

Response Strategies for Frequently Asked Questions

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Every question thrown your way in an interview presents an opportunity for you to make your case for why you're the best person for the position. You want to highlight your positive qualities and avoid giving reasons to disqualify you. With that said, think about your overall response strategy for the interview.

Examples Speak Volumes

For each quality you present, make sure you're prepared to describe a situation where you demonstrated that quality. Basically, you always want to be able to back up any claims you might make. For example, if during the interview you say that you work well under pressure, be ready to describe an example where you did work effectively under pressure and delivered the results required.

Steer the Interview Your Way

One thing to guard against is getting lured into the interviewer's game of alternative or trick questions. Be like a politician. The next time you watch a debate or press conference, notice the kind of questions reporters ask, and then observe how the politician responds. Politicians often answer questions indirectly by presenting information they want to convey. You can do the exact same thing in a job interview.

For example, if the interviewer asks if you prefer to work alone or on a team, he may be trying to get you to say you are one way or the other. But you don't have to play this game. The reality is that most jobs require us to work both independently and in teams. Your response to this question should show that you have been successful in both situations.

Your answers also need to provide the reason to hire you, and you want to avoid providing reasons not to hire you. Before responding to any interview question, take your time, breathe and think about your answer. Thoughtful answers delivered clearly are much better than empty answers given rapidly. And you're not being measured by your response time.

Be Clear and Concise

Be honest and succinct with your responses. Tell the truth in as positive a manner as possible, and don't discuss things or events in a negative fashion. Long answers are less effective than concise responses and tend to make interviewers suspicious. If you are talking more than 90 seconds without interaction with the interviewer, you may be giving them more detail than they want. If you feel you may be talking too long, just stop and ask the interviewer a question like, "Am I giving you the level of detail you're looking for?" This prompts a response and promotes an open exchange of information. Besides, if you're putting the interviewer to sleep with your long-winded answers, asking a question will wake them up.

Open the Conversation

After your response, ask the interviewer a tag-on question, such as, “Does that give you what you were looking for?” This ensures you are understood accurately, conveys that you want to be sure you're providing what the interviewer is looking for, and promotes two-way communication.

You deserve the best, so practice your responses to frequently asked interview questions, and prepare to be your best when it matters most.

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