# HOW TO ANSWER: What Are Your Strengths?

It’s important to take the time to identify your strengths and PRACTICE talking about them in advance. That way, you’ll be ready when you walk into that interview for your dream job. Let’s start by identifying/confirming what your greatest strengths are.

First, **brainstorm.** Sit down and make a list of your top strengths. Jot down everything that comes to mind. Your strengths could include: *Experience*, t*alents*, s*oft skills*, e*ducation/training.* Next, **prepare examples.** Develop at least one example or story to illustrate each of your strengths.

Choosing the right strengths

**1. Be accurate.** Choose strengths that you actually possess. You want to be yourself in an interview, just the best and most professional version of yourself. You will be much more convincing and likable if you talk about authentic strengths.

**2. Be relevant.** You should take the time to analyze the job description and identify the most important strengths for each opportunity. You likely have many strengths, but which will be most relevant for this interviewer?

**3. Be specific.** Choose specific strengths. Don’t be generic. Could 90% of your friends claim your strength? Pick another one.

**4. Don’t be too humble.**  Avoid “weak praise” and lame strengths. Pick something impressive. Don’t go with “pleasant to work with” as your main selling point. Just about everybody can and should be pleasant to work with. To get the job, you have to show you would bring more to the position.

**5. Be prepared to demonstrate.** As discussed, have a brief example ready to back each strength up. Be careful about rambling on too long here. Your answer should still be 1-2 minutes long.

I don’t know my own strengths  
*If you get stuck trying to develop a list your strengths, try these techniques:*

**1. Get a second opinion.** Ask a trusted friend or colleague what they think are your greatest strengths.

**2. Dig for clues.** Read previous performance reviews and analyze the positive feedback. If you’re a student or new grad, think about the feedback that you’ve received from professors and supervisors.

**3. Review your resume.** Look for common themes in your achievements. Try to read your resume with fresh eyes — as if it was the resume of an admired friend. What stands out?

**4. Get scientific.** Try the www.StrengthsFinder.com assessment. You can answer a series of questions and get a report that summarizes your top strengths. Many corporations also ask their employees to take the StrengthsFinder assessment as a foundation for their performance improvement plans.

Now read the answers below. Why do you like them? What is the interviewer probably thinking?

**1. Example Answer: 3 Strengths for a Technology Team Leader**

“I think one of my greatest strengths is as a problem solver. I have the ability to see a situation from different perspectives and I can get my work done even in the face of difficult obstacles. I also feel that my communication skills are top notch. I feel just as comfortable talking to my supervisor as I do mediating a conflict between junior team members. I worked as a programmer in the past so I have that perspective of a developer and I think that they respect me for that.”

**2. Example Answer: Work Ethic**

“One of my strengths is my strong work ethic. When I commit to a deadline, I do whatever it takes to deliver. For example, last week we had a report due and got some numbers back late from our team in Singapore. I pulled an all-nighter to finish the spreadsheet because I knew that the client HAD to receive the report on time.”

**3. Example Answer: Writing Skills (New college grad applying for analyst position)**

“I am proud of my writing skills and believe that they will make me a better analyst. I am able to communicate complicated topics to different audiences. I can take a lot of data and information and find the story and themes that clients need to know about.

I honed my research and writing abilities during my days writing for the college paper, where I learned how to write well on deadline from pretty demanding editors. I even won an award for my series on the financial crisis.”

http://biginterview.com/blog/2013/03/what-are-your-strengths.html