



What is your greatest strength?



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Seems like an easy enough question. We all like to talk about ourselves and how good we are, don't we?

One of the most common questions asked at an interview. Normally comes in a few disguises.

What are your greatest strengths? What are your 3 greatest strengths? What is your greatest strength?

They could be followed by "Tell me about a time when you had to use (X = A strength you mentioned) to overcome a situation?" A classic behavioural question in itself.

So why would an interviewer ask this?

- Your strengths align with the company's needs.
- You can do the job and perform it well.
- You are the best person for the job.
- You have qualities, skills, and/or experience that set you apart from the competition.
- You are someone who will make an excellent addition to the team.

What should I think about?

Prepare for this question, you know it's coming so start with the following:

- 1) Sit down and compile a list of what you think your top strengths are.
- 2) Try and get a minimum of 10, more if you can. Be as creative as you can, no strength is a bad strength.

Strengths could include:

Experience – Could be a product, a client, a software, industry etc

Talents – Could be programming, copywriting, organising, languages etc

Soft Skills – Team building, problem solving, influencing.

Transferable Skills – Negotiation, Stakeholder Management, Project Management, Business Development.

Education/Training – relevant to the job, certificates, seminars, internships etc

- 3) Focus – Once you've made your list, get them down to 5 you are comfortable discussing. It's good to have more than would be required as you can use them in different interview scenarios.

- 4) Prepare examples to demonstrate each of your 5 strengths and practice them.

If you have trouble coming up with enough work-related strengths, note down positive personality qualities or personal strengths. You may find ways to relate these to job performance.



So I've got my 5, how do I choose the best ones?



Be accurate:

Do you actually possess that strength? You will be more authentic talking about a strength that is you. It shouldn't be one that you saw in the job description or someone you spoke to said it went down well at an interview. Be yourself.

Make it relevant:

Your strength should be relevant to the company or the role you are applying for. Four of the five you came up with may not necessarily be relevant but one stands out, use it.

Be Specific:

Don't be generic, choose strengths that are specific to what you do and can bring to the role.

Be strong NOT weak:

Avoid a strength that everyone else could have. "Hard worker" or "a joy to work with". Doesn't everyone claim this? Weak strengths that are not standing you out against the competition are a waste of time.

Be able to demonstrate:

Make sure you can back your strength up with an example. Back your example up with a real scenario. Don't waffle and talk for more than 2 minutes. Practice to make sure you get the timing right. Use the **P.A.R** approach and showcase a **P**roblem, the **A**ction you took and what the **R**esult was if asked further.

What if I struggle to find my strengths?



If you are struggling to think about your strength then try a few options:

- 1) **Ask a friend** – Sometimes it's good to get a second opinion. If you have some strengths, run them past a trusted friend or colleague.
- 2) **Become a detective** – Look at old emails, appraisals, feedback, performance reviews to have a look at positive feedback you may have received and draw from those.
- 3) **Look at your CV** – What stands out? What achievements have you done? What transferable skills do you have? Is there anything in there that stands out?
- 4) **LinkedIn** – Is there anything in your Profile or other social media sites that showcase a strength?
- 5) **Online** – There are strength tests you can take to see what they are? It may or may not help. Look at reviews to see if any come recommended.

How to format your response?



Let's have a look at what you need to cover:

Let's focus on "Problem Solving" as a strength. Now a lot of people will say they are a good problem solver. You won't be the only one but it depends how you answer the question and showcase the strength.

"My greatest strength is problem solving. I have the ability to look at issues from all different angles to come to a solution. I look at why this happened, what needs to be done to put it right and what the final outcome should look like. I also bring together and communicate to all stakeholders required to make sure that the proposed solution has the right impact. I also draw on my previous experience in product development and work with our designers to give them customer feedback so we can ensure the right product meets the demands of the market."

The above is clear, precise and to the point. What we haven't done is give too much away. We've invited the interviewer in to want to know more. They may well ask "Tell me about a time when you had a problem to solve, and what was the outcome?". You can use your pre-planned P.A.R answers.

What we have also done is showcase three strengths – Problem Solving, Communication and Team player.

Obviously it needs to be relevant to the role you are applying for.

It may come in a different disguise?

Your strengths question can come in different ways. It depends how trained the interviewer is:

- 1) Why should we employ you?
- 2) What makes you the best candidate for the role?
- 3) Why should we employ you over all the other candidates?
- 4) What makes you the best fit?

In any interview, you need to bring in to play your strengths. You need to showcase why they should choose you. If the questions not asked then try and use your prepared answers in another question or ask questions that showcase your strengths.

Depending on how it's asked you can use your P.A.R answer response to demonstrate your strength. You could also use one or more of your transferable skills to answer in a different but just as effective way, again using P.A.R.





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www.solstaruk.com

solstaruk@gmail.com or stephen.cox@solstaruk.com