

## Understanding Your Strengths and Weaknesses

To best showcase yourself to advisors, potential mentors and employers, you need to have an elegant approach to expressing what your strengths are and the areas in need of a little work. And if you are prepared, you can relax which also showcases your confidence. Self-evaluation is essential in this regard. Here are some tips and questions that will help you to become more sophisticated in talking about your strengths and weaknesses:

- Think about aspects of your experience that you absolutely love doing or hate doing
  - What types of activities always gain positive or less complimentary comments from superiors?
  - Ask a good friend – what do they see as your strengths? Weaknesses?
  - What are key talents/character necessary to perform well in your profession?
  - What would really keep a person from succeeding in your profession?
  - What do you value in the people you admire most?
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- Develop a list of strengths:
    - First just identify briefly a list of your strengths.
    - Prioritize this list.
      - Don't pick just one, focus on your top three or four.
  - Determine which strengths would fit best with the position for which you are applying.
    - Write up an answer to the question and include concrete, action examples.
    - Practice saying it out loud.
    - Get feedback on your answer from people you trust.
  - *Some examples of strength areas could be:* leadership skills, team-building skills, and organizational skills. For example, if the job stresses the ability to handle multiple tasks, you could say: "I'm good at organizational skills, prioritization and time management. But my greatest strength is my ability to effectively handle multiple projects and deadlines for example...."
  - Develop a list of weaknesses.
  - Prioritize based on the least harmful to reveal or those that can be turned into an advantage. Choose 3 or 4 to address.
  - What have you done to address your weakness? What are the concrete action plans that you have taken or could take to address each weakness?
  - To stand out, be more original and state a true weakness, but then emphasize what you've done to overcome it. For example: "I've had trouble delegating duties to others because I felt I could do things better myself. This has sometimes backfired because I'd end up with more than I could handle and the quality of my work would suffer. But I've taken courses in time management and learned effective delegation techniques, and I feel I am on track now."
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## What are my strengths? Worksheet

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What do I love about being a ..... (chemist, biologist, engineer, etc.)?

What skills, talents, character traits do I have that will make me a great .....

What do I want a future employer to value about me the most .....

What are my top three or four strengths that I want to make sure my advisor and future employers know about me? Do I have great examples that illustrate these?

## What are my weaknesses? Worksheet

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What do I hate to do that is related to my future career or my academic experience?

What part of my skills, natural talents, attitudes, or character seem to work against me?

When I have worked with other people, what do they complain about or stop asking me to do?

Of the weaknesses I have identified, which ones have I tried to work on? Which would be safe to reveal?

Of the weakness safest to reveal in an employment interview, what is/was my action plan for making change?