

SHIFT in Orality preparatory materials – Intellectual Output 5

SHIFT in Orality Summer School of Remote Interpreting – Forlì, June 11th-16th, 2018

Sight translation with cloze – English to Italian

What Are Your Weaknesses?

Being asked about your weaknesses in an interview is intimidating. After all, you're there to show them how (1) you are, not to talk about what you're bad at.

But, most of the time, it's unavoidable. It's a very common question – and later on we'll examine why that is. It's also frequently paired with the "What are your strengths?" question, so be sure to prepare for that too.

To answer it well requires walking a tightrope. If you don't talk about anything that sounds like a plausible weakness, you come across as disingenuous or – worse – deluded as to your lack of shortcomings.

But if you are perhaps a little too honest, or if your weakness is a critical one, you (2) sabotaging your own interview.

Unsurprisingly, not many (3) answer it well. That presents you with an opportunity to stand out though; if you practice and prepare well, it can work in your favour.

A good answer shows that you're **self-aware** and able to critically analyse your own skills. It also shows that you're willing to address your weaknesses, and that you can remain **calm under (4)**.

Why do Interviewers Like to Ask this Question?

It does seem a little perverse. When candidates are doing their best to put themselves across well, the interviewer asks them to talk themselves down.

But interviewers can gain a huge amount of (5) from this simple question (or a variant of it). It's not sadism that keeps this question as one of the most popular – it's effectiveness at getting the candidate to think deeply about themselves.

More specifically, interviewers might want to ask this question:

- To assess your **character** and **personality**
- To gauge your level of **self-awareness** and ability to reflect upon your own skills and gaps
- To check that you don't have any critical **flaws** that might affect your ability to perform in the role
- To see if you're willing to **work on your weaknesses**

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- To test your ability to **maintain composure under pressure**

Different Ways of Asking the Weaknesses Question

While this question is often (6) outright, it can also take a variety of forms. Make sure you know what they're *really* asking so you don't get caught out.

Here are a few of the ways it can be phrased:

- What would your employer or (7) describe as your biggest weakness?
- Which of your current tasks or duties do you find most challenging?
- Which of this role's tasks or duties would you struggle with the most?
- Have any difficulties or issues arisen in your current role?
- What is the biggest regret you'll have on leaving your present (8)?
- Is there any area of your skill set that you feel still needs work?
- Tell me about a time when you let your team down.

While each of these questions (and many more) are all asking a similar question, you don't want to come across as robotic, like you've prepared this answer purely by rote.

Understand that they're asking for your weaknesses, but take note of how exactly they posed the question. Tailor your response accordingly, and it will come across as off-the-cuff, confident and fluent.

Being able to adapt like this is an important interviewing skill that you should get used to. It demonstrates not only that you can deliver a good (9), but that you can think on your feet and have good communication skills.

How to Assess and Select a Weakness that Won't Damage your Credibility

This is the million-dollar question – how do you pick a good weakness for this situation?

The weaknesses you choose should ideally be:

- **Not fundamental to the job.** You probably won't get far if you're applying for an accounting job and your weakness is that you're just awful with numbers.
- **Relevant.** By this we mean that it should actually be a weakness relating to professional competencies. Answering with something like "I just don't do enough exercise" sounds like you're dodging the question.

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- **Easily fixable.** One of the most important parts of answering this question is to get across the idea that you *actively work on your weaknesses*. This means that your weakness needs to be something that you could feasibly (10) through personal effort.

The STAR Method

The **STAR** method is a fantastic approach for all interview questions. It's a technique you should definitely be familiar with and practice.

It's basically a way of structuring any example-based response you give that ensures all the key components are there.

- **Situation.** Give the context of the example. What was the company and the project? Who was the client? Were you working in a team?
- **Task.** Now move into the specifics and describe what your (11) in the project was, and what your goal was.
- **Action.** Describe the actions that you took towards that goal. This should be specifically about your contribution, not the team's.
- **Result.** Finally, talk about the (12) of the actions you took. If you can, slip some numbers in here to make things more concrete.

While this method would typically be used when talking about your positive traits and achievements (after all, that's mostly what you want to be doing in an interview), it's still useful when talking about your weaknesses.

It helps keep your examples concise and engaging. The interviewer can easily follow your scenario from start to finish, getting all the important details along the way.

[897 words. Source: <https://www.wikijob.co.uk/content/interview-advice/interview-questions/what-are-your-weaknesses>]

Missing words:

- (1) capable
- (2) risk
- (3) candidates

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- (4) pressure
- (5) insight
- (6) asked
- (7) colleagues
- (8) job
- (9) answer
- (10) improve
- (11) role
- (12) outcome