



Interview Tip: What Are Your Strengths?

We've all heard this question before, and it's a no-brainer that you need to have an answer ready when your interview rolls around, but what is the proper way to respond without coming off as overconfident or indistinguishable? Here are some ideas:

1. Know Yourself. It's impossible to give a good answer to this question if you can't even identify your strengths. Reflect on some of the tasks you've completed in the past and analyze the skills that helped you accomplish those projects. If you're stuck, try taking some assessment tests like *StrengthsFinder2.0*, check out the career books at your nearest bookstore, or create a survey using tools like *Survey Monkey* to poll coworkers, family, and friends.

2. Use Testimonials. Let's face it, most of us are uncomfortable flaunting our achievements, but if there is ever a time to do it, this is it. One way to sound less boastful, however, is to quote someone else's remarks about you. Leave an open-ended section on the survey you create so that you can collect this commentary or reflect on comments you've received during past performance reviews. It's much stronger to say *"I spoke with my former bosses and coworkers regarding their thoughts about my strengths and they mentioned that..."* rather than expressing your personal opinion. This highlights the extra steps you took to prepare and effectively comes across as a third-party testimonial which carries more weight.

3. Use Examples. If you're going to mention your *"strong leadership skills"* you should follow it with *"For the past 2 years I've led a team of Sales professionals in the launch of a new SaaS offering – the team overachieved quota and ranked in the Top 10% companywide."* Examples that highlight your strengths in a specific situation are much more powerful than simply referencing a vague opinion. Use them!

4. Tailor Your Strengths. Not all jobs are created equal. Before you go to an interview, review the position description. What are the most important requirements? Tailor your responses to address these specifics to have more impact. If you have a skill that can be directly applied to the position you're being interviewed for, it will make it clear to the recruiter or hiring manager that you're a qualified candidate. For example, if you are interviewing for a Pre Sales position where the company is planning on launching a new SaaS product, you might have said: *"I have strong communication skills."* However, a more effective answer might be: *"Previous co-workers have told me I'm very effective at making complex concepts simple to understand, which is useful when communicating with prospects across their organization – business users, C level executives, and the IT department."*

The first statement is based on subjectivity while the second uses a testimonial that is directly tailored for the position.

5. Be Prepared. In order to do all this well, you will not be able to simply come up with answers off the cuff! It takes preparation and practice. As I coach job seekers to do regularly, write out answers in advance, practice them, hone them, and then practice them again. The more you practice saying them out loud, the easier and more naturally they will come out in the interview. Preparation is key to presenting yourself as professionally and effectively as you can.

We look forward to hearing from you. Let's start a conversation. 952-934-4100



[Jackie Neva](#)



[Peter Neva](#)

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