

Answering “What do you like to do for fun?” the right way

“What do you like to do for fun?” is a simple interview question many job-seekers overlook. But they don't realise that their answer carries a lot of weight!

Why do interviewers ask, “What do you like to do for fun?”

Questions about your personal life can seem a bit out of place in a job interview, but they're more common than you think. The “What do you like to do for fun” question is a great example. This question comes up very often, and it's not as easy to answer as many job-seekers think.

There are many reasons why this question comes up, and how you respond unveils a lot about you.

The first reason you might hear it is to break the ice. Some interviewers bring this question out relatively early. It's a way to get the conversation flowing, help you feel more relaxed, and eliminate some of the tension that comes with job interviews.

Beyond being a relaxing opener, finding out what you like to do for fun also gives the interviewer a chance to learn a little more about you outside of your resume. Until now, the only thing the hiring manager knows about you is what you put on your resume and application. This question goes deeper and uncovers your true personality.

Why does that matter? It's important for a couple of reasons.

Employers want to bring people they enjoy being around on board. It's as simple as that. You're not going to work with every hiring manager you speak to, but they could be an ever-present figure in your daily work life if you get a job offer. It's natural to want to choose someone you get along with, so interviewers ask this question to find some common ground.

“What do you like to do for fun?” is a question that helps them gauge how you fit in with the company culture and ensures you mesh well with your colleagues.

Secondly, your response says a lot about your motivations, ambition, and level of professionalism. Honesty is always the best policy, but there are some things you want to leave out. Bringing up some less-than-ideal weekend habits isn't the best approach. Interviewers know that and test your ability to censor yourself and stay professional.

Your answer can also provide a glimpse of your overall aspirations. Are you a driven person who spends your time improving yourself? Or are you the “work for the weekend” type that won't be motivated to do more than just the minimum? Believe it or not, what you like to do for fun can give employers a good idea.



“What do you like to do for fun?” can also shed light on a critical facet of a professional career: Maintaining a work/life balance. Everyone needs a hobby that helps them manage work stress and stay level-headed. Talking about your non-work activities is a way to show that you can efficiently manage stress and stay productive.

How to answer this question

“What do you like to do for fun?” is a question that seems simple at face value. But when you consider just how much information it reveals about you, you're better off planning your answer ahead of time. Being strategic about your response can ensure you check off all the boxes and leave a positive first impression.

Here's an easy guide on how you can develop a great answer.

1. Brainstorm

Start by listing all the things you do for fun outside of work. There's a good chance you have a long list of things you do in your off time.

Focus on the more interesting hobbies. Jot down a list of activities and pick the most memorable ones to focus your attention on. For example, you might spend some weekends on the couch playing video games. But every few weeks, you might travel to a great hiking spot and spend the day enjoying the great outdoors.

The latter option is much more interesting, so you're probably better off focusing on hiking!

2. Pick one or two things

Once you have your list, pick a few you want to discuss. Again, set your sights on the most interesting things that you like to do for fun. Unique activities stand out in interviewers' eyes, and the hobby may become your identifier when employers think of you later.

Another good trick is to focus on diversity. Having a wide range of interests makes you look well-rounded, cultured, and willing to try new things. So, try to talk about two activities on polar opposites of the left brain/right brain spectrum.

For example, you might talk about the physicality of rock climbing before going into the creativity of playing music.

Either way, try to focus on just two things. "What do you like to do for fun?" is a question that can bait you into giving a lengthy response. Limit yourself to keep things concise.

3. Show your passion

It's always the better choice to talk about something you're genuinely passionate about. For most people, their life doesn't revolve entirely around their work. Employers want to see that you have a balanced life after you clock out.

It shows that you're well-rounded, mentally stable, and capable of being your most productive self when it's time to work.

Dig deep to think about passions and why they mean so much to you. That shouldn't be too difficult. Consider the reasons why you enjoy certain activities.

