

## JOB SEARCH KICKSTART: SO TELL ME ABOUT YOURSELF

**How to answer the question that you know is coming.**

### **4 simple steps to a great answer to**

**“So... tell me about yourself.”**

It's often the first question you'll face in an interview. Despite knowing this, many candidates head into a job interview without a clue as to their answer. Then, you end up struggling with a good answer and bobbling around a bit as you try to think of something smart to say.

Trust me, your interviewer knows when you're not prepared for this question and is probably rolling his or her eyes internally as you blunder and wobble through your answer.

Some version of this question is almost a certainty in any interview. You can count on it so it's worth taking some time to polish up an answer.

It's often one of the first questions you will be asked so it's a perfect opportunity to make a positive first impression.

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**SO TELL ME ABOUT YOURSELF**

First, let's look at what NOT to do.

Here are three examples of the WRONG way to answer "So tell me about yourself."

**Answer 1:** *"I was born in Richmond, Virginia and have an older sister and a younger brother. I grew up in a great family. My dad was an electrician and my mom stayed home and volunteered at our school in the library. I played on the tennis team in high school and was vice president of student council. I graduated from Richmond High School and then went to Virginia Tech..."*

**What's wrong with this answer?** The interviewer doesn't want an autobiography. You're giving way too much information and your interviewer is probably bored already. And most importantly, you've given no reason that you're a good fit for the job you're applying for.

**Answer 2:** *"Well, I have 2 dogs and a cat named Whiskers. My dogs are Rover and Buster. I really like hiking on the weekends. The dogs love it."*

**What's wrong with this answer?** This is very random information and tells the interviewer nothing about how you will do the job. Plus, nobody cares!

**Answer 3:** *"Well, uhh, I saw your ad online and uhhh, well, I thought "Why not, I could do that!"*

**What's wrong with this answer?** This answer screams UNPREPARED. Enough said.

The trick is to be prepared. You know the question is coming. Follow the next four steps to a great answer.

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## SO TELL ME ABOUT YOURSELF

So how do you prep a good answer to this question? The good news is that, with just a little time and thought, you can create a natural but polished answer that will create a great first impression and get your interview off to a great start.

### **Step One: Review the job description.**

What experience and credentials are needed? What job skills are listed? Check out the company website and learn as much as you can about the company mission and goals. Write it all down.

### **Step Two: Match your best qualifications to the job description and company mission.**

What skills do you have that are mentioned in the job description? How do your goals align with the company mission? Focus on your top three qualifications and accomplishments that are relevant to the job. Ask yourself "If I could only share 3 things about myself that would show them I'm a good fit for this job, what would I want to tell them?"

### **Step Three: Organize your answer with a really simple, but powerful, formula: Present - Past - Future.**

So, first, start with the present - where you are right now. Then, talk a little about the past and your previous experience and skills that are relevant to the job you're applying for. Finally, finish with the future - why you are excited about using your specific skills and experience in this new position.

Here are a couple of examples:

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## SO TELL ME ABOUT YOURSELF

This candidate is applying for a brand manager position with Brand Strategies Inc.

*“Well, right now, I’m the account manager at Magic Ad Sales Inc where I developed brand strategies for our top clients. Before that, I was a team leader at an agency where my team specialized in creating unique brands for each of our clients. I have extensive experience in Specific Name branding software as well Net X, Microsoft Office and BCDware. I enjoy this kind of work and I’m excited to have the chance to work in more depth with the clients at Brand Strategy.”*

Recent grads often have trouble with this question. Here’s a sample for a recent university grad for a marketing position.

*“Right now, I’m finishing up my final semester at State University with a degree in marketing. I really enjoyed my classes in marketing analytics, strategic internet marketing and media communications. As part of my program, I worked with a local pet business start-up to create a cost-effective marketing campaign using social media as well as offline techniques to build their new customer base. They really liked my knowledge of social media marketing platforms like Twitter, Pinterest, Instagram and such and I won second place in State’s business marketing competition. I’m really excited to put my skills to work with your company to build your customer base. I’m also proficient in Spanish so I can expand your marketing reach into that market as well”.*

## Step Four: Write a first draft of your answer and then polish it down to 1-2 minutes.

Write it out and time yourself. Practice it so you’re comfortable with it - but don’t make it sound memorized. Practice it in front of your friends, family or even the dog so that it sounds conversational.

You will need to create a unique variation for each interview, matching your best qualifications to the job description.

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**That's it. Keep it simple.**

All you need is 2 minutes of telling them what you do best, organized with the **Present - Past - Future** formula. With a little effort and practice, you'll be ready to nail the answer to this very predictable question.

Good luck out there!

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