

Essential Job Interview Tips and Tricks, Business English [1-2]

References:

1. YDI340 Business English Ders Notları (2007)
2. Akar N. Z., Özkan Y., Tarhan Ş. (2005) "Language and Communication Skills After Graduation"

«... **Interviewer:** Tell me about yourself.
Candidate: I was born and raised in Milan, Italy. I attended the University of Milan and received my master's degree in Economics. I have worked for 12 years as a financial consultant in Milan for various companies including Rossi Consultants, Quasar Insurance and Sardi and Sons. I enjoy playing tennis in my free time and learning languages.

Candidate: I've just graduated from the University of Singapore with a degree in Computers. During the summers, I worked as a systems administrator for a small company to help pay for my education.

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Comment: *This question is meant as an introduction. Do not focus too specifically on any one area. The above question will often be used to help the interviewer choose what h/she would like to ask next. While it is important to give an overall impression of who you are, make sure to concentrate on work related experience. Work related experience should **always** be the central focus of any interview (work experience is more important than education in most English speaking countries).*

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Interviewer: What type of position are you looking for?

Candidate: I'm interested in an entry level (beginning) position.

Candidate: I'm looking for a position in which I can utilize my experience.

Candidate: I would like any position for which I qualify.

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Comment: *You should be willing to take an entry level position in an English speaking company as most of these companies expect non-nationals to begin with such a position. In the United States, most companies provide many opportunities for growth, so don't be afraid to start from the beginning!*

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Interviewer: Are you interested in a full-time or part-time position?

Candidate: I am more interested in a full-time position. However, I would also consider a part-time position.

Comment: *Make sure to leave open as many possibilities as possible. Say you are willing to take any job, once the job has been offered you can always refuse if the job does not appeal (not interest) to you.*

...» [22, 1]

[22]

Interviewer: Can you tell me about your responsibilities at your last job?

Candidate: I advised customers on financial matters. After I consulted the customer, I completed a customer inquiry form and catalogued the information in our database. I then collaborated with colleagues to prepare the best possible package for the client. The clients were then presented with a summarized report on their financial activities that I formulated on a quarterly basis.

Comment: Notice the amount of detail necessary when you are talking about your experience. One of the most common mistakes made by foreigners when discussing their former employment is to speak too generally. The employer wants to know exactly what you did and how you did it; the more detail you can give the more the interviewer knows that you understand the type of work. Remember to vary your vocabulary when talking about your responsibilities. Also, do not begin every sentence with "I". Use the passive voice, or an introductory clause to help you add variety to your presentation

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Interviewer: What is your greatest strength?

Candidate: I work well under pressure. When there is a deadline (a time by which the work must be finished), I can focus on the task at hand (current project) and structure my work schedule well. I remember one week when I had to get 6 new customer reports out by Friday at 5. I finished all the reports ahead of time without having to work overtime.

Candidate: I am an excellent communicator. People trust me and come to me for advice. One afternoon, my colleague was involved with a troublesome (difficult) customer who felt he was not being served well. I made the customer a cup of coffee and invited both my colleague and the client to my desk where we solved the problem together.

Candidate: I am a trouble shooter. When there was a problem at my last job, the manager would always ask me to solve it. Last summer, the LAN server at work crashed. The manager was desperate and called me in (requested my help) to get the LAN back online. After taking a look at the daily backup, I detected the problem and the LAN was up and running (working) within the hour.

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Comment: *This is not the time to be modest! Be confident and **always** give examples. Examples show that you are not only repeating words you have learned, but actually do possess that strength.*

Interviewer: What is your greatest weakness?

Candidate: I am overzealous (work too hard) and become nervous when my co-workers are not pulling their weight (doing their job).

However, I am aware of this problem, and before I say anything to anyone, I ask myself why the colleague is having difficulties.

Candidate: I tend to spend too much time making sure the customer is satisfied. However, I began setting time-limits for myself if I noticed this happening.

...» [22, 1]

«... **Comment:** *This is a difficult question. You need to mention a weakness that is actually a strength. Make sure that you always mention how you try to improve the weakness.*

Interviewer: Why do you want to work for Smith and Sons?

Candidate: After following your firm's progress for the last 3 years, I am convinced that Smith and Sons are becoming one of the market leaders and I would like to be part of the team.

Candidate: I am impressed by the quality of your products. I am sure that I would be a convincing salesman because I truly believe that the Atomizer is the best product on the market today.

Comment: Prepare yourself for this question by becoming informed about the company. The more detail you can give, the better you show the Interviewer that you understand the company.

Interviewer: When can you begin?

Candidate: Immediately.

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Candidate: As soon as you would like me to begin.

Comment: *Show your willingness to work!*

The above questions represent some of the most basic questions asked on any job interview in English. Probably the most important aspect of interviewing in English is giving detail. As a speaker of English as a second language, you might be shy about saying complicated things. However, this is absolutely necessary as the employer is looking for an employee who knows his or her job. If you provide detail, the interviewer will know that you feel comfortable in that job. Don't worry about making mistakes in English. It is much better to make simple grammar mistakes and provide detailed information about your experience than to say grammatically perfect sentences without any real content.

I hope these features help you to improve your job interviewing skills. Practice your replies often to these and other questions. Sit down with a friend and act out the interview. By repeating these phrases you will gain much needed confidence.

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From Kenneth Beare,
Your Guide to English as 2nd Language.

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