

Tell me about yourself

Out of all the interview questions you will ever answer, this is the one you need to know cold... because it is going to be asked in pretty much every interview you will ever go through in some form or another – **TELL ME ABOUT YOURSELF.**

Other ways this common interview question may be phrased include “Walk me through your resume”, “walk me through your background/experience”, or “tell me your story”. It should also be the easiest question to answer – for 2 reasons. One, it is *your story* and no one knows that story better than you do. Two, you absolutely without a doubt knew the question would be asked, so you are totally prepared.



It shouldn't be a long story or your life story. It should be the story of **why you want the job you are interviewing for, and how your education and experiences have prepared you for it.** The most common mistakes people make are talking too much, over-sharing, shooting themselves in the foot by saying the wrong thing, being negative, and being inarticulate/unprepared. Here are my recommendations to really nail this question.

Keep it brief – a good rule of thumb is to keep your story to 5 minutes or less. Your total interview will probably only be about a half hour and you don't want to find yourself talking for 15 minutes. It is important to

leave the interviewer time to ask you what is important to them as well. Also, unless your story is super interesting and full of twist and turns, it can get a little boring (and not relevant).

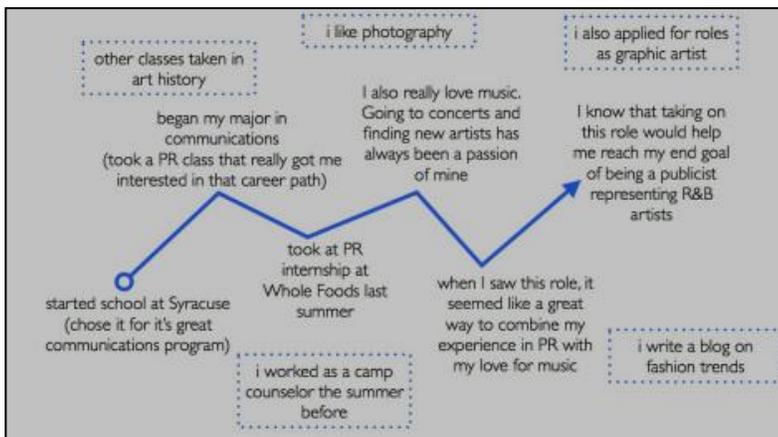
Connect the dots - Make sure the way that you describe your different experiences build on each other in some way. “I did X because of Y and then based on what I learned there, I knew I wanted to do Z, so...” Depending on your personal story and also the job, the response can look different each time. A common place to start is with your formal education but perhaps the industry you are focusing on has actually been a passion of yours since middle school. It's different for everyone but make sure the things you mention are interconnected and seem purposeful (example below).



Tailor it to the job – You probably have lots of different elements to “your story” that you can speak to. You've likely done many things in your life and of course you won't be able to address all of them in a 5 minute run-through. Think about the job you are interviewing for and what pieces of your story make the most sense to tell. Take a look at the image below. You'll notice there are certain things that are part of your experience, but were cut out of “the story”. All this being

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said, if you've done something truly impressive, feel free to mention it even if it is outside the box. Perhaps the fact that you ran the NYC marathon doesn't have anything to do with this job but it does show dedication and commitment.



Come up for air – Every interviewer will have follow up questions based on the things you are going to share with them. As you walk through your story, leave enough small “pauses” to let the interviewer insert a question if they want to. If you get the feeling they just want you to run through and ask questions afterwards, that's fine too.

Proactively address anything “negative” – There are certain things that can be perceived as negative may not be. If you have large gaps in between jobs or had a particularly short stint at a company, go ahead and address that up front. Not mentioning it will just make an interviewer have “open questions”.

Stay “diplomatic” – Even if your last boss was terrible and the company culture was a nightmare, keep it constructive. Trash-talking a former employer never landed someone a job. You definitely don't need to lie about it – if the role wasn't right for you, feel free to say so. There are ways to put things delicately and remain appropriate – definitely make sure you stay on that side of the fence. It's a small world and you never know who knows who!

Wrap it up and endorse the company – As you are finishing your story, end it in the present. “...And this is why I was looking for jobs in the XXX world. When I started learning more about X Company, I knew it would be a great place for me to apply because of X, Y, and Z.” You may have other times in the interview to prove you were thoughtful in applying but why not say it here. It's a great way to end your answer.

If you stick to these few points, you will have a stellar answer to this question. This question sets the tone of what is to come in the interview so it is an important one to get right.

Rehearse it with someone you know well and trust. Have them give you honest feedback on things you can say differently or if there is anything that was unclear. Practice a few times – the more you practice, the more you're going to “know it cold”. Nerves may get to you on the day of the interview and those “rehearsals” (whether in front of a friend or the mirror) really come in handy!

Source: <http://www.prepary.com/common-interview-questions-tell-me-about-yourself-2/>