

How to skip a question in a job interview

So you're in a job interview, and things are going well. You're answering questions with ease and your interviewers are nodding encouragingly. Then, out of nowhere, comes a question you haven't prepared for. You don't know how to answer it, and you freeze. The confidence and calm you exuded for the past 15 minutes disappears, and anxiety sets in.

You need to skip or pass on the question.

It's natural to feel thrown and unnerved by something like this, but it's totally possible to skip on an interview question and still make a great impression. Here are three tips to ensure you still present your best self:

1. **Put the question on hold.** Executive Director at Slade Group, Anita Ziemer, says that while you should answer all questions in a job interview (particularly those surrounding [selection criteria](#) and your own experience) if you, "take in a pen and paper, make a point of writing down the question, and let the interviewers know that you'll come back to it," this still exhibits professionalism and enthusiasm. When you arrive at the end of the interview, take ownership of returning to the question, and be ready to answer it comprehensively. If you run short of time and need to email through your response, provide detailed examples where possible.
2. **Use it to your advantage.** Ziemer says that honesty is the best policy when it comes to passing on an interview question, and that it can, in fact, raise interesting topics that may not have come up otherwise. "Explain why you can't answer it," she says. "Perhaps that's something you'd like to learn more about. You should also explain that you haven't come across that issue or situation before, or demonstrate that when you last came across a new challenge, then this is how you approached it." Hiring managers rarely ask questions to try and catch candidates out, rather, they ask them to get a sense of how and why they'd be suitable for the role, so use this to your advantage.
3. **Stick to the plan, and keep up your confidence.** "If you know you're a 70% fit for the role, that is, you cover most of the key criteria, and you have the ability to stretch and improve, plus you bring additional outside learnings to the role and the organisation, then you should walk into an interview with the confidence that the employer will want you on their team," says Ziemer. The point here is, that skipping an interview question doesn't mean you've surrendered your chances for success. Throughout the interview, and even in the face of a little trip-up, candidates should seek to build rapport with their

interviewers. Have **two or three questions prepared** to help build a meaningful conversation, and don't just succumb to a question-and-answer with the interviewer.

Ultimately, no one goes in wanting to skip or pass on an interview question. But when you do get stumped, it's important to have a strategy. Furthermore, make sure you thank your interviewers for the opportunity to return to the question. Remember, an interview is a two-way conversation, so be sure you take the time to cover off your questions as well.

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