

# “Tell me about yourself”

You need to put yourself in the recruiter's shoes. Understanding the recruiter is the first step to building a relationship with them, and that is the first step to getting your foot into the door for that interview. There are several things to remember when speaking to a recruiter.

First, the recruiter is not a mythical creature that you must treat like a higher power. The recruiter is a regular person just like you! They are human. They have interests outside of work. They are trying their best to make their time at the career fair as interesting and engaging as possible. Don't squander it by not being engaging and exciting.

Second, the recruiter wants to know if you would be a good fit for the company culture. Two people with the same set of technical skills might not be as equally qualified to work in a position because of the social and soft skill requirements set forth by that particular team. Know what sort of company culture you are looking for! There are 2 major categories: large vs small companies, and team vs individual focused positions. Odds are, most companies will be large and team focused positions.

Third, the recruiter wants to engage with a potential future coworker! Can this recruiter imagine having a good conversation with you during the company happy hour or holiday party? As trivial as this sounds, making good connections with your coworkers will reflect in your performance reviews.

So how should I approach this question?

- Start off with a brief introduction about yourself, including your name, major, year, and where you grew up
  - “My name is [name] and I am a [year] in [blank] major. I grew up in [city] and made my way to [college] a few years ago.”
- Continue with a couple of your technical passions:
  - Good: “I enjoy mechanical design”
  - Better: “I have worked in a position with mechanical design and I enjoy it a lot”
  - Best: “I specialize in mechanical design and it is my passion”
- Go into your relevant extracurriculars: “In addition to my technical skills, ...”
  - “...I work for the tutoring center at the university and tutor 10 hours per week in [relevant courses]”
  - “...I am an officer of [club] and I spend a lot of my free time doing [tasks] for the organization”
  - “...I am working on a personal project that involves [process]”
- Finish with hobbies: “Outside of school and work, ...”
  - “...I enjoy running and exercising every morning with my friends. It builds dependability as well as mental and physical strength”

- "...I enjoy hiking, camping, fishing, and anything outdoors. I find it gives me a good break from society and helps my unwind best"
- "...I enjoy cooking because it helps me unwind while still being productive. Not to mention that I enjoy cooking almost as much as I enjoy eating!"

If you go with those four big topics, the recruiter will certainly pick something out of that to use as a talking point. Recruiters are normal people and will find ways to connect with you. I interviewed with someone once who grew up 10 minutes away from me in a state that was hundreds of miles away – what a small world!

If you have a weak "tell me about yourself" answer, the recruiter will immediately change topics. That might mean that the recruiter did not find anything you said to be interesting or relatable. If you genuinely had a good spiel, don't sweat it! There could be two reasons the recruiter switched topics on you: they need to follow a strict question set and have a time limit; they genuinely think that you aren't a good fit for the company or position. They could also just be a bad interviewer – it happens. Sometimes you have to trust the recruiter's judgement on whether or not you would be a good fit. It's better to get turned down at the career fair than spend months in a job that you hate and won't grow or learn from.