

How to answer "Tell me about yourself"

The interviewer often looks relaxed: sitting back, sipping coffee, listening. This can create a false sense of security, almost encouraging you to stray from the point. Beware! A long story about your love for art house films or football or about how well you service customers may seem interesting to you, but may not hit the spot for interviewer. An interview is a two way process; an interaction. If you talk for too long you are giving a speech; not interacting.

Why do interviewers ask this question?

To identify:

- Presentation skills
- Influencing skills
- Evidence of over achievement
- Ability to communicate concisely
- Fit for the job

How to structure a great answer Timing is key; be concise and relevant. Aim for a few sentences and no longer than two minutes. There are five key stages to remember when answering:

1. Find out in advance the key skills required for the job. Structure the first part of your response to match the skills and back up your answer with evidence.
2. Provide a brief snapshot of your career or background, focussing on your most recent roles. Pick two examples of relevant achievements.
3. What are you looking for? State your aspirations and why the company and industry is very attractive to you.
4. Add a personal anecdote. Are you sporty, social, artistic, well-travelled? Try to choose an amusing story or something that will lighten the atmosphere.
5. Finish on a question. An interview is a two way process. Show you are serious about finding out if this is the right opportunity for you, in a polite and enthusiastic way.