

Top tips for answering skills-based interview questions

Skills-based questions aim to uncover whether your skill set matches what an organisation wants and needs. These questions require you to discuss your existing skills as well as those you would like to develop.

“Skills-based questions are used to assess the technical components of a role and whether you can carry out what we’re hiring you to do,” says Manisha Maligaspe, Recruitment Lead for Oceania Transaction Advisory Services at EY.

Maligaspe notes that it’s important to recognise that skills-based questions can cover soft skills. “It’s a competitive job market and we want candidates to show they have good technical skills, but that they will also fit the culture of the organisation,” she says. “Demonstrating that you have soft skills such as problem-solving is critical. That can really set apart two individuals when they’re going for the same job.”

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The key to responding to skills-based questions

“These questions allow you to showcase your technical and/or professional skills and strengths,” says Jodette Cleary, Chief People Officer with hipages. The best responses will cover “soft” skills (such as adaptability and communication skills) as well as “hard” skills (skills that can be taught – e.g. technical skills).

1. Talk us through your professional and/or technical skill-set

It’s important that you are very familiar with the role and job description when answering this question, so you can highlight how useful your skills are to the

current position.

If the organisation is looking for someone with online business skills you could say:

“I have experience in HTML and coding, and I used these skills in my last two roles. My previous place of employment didn’t have a website, so I taught myself how to code. I built a website from scratch for the business and they saw their sales increase by 80 percent.”

2. What is the one professional and/or technical skill you would most like to develop?

If there are any skills listed in the job description that you don’t currently have, this is the time to highlight the ones you want to develop. This shows you understand the requirements of the role and your willingness to undertake professional development.

It’s also worth emphasising how you have addressed any skills shortages you have had in previous roles and how you utilised new skills.

3. Based on your understanding of this role, what do you think are the key challenges? How could you best apply your skills to resolve these?

This is a question where you need to know the requirements of the role and how your experience, skills and knowledge match up. It’s also an opportunity to highlight your soft skills. “Soft skills are so critical because in order to deliver outcomes, you need to be able to have effective working relationships,” says Sarah Beck, SEEK’s Director of Talent Acquisition. “I’m looking for people with empathy and listening skills who are collaborative because they will be able to achieve the outcomes of the role.”

You could say:

“One of the challenges will be learning your Customer Relationship Management system as I haven’t used it before. My plan would be to ensure I have access to training and ask lots of questions. In previous roles I’ve had to learn a variety of CRM systems so I’m confident it won’t take me long to get up to speed.”

While this is not an exhaustive list of skills-based questions that may get asked in an interview, it’s possible to see this type of question is to allow you to explain how the professional or technical skills you have fit the requirements of the job you are going for.

It's also important to identify the skills you want to develop and highlight how your soft skills (such as problem-solving, critical thinking and communication skills) make you an ideal candidate for the role.

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