**“Tell me about yourself” does not mean “Provide me with your detailed autobiography.”**

Interviewees assume this question means what the words mean: what are some of the highlights of your life, and what makes you interesting? But you’re not at an interview to audition for the part of friend. You’re here because you have some attractive skills and a bit of exposure/experience that means you (might) hold promise for the company. **When an interviewer asks this question,** **it’s your opportunity to set the tone for the entire interview and to show immediately that you know what it takes to do this job, and what skill set you have that sets you apart from your competition.** This question is really the place to begin that pitch you’ll use throughout the interview.

**Divide your answer into three parts:**

* What has brought you to this point/Where you are now/what you’re proud of/what skills you’ve been honing
* How you approach your work/what you’re engaged in/what you’ve put together for innovating, researching, changing
* End with what you seek now, or how you can put all this work together for the (new) company

Craft a short—one minute—answer that tells what your original thinking was; why you’re in this or a related field; what combination of skills you’ve refined and used; why you find this work important; what you’ve accomplished; why you’re a good fit for the job you’re interviewing for.

A brief sketch of what you’ll say:

**Where you started (but not too far back)** I have always been attracted to collecting data since my sophomore year, when I got involved in a research project where I \_\_\_\_. As an industrial engineer, I’m big on efficiency, too, and had a project where I \_\_\_\_\_. I found out I was good at putting data collection together with my eye for finding trends and anomalies.

**How you then began assembling the skills and created detailed work** During my internship later that year, I was tasked with \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_, and analyzing the data to find out \_\_\_\_. I was fast/capable/ driven about taking it/using it to \_\_\_\_\_\_. Then, when I presented my findings at a morning meeting, my boss asked me to create a presentation for the client. Not only did I have to present my findings, I now had to present them with conclusions to a non-technical client. By boss was so impressed, he asked me to return the following year.

**Show how you can put this work to work for the company interviewing you** I have been able to put \_\_\_\_ with \_\_\_\_ and then \_\_\_\_\_ with it. I’m interested in this position because it means I can put \_\_\_ with \_\_\_ and even\_\_\_, so my work can be taken to a new level.

**Like this:**

"When I started taking the biomedicine and culture cluster courses within my major, I learned I am fascinated by the complexities of public health. Through the research lab I work in, I found the importance of equitable data collection and the phrase -- 'what gets counted counts.' During my previous internship, I learned the importance of building trust within a community and developing a diverse stakeholder mix. Through internships, research, and course work I have developed skills such as literature review, qualitative data analysis, and community health outreach. My unique skill set is why I am the best candidate for this position."

**First- and second-year students** will have enough in your background to answer the question. Don’t overthink it. Try something like this:

“I chose my major, mechanical engineering, because from an early age, I wanted to know how things work. I used to take things apart, like clocks and the electric mixer. It drove my mom crazy. But then I discovered cars, and I could tag along with my uncle who owns a repair business. I’ve been able to assemble motor parts, while taking classes using Solidworks and Java, plus learning fluid dynamics and machine design.

While I’m going in the direction of automotive design, all my skills can be transferred to assembly line work and quality inspection.”

**Note: You’ve just 1. demonstrated your aptitude, 2. told a narrative, 3. provided concrete skills, 4. shown how your work transfers/translates. That’s a lot.**