

How to answer: So, tell me about yourself

Many interviews begin with the interviewer asking, “So, tell me about yourself.” This question is a way of easing you into the interview so that you relax a little. However there’s more to it than that, says the principal of [HBA Consulting](#), Gary Champion.

“It’s also a way of finding out how organised a person is in their thinking. Hirers will be hoping to see some clarity around why a candidate is interested in working for the company and what they can bring to the company as an individual.”

Prepare for this question by thinking about the way the organisation presents itself on its website. How does it approach things like career progression and corporate social responsibility? Ask yourself if you have something in common and then during the interview, explain the alignment of values.

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Examples could include any volunteering experience, community activities, or even any time you’ve spent overseas where the company has a presence.

It will also give interviewers an indication of your interpersonal skills, so take a deep breath and relax. Speak in a confident, friendly and measured tone. Remember, this question is about you – so be as natural as possible.

What to mention

- Start by linking your answer back to your CV. “You could say, ‘I’ve got a couple of really interesting past experiences that I think are relevant to this position and I’ve outlined them in my CV, but let me just tell you a bit about myself in those roles.’”

- You could also include the top two or three descriptive words that align with your personality. You could say something like, 'My three core values are honesty, integrity and persistence.' "Avoid mentioning a long shopping list of all the wonderful things you think about yourself, your personality and style," cautions Champion.

What to avoid

- Champion suggests sticking to professional topics and not delving in too deep to the personal. This conversation is about you as a candidate.
- "Your interviewer might be interested in hearing a little about your family and background, but just at a high level. I wouldn't get into how long you lived at home before you moved out, or what your sister's doing overseas, or how much debt you have. Personal stuff should be reasonably limited because it's a business discussion."

How much detail?

- Spend no more than two or three minutes answering this question.
- "If you're organised in your thought processes and you've figured out the links between your own experience and the values of the business, you'll have done the best you can in that time," says Champion. "To go on much longer almost looks as though you haven't understood the purpose of the interview or why the question is being asked."

Finish confidently

Champion's tip is to consider ending your response by asking your interviewer if they have any questions about what you've just told them.

"That would probably take a pretty brave interviewee, but I think it shows confidence and a certain clarity of thought. If you're trying to differentiate yourself early on in the interview, this could be the point that does it for you."