

# How To Answer “What’s Your Greatest Weakness?”

“What’s your greatest weakness?” This is one question most job search candidates hate. But if you happen to be a lifelong learner, or someone who embraces personal and professional development, it can be a decidedly easy question to answer.

**Watch:** [How To Handle Tough Interview Questions](#)

My favorite way to respond to the question, “What’s your greatest weakness?” is to share a past weakness and position it as a current strength. If you share a genuine weakness but don’t show what you’ve learned from it, you will accidentally damage your candidacy for the job in question. If, on the other hand you can share a genuine weakness and demonstrate how you wrestled with it in positive ways, you say more about your assets as a candidate than you’ll have time to list in the meeting. Here’s how:

## **1. Choose a previous weakness that you once possessed but have since overcome.**

Select a genuine weakness, one that is (preferably) work-related, and one that will bolster your candidacy when seen through a more positive lens. Ideally, choose a weakness that you have since transformed into a strength.

**Example:** perfectionism.

## **2. Share an example of how this weakness threatened you, your team, or your work performance.**

Be real (but not too real) in showing your interviewer how this weakness had a negative impact on you or your work environment. Give specific examples without belaboring the point.

**Example:** *“Early in my career, I was anxious to prove myself and inadvertently allowed my determination to succeed to bleed into perfectionism. Although I never expected perfection of the teams I led, I did expect too much of myself, to the point that I developed an ulcer and began to feel burnt out in my work.”*

## **3. Tell the story of how you overcame the weakness.**

Relay to the interviewer the steps you took to turn this situation around. Use the CAR (challenge | action | result) format to convey the situation you faced, the steps you took to resolve those challenges, and the results your efforts produced in you, your team, and your performance.

**Example:** *“As a prolific reader and lifelong learner, I discovered a range of self-help solutions I could implement. I rebalanced my personal and work lives, learned to proactively*

*deal with stress, and realigned my expectations with reality. This process took time, of course, but with assiduous discipline I was able to resolve my health issues and reignite my passion for my work. I believe this effort is never-ending, which is why I refer to myself as a recovering perfectionist.”*

Hopefully this example has the ring of truth about it because it *is* true. Don't make things up! Recruiters and employers expect a genuine reply to this question, so this is your chance to reveal the kind of candidate you really are. Show them you know how to own your own warts and heal them. After all, giving an honest answer to this question demonstrates your problem-solving approach and ability to learn from failure.

Lastly, note that this example can be comfortably shared in less than 30 seconds. Aim to keep all of your interview responses to less than two minutes unless you are asked multi-part questions that clearly call for a comprehensive approach.

Contrast this 3-step weakness-turned-strength story with the two ways most candidates answer this question. First, many refuse to share a weakness or claim they don't have any. They end up trying to deflect the question, say they can't think of anything, or claim not to have any significant weaknesses. Your interviewer will recognize such replies as disingenuous and you'll lose respect and candidate "clout" as a result.

Second, other candidates share a true weakness without knowing how to emphasize the silver lining in that particular cloud. Without meaning to, they focus too much attention on a negative issue and leave their interviewer(s) with a negative impression of their candidacy.

By taking an honest yet strategic approach to the "What's your greatest weakness?" question you demonstrate your integrity as a candidate and prove your ability to rise like a phoenix from the ashes of negative experiences. This inevitably reveals your resilience – a trait most companies will welcome with open arms.