

How to Conquer the Secret Weapon

Want to know a secret? At some point in your professional career, a hiring manager has (or will) use a secret weapon to determine if you are truly qualified for the job. Don't be alarmed – it's nothing serious, but your reaction can ultimately have an influence on your chances of moving forward in the application process.

In an effort to loosen you up, most likely the interviewer will begin with a warm-up question along the lines of "So tell me about yourself." Remember – all interview questions are asked for a specific purpose (to get to know you), but in this instance, it's important to be as candid as possible without over-sharing. This means that you should avoid discussing any personal information.

Here is the wrong way to answer this question:

"I was born in Pittsburgh in 1958 and earned a baseball scholarship at GMU. On the weekends, my wife and I enjoy taking our dog on long walks in the park. I also have three children that keep me very busy on the weekends with their recreational activities."

Let me guess... most likely you may assume that sharing a tidbit of personal information will allow you to establish a friendly relationship with the employer because of course; it's more difficult for the hiring manager to pass up on a candidate that they have a positive connection with. I will let you in on another secret – hiring managers often ask this question in order to use certain elements of your response against you. In other words, they want you to over-share so that they can be privy to information that is technically illegal to ask such as your age, marital status, and family structure. Let me preface this by saying that not all employers do this, but there are *some* that for example, may assume that the number of children that you have may affect the amount of time that you take off and your ability to perform on the job.

The key to answering this question successfully is to keep your response strictly professional. Do not divulge any personal details that relate to your life outside of work. Now that you have been told about the employer's secret weapon, use this information to instead, answer this question the correct way:

"I graduated from VCU with a bachelor degree in nursing. After graduating, I took on several internships with local clinics and then moved on to a better opportunity working at the Medical College of Virginia. At this stage in my career, I am looking to work as a certified school nurse because of my love for children. I also like having the ability to take the summers off to take on additional nursing work and remain an active member of the American Nurses Association."