

Want to stand out in an interview? Stop saying these 5 words

Beware. You've got the skills and you'd love to land the job, but you might just shoot yourself in the foot in the interview thanks to your choice of words.

Just think about it. We all overuse certain words. Recruiters and employers hear it all the time. The trouble is that overused buzzwords start to lose their meaning because candidate after candidate trots them out. Understand this and you boost your chances of coming out on top.

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Try not in general to overuse words such as *dedicated, motivated, team player, synergy, leverage, ownership, pro-active or reach out.*

And look out for slang that may make you sound too casual such as *kinda, you know* and *cool.*

We asked Jason Walker, director at Hays for words to replace his pet hates. Follow his tips to replace these overused words:

1. **Obviously.** "Interviews are usually the first time we meet a candidate so you should not assume that anything is obvious," says Walker. "We are trying to get an understanding of experience and how good a fit you would be for an organisation so steer clear of implying we already know the answer."
2. **We.** The word "I" is always better. The interviewer doesn't want to hear "we did XYZ in our department". The interviewer wants to know what part you played in the success and how you took ownership.

3. **Workaholic.** If you think you're going to woo your interviewer by saying you're a workaholic when asked [what your weaknesses](#) are, think again. Instead cite a nice to have skill you could develop such as public speaking or not delegating enough.

Ian Scott, manager at Randstad Technologies said candidates should remove any generic phrases from their interviewing vocabulary. "Trained interviewers see right through the phrases that lack substance, and are left frustrated when having to draw out the real anecdotes that bring those statements to life," he says. The worst examples are:

4. **Challenge.** Never say "I love a challenge", says Scott. "Rarely do people follow this up with a good explanation of what challenges them or even examples of challenges they have met, their reaction to the challenge at hand and the result of their response." It also assumes that everyone finds the same things challenging.
5. **Motivated by change.** "In my experience, many people become active job-seekers because they have experienced change. As human beings, many of us struggle with change, and prefer the comfort of normality, systems, routine." If you love change, be sure your story is consistent throughout the interview.

Far better than throwing out overused buzzwords, fillers, ums, ahs, and slang is to give a structured reply using the STAR method. STAR stands for **Situation, Task, Action, Results.**

A STAR answer is one where you answer succinctly, but directly by outlining the **Situation**, identifying the **Task** that you set out to achieve, describing your own personal **Actions**, and recounting the **Results**. It's a way of telling your story in a way that will impress your interviewer.

Practice telling STAR stories about your past experiences that demonstrate the skills needed in the key criteria. A STAR story is far better than simply saying I've got this or that quality or skill.