

# Answering "Tell Me About Yourself"

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"Tell me about yourself" is a common interview question. What do they expect to hear? Read this article for ideas and tips.

It might sound like they're asking to hear about your favorite hobbies and TV shows, but they're not. They're not asking to hear personal details about where you were born and raised, where you went to school, or about your family either. They're expecting to hear how your previous experiences led you to applying for this job, and how you're drawn to the work and mission of the organization. You get to tell them the story of yourself!

How do you express this? First, it's good to be clear on your internal vs. external narrative, or story.

## Internal Narrative (aka what you keep to yourself)

Your internal narrative is what you tell yourself about why you're applying to this position. It might include things like the salary, the location, or where you hope it will get you in the future. These are important things to be clear on, to motivate you to get through the job application process and take the extra time it takes to present yourself as the perfect candidate. If you're not sure, try asking yourself these questions:

- *What could you learn about yourself at this job?*
- *What types of people could you meet at this job?*
- *What skills could you learn at this job?*
- *What topics could you learn about at this job?*
- *What could you write on your resume after you've been at this job for 2 years?*

## External Narrative (aka what you share with your new co-workers)

Your external narrative is the story you share about yourself, with a message tailored to fit the audience you're talking to. During a job interview, your goal is to show that you're the right person to hire for this position, and that if given the opportunity, you'll do great things at your new job. Try answering these questions:

- *How did my previous experiences lead me to seek out this opportunity?*
- *What skills and experiences will I draw on to do this job?*
- *Why am I drawn to this work?*

Your story should have a beginning, middle and end. The beginning is your past, the middle is the present (you applying for this job) and the end is your hopes for the future.

**Example of how your previous experiences led you to seek out this opportunity:** "Hi! I'm Joseph. I've been a salesperson since as long as I remember: When I was 15, I sold my mom on getting me a smartphone. When I was 20, I worked as a Verizon sales rep and was the highest grossing rep in all of North California. I had a good time, but my real passion is for technology, so I returned to get my bachelor's degree in IT. Now, as I think about what I'd like to do next, I'd love to combine my passion for technology with my skills in sales. When I learned about the inside sales rep position with Toast, I just couldn't say no, so here I am!"

**Example of why you're interested in the work, or what brought you to the organization:** "I was reading about you all in Business Insider and was inspired by your mission to help small restaurant owners. As someone who grew up in a town where all of our local restaurants have been replaced by chains, I want to do my part to prevent this from happening. And given my experience waiting tables at dozens of restaurants, I'd

like to think I can speak the language of restaurant owners.”

Once you put in the time to sort out your internal and external narratives, you'll be ready to answer the “tell me about yourself” interview question with ease!

Note: Content is adapted from the book [The Unspoken Rules: Secrets to Starting Your Career Off Right](#) with permission from Gorick Ng.