build a solid clientele of return clients. I enjoy building relationships with clients who come back year after year for service and advice. Long-term, I can see myself taking some additional training over the next few years, and applying for a more senior position here once I have the right combination of experience and education.

Now that you know what answers will work best for you in an interview, don't be surprised if the next question from your interviewer is "When can you start?"