

# How to answer interview questions about skills

Do you feel comfortable talking about your skills?

Making a point of your skills and strengths probably isn't something you're used to doing day-to-day, but for an interview, it's key.

Almost 1 in 2 feel people feel only slightly confident, or not at all confident, when talking to their skills, research for SEEK found.

That's why getting more confident at discussing your skills – and how you can put them to work in a role – is such a useful form of interview preparation.

We asked Leah Lambart, Career and Interview Coach at Relaunch Me and Greg Kouwiloyan, Director at Method Recruitment Group for their tips on talking about skills in an interview setting.

Here's their advice on how to answer different types of questions about your skills in an interview.

## How to answer skills-based questions in your interview

Expect to be asked a couple of skills-based questions in your interview. Answering skills-based questions well can help you to convince the interviewer that you have what it takes to do the role well. Lambart says, "you need to show a level of awareness about the skills you already have, those you want to develop and explain how you will apply them to the role."

Here are two common skills-based questions:

### 1. What skills could you bring to this role?

The interviewer is trying to gain insight into your work ethic and style, so it's a chance to show that you're enthusiastic about the role, as well as that you have the skills for it.

"Show them that you have done your research and can be the cultural or team contributor they are looking for," Kouwiloyan says.

A response might be:

*"I understand this role requires me to provide outstanding customer service, and through my career so far I've developed a strong customer service skillset. In my previous role at a call centre, my communication skills were key – I particularly excelled at asking the right questions to truly understand the customer's issues. I also relied on my technical knowledge of our system to resolve customer issues quickly, and I was able to use my patience to manage difficult situations by staying calm. I'm confident that I can apply these skills to the role you're hiring for, too."*

### 2. What is a technical skill you would like to develop?

“Make sure you identify the area for improvement, why you need to develop it and explain what you intend to do or are already doing to develop it,” Lambart says.

If the business is looking for someone with financial skills, you could say:

*“I understand that if I’m to progress to a management role, I’ll need to know how to prepare a budget. I have some ideas how I can go about this. I’ve asked my current manager if I can assist her when she prepares the next budget and I’ve found some short courses that would help me develop my financial knowledge.”*

This type of answer might also provide a chance for you to find out if the company or organisation you’re applying to offers opportunities to help staff develop their skills.

## **How to answer questions by highlighting your soft skills**

Soft skills are non-technical skills like communication, teamwork, time management, creative thinking and problem solving – skills that relate to how you work, not just the work you do. Soft skills are about how you interact with others, manage your work or face challenges.

And for many roles, they’re just as important as technical skills – in fact, 76% of employers agree soft skills are becoming more important as a way for people to advance their careers.

Here are two questions and answers that could help you highlight your soft skills:

### **1. What's your understanding of the role and why are you interested?**

This question is all about gauging your motivation for applying. “Talk about the opportunities of the new role and what you can bring to it,” Kouwiloyan says.

Through explaining your reasons for wanting to work for the organisation, you could talk about key soft skills as well. One example would be:

*“I’ve been an Acting Assistant Manager for nearly a year now, and I really enjoy motivating the team, but I’m at a point in my career where I’m ready to take on a more senior role. I have taken over management responsibilities on numerous occasions and feel management is a particular skill I have. I regularly provided ideas and feedback to my manager about the ways we could engage more effectively with staff. I’ve put my critical thinking and decision-making skills to use, particularly during a period where I assisted my manager in establishing a new team structure. You mention that this role has staff management responsibilities, and I think I’d be a great person to lead this small team to achieve some great results.”*

### **2. Based on your understanding of this role, which of your skills do you believe will be most valuable to our organisation?**

This question offers the perfect opportunity to showcase your passion and draw on your experience.

Here's a sample response:

*"I pride myself on being a strong communicator and an effective relationship manager. At my previous job, I helped develop and implement a communications system to improve productivity in our team. This involved a lot of consultation to understand the needs of various staff. I wanted to ensure that we not only had a practical system that improved our internal communications, but also that the final implementation would have input from the staff who would use it. Taking them on the journey was a great way to achieve these two goals. You stated in the job description that you are looking for someone who's a strong communicator as well as a strong team player. I'm confident this example shows I have these skills."*

## **How do I answer interview questions about skills if I'm changing career?**

It can feel especially challenging to talk about your skills if you're moving from one field or industry to another. Considering your transferable skills is key. The idea here is to [identify the transferable skills](#) you've developed in previous positions and convince the employer that you can [transfer them to the role](#) you are applying for.

For example, if you have worked for an airline in a public-facing role, you can easily talk up your experience in customer service, conflict resolution and communication. Both hard skills (skills related to your field) and soft skills can be transferable, depending on the move you want to make.

Don't be afraid to look beyond your skills, either. "Highlight other times you learnt a new system or changed companies and draw on skills from other parts of life like sport or volunteering," Lambart says.

If your resume or job application has earned you the chance at an interview, then the employer is keen to know more about your skills and how you can put them to use.

Being able to talk confidently about your skills and how they'll benefit the role you're applying for can go a long way to proving that you're the right person for the role. Other questions will pop up in an interview, but these give you an idea of the general approach you can take to talking about your skills in a way that will win employers over.

*Source: Independent research conducted by Nature of behalf of SEEK, interviewing 4000 Kiwis annually. Published May 2021.*