

When approaching an interview, you know that there are certain things you can prepare. You can dress professionally and be presentable. You can create an outstanding resume and bring a few copies with you to the meeting. You can bring business cards, pens, and a notepad for taking notes. You can prepare by getting to know the history of the company and its mission statement. You can learn a bit about the interviewer and what their career or interests reveal about what they are looking for in a candidate. You can even prepare some answers to questions. However, simple questions about what your experience and skills will bring to the table are not the only ones you may face.

Interviewers often ask difficult questions to see how you handle pressure and how truthful you are while maintaining integrity. One of the toughest questions asked in interview settings is what you thought of your last boss. Now if you loved your last boss, who threw you a great going away party and still meets you for coffee now and then, this question is not so tough. But we have all had bosses that we did not like or get along with at work. We have all worked for someone who never seemed to approve of the job we did no matter how hard we worked. Some people are not good communicators, even though they are in management, and this can cause a lot of friction with employees. Some people are not what you might see as cordial or polite; their people skills may be lacking, and this can create an environment of animosity and resentment as directness can be misunderstood for rudeness.

Whatever your reasons for not liking your previous boss, it is very important in an interview to not bash this person. Anything negative that you say about someone else, instead of illustrating their poor skills, will only reflect poorly on you. It may seem unfair, but that is the way people hear negativity.

So what do you say when you are faced with the question of a poor boss? First, this is something you should prepare before the interview. Rehearse this answer with someone else and ask them to be very honest about how negative you sound. You should always show respect to others no matter how you feel about them. This means that you can start by highlighting the positive aspects of your previous employer. Everyone has good points, so start there. When listing anything negative, try being as kind and tactful as possible. For instance, if they never gave you direction but then chastised you later for not knowing what to do, it's best not to say this outright to an interviewer. Instead, tell them that your previous employer had a different communication style than you did, but that it inspired you to get out on your own and take responsibility for learning tasks right the first time, without direction.

Always choose to answer this question in the most sensitive way you can. Again, badmouthing someone else will only give a bad impression of you, and bear in mind that anything negative you say will be amplified in the interviewer's mind. They will imagine the worst possible instance of what you are describing, so keep it light and tactful. And always finish with something positive, preferably about yourself. Smile, and show the interviewer that even if you don't like someone, you can work with them successfully.