

What's your greatest weakness? Top 3 best and worst answers

The interview is going well. Then the dreaded question comes up: “what’s your greatest weakness”? We know that answering this question can be a challenge. Get it right and you’ve considerably boosted your chances of landing the job.

Interviewers ask this question to find out how self-aware you are, says Jane McNeill, Director at Hays. Knowing your areas of personal strength and weakness allows you to build on them and identify areas you can improve.

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There is no perfect answer. It’s about how you handle yourself.

If you’re looking for brownie points, then choose something that you’ve already taken steps to improve, but isn’t mission critical to the role. You wouldn’t say, for example that you can’t code, for a programming job, or that you hate computers, for an office job.

Don’t cite anything in the [key criteria](#) as your weakness. Look for a nice to have skill, not a must have.

Best answers:

1. “I’m scared of public speaking.”
2. “I’m quite self-critical.”
3. “I don’t delegate enough.”

All three show self-awareness, says McNeill. These answers are even better if you can explain what you’ve done to overcome your weaknesses.

Those answers could be:

- I've joined Toastmasters and am learning to love speaking to audiences.
- I'm working with a life coach to solve the problem of being self-critical. She/he has given me these strategies, which have proved useful.
- I have signed up for a [leadership course](#) because I'd like to tackle this weakness.

It's critical to show that you have emotional intelligence and that you are working on your weakness.

Be aware of the role, says Scott MacMorland, Manager Accounting and Finance at Randstad. "I don't delegate enough" might not be a good choice if your role relies on delegation. If you're just moving into this area and show you are willing to learn it could be an ideal choice.

If, for example, you admit to having an autocratic style, you might then follow up and explain that you're aware of this and you have learned to adapt your style within the team, says MacMorland.

Also think about how you word your weakness. "I'm no good at managing people" sounds better as: "I sometimes don't give my team sufficient encouragement."

The worst answers are trying to dress strengths up as weaknesses. At best this looks disingenuous or deliberately insincere – at worst your interviewer will think you're lying.

Worst answers:

1. "I'm a workaholic"
2. "I'm a perfectionist"
3. "I don't have any weaknesses"

Nice try. Employers want someone who can tell the truth or front up when they've made a mistake. The opposite is a difficult employee who thinks he or she is perfect and everyone else is wrong.

As for the person who thinks he or she has no weaknesses. Everyone has something they could improve on, says McNeill.

Remember: A real weakness makes you sound more sincere.