**A guide to understanding interview questions**

Worried about answering questions in an interview?

Here are some example questions and how you may answer them

**Interviewer:**If you join us as a waiter, you’ll often be in high-pressure situations with a lot of competing demands. How are you at prioritising tasks?

**Applicant:**I have a lot of experience with that. I’m still a student, so balancing the work for my different courses is something I’ve gotten used to - but I also am captain of my football team and look after my younger siblings when my parents must work late. One-week last autumn, I had essays due, I needed to help with try-outs for the team, and my parents needed me to mind my siblings. I sat down and worked out a careful schedule, balancing out things that couldn’t be changed - I couldn’t just leave my siblings home alone, so that of course had to take priority - and places where I might have a little more flexibility, like starting the essays early so that I wouldn’t actually be finishing them during that crazy week, or trading off with the co-captain to show up at try-outs a little bit late. Of course, in a restaurant setting I wouldn’t have time to make plans this way, but the experience has helped me get better at sorting out priorities on the fly, too.

It’s easy to panic and say, ‘Yes, I’m really good at balancing different things, I think it’s a really important skill,’ but that doesn’t show the interviewer that you’re good at it. A specific story lets them see a time you’ve put that trait into action.

* **Question**– What’s your biggest weakness?
* **Meaning** – Are you able to identify areas you can improve in, and admit to them? Also, are you going to struggle with any aspects of the job?
* **Reason** – Everyone can always improve on something. Employers want to see that you’re aware of areas you may not perform as well in and willing to work on them to improve your performance. It’s also useful for them to know if you see yourself struggling with something they know is going to be important to the job!
* **Useful tip** – Don’t be cocky, and don’t try to think of something which sounds impressive (‘I’m too much of a perfectionist’ is a typical example of this). No-one is perfect and there’s no harm in being honest.
* **Question** – Where do you see yourself in five years’ time?
* **Meaning** – Do you have a plan? Are you going to stay with the company or is this a stop-gap? Are you ambitious?
* **Reason** – Employers are usually interested in developing their staff, but they can’t help you progress if they don’t know what you want to do! They also want to see how your ambition lines up with their company.
* **Useful tip**– You don’t need to have a full five-year plan for this; you just need to show that you have an idea of how you could grow with the company.