For example, some people love music's creative challenge and emotional nuance. Others love the solitude and beauty of Mother Nature, leading them to enjoy hikes. Whatever hobbies you enjoy, there's a deep passion there.

Don't be afraid to talk about it. You don't have to open up completely, but letting interviewers in a bit when explaining what you do for fun can pay off.

4. Be prepared to elaborate

If you talk about something you like to do for fun, be prepared for follow-up questions (especially if it's unique or unusual). Some interviewers might ask you to elaborate more and provide insight into the hobby. Alternatively, they may ask questions about how long you've enjoyed the activity, how you started, etc.

There's no rhyme or reason to follow-up questions. In most cases, they're off the cuff and come out of genuine interest in what you have to say. Even still, you should remain professional, respond to additional questions, and continue to speak with confidence.

5. Connect it to your job

Our final tip is a big one. If possible, connect the hobby you talk about back to the job you're trying to land. That might seem challenging at first, but it's easy with careful thought.

If what you like to do for fun and your career share an inherent connection, talk about it. Maybe the hobby uses skills that apply to your everyday work. For example, an artist applying for a marketing job could easily talk about how the creative skills they get from painting make them perform well at work.

Another example is someone who enjoys playing on a local soccer team. If you're part of a sports team, you could talk about how the collaboration directly translates into helping you become a better team player on the clock.

There are many ways to establish that connection if you think deeply enough.

Another angle is to discuss how the hobby helps you decompress. Perhaps you're applying to a high-stress job that requires you to be constantly "on." A simple hobby like reading could be the thing that lets you unwind, recharge, and come back to work feeling refreshed.

Talk about how your hobby makes a difference to your work life and career. Drawing that connection keeps your response relevant and provides more insight into who you are.

What to avoid in your answer

"What do you like to do for fun?" is an interview question that seems difficult to mess up. But don't forget that it provides insight into your personality, character traits, and natural work motivations. Everyone's response to a question like this will differ, and there's no universally incorrect answer.

However, you could say a few things that hurt your chances of getting a job offer. Here are a few mistakes you want to avoid.

Outright lies

You should never lie during a job interview. And that rule applies to seemingly unimportant questions like this, too.

Imagine how you would respond if an interviewer asked you to elaborate. Sure, you could stick with the lie. But what if they're someone who enjoys the same hobby?

Getting caught in a lie is nothing short of embarrassing. And in the context of a job interview, it only makes you look dishonest.

Polarising hobbies

What you like to do for fun might involve religious or political activities. That's fine, but you should focus on other interests when answering this question.

The issue with polarising ideas or activities is that you don't know what other people believe. The last thing you want is for people to make snap judgments about you or for you to say something inadvertently offensive. It's best to avoid those risks altogether.

"I don't have any hobbies"

"What do you like to do for fun?" is a question that everyone should have an answer to. We all have hobbies and interests! You might have trouble thinking of something, but never say that you don't have anything you like to do for fun. That's not a good look, and it will come off as a bit strange.

If you're having trouble talking about things you do for fun, frame it in a way that's easy for the masses to understand. You don't have to get into great detail, but providing some information is better than nothing at all.

Illegal or illicit activities

This should be obvious, but it's worth mentioning. You're not a college student trying to get on Greek row. Talking about alcohol, drugs, or other similar activities is a huge no-no.

It's not impressive, and it will certainly raise some red flags. It's best to leave those details at home.

Boring and cliché answers

Finally, avoid any cliché responses that the interviewer has heard before. We're talking about answers like "hanging out with friends" or "spending time with family."

Those answers are a bit dull and provide no real information about who you are. Discuss specifics and talk about what you like to do for fun with your friends or family.

Conclusion

"What do you like to do for fun?" is an interview question that should be easy to answer if you spend a little time preparing for it. Talking about your passions and hobbies usually comes naturally once you get started, so have fun with it!

Hannah Morgan speaks and writes about job search and career strategies. She founded CareerSherpa.net to educate professionals on manoeuvring through today's job search process.

