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How to Explain Being Fired

A job termination may not tarnish your reputation, but lying about it will. Read on to learn how to tell the truth in a way that shows you in a good light.



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There's no easy way to explain to people why you were fired from a job. Call it a termination, separation, or conscious uncoupling from your employer—whatever your euphemism of choice, sooner or later you're going to have to learn how to explain being fired, and how you do so can speak volumes.

Bear in mind, however, that getting fired doesn't mean you have an eternal black mark on your resume. In fact, you can actually use the experience to illustrate how you've grown as a person

and employee.

Ultimately, when it comes to getting fired, all you can do is own it. And when the subject comes up in your next job interview—and you know it will—you can make sure you're prepared to address it honestly, while still framing yourself in the best possible light. Wondering how to do that? Don't worry; we'll show you how to explain a termination in an interview.

Does Getting Fired Go on Your Record?

When you apply for a job, the employer might ask you to agree to a **background check**. This gives them an opportunity to dig into your employment history and ensure that you don't have any skeletons your closet before offering you a job.

The information they may find includes:

- Companies you've worked for.
- Previous job titles.
- Dates of employment.
- Salaries you've earned.

The good news is a background check will not disclose if you've been fired from a job. However, employers can find out if you've been fired through reference checks and, sometimes, word of mouth.

Can an Employer Say You Were Fired?

The answer is "yes." A potential employer might conduct a reference check with previous employers to verify that you worked for them within the dates included on your resume. While a previous employer can legally disclose that you've been fired, it doesn't always mean they will.

Can a Previous Employer Discuss Why You Left?

In addition to disclosing that you've been fired, a previous employer can provide a reason for your termination if asked but can only provide verifiable facts (e.g., falsifying timesheets, stealing from the company, etc.).

Depending on which state you're in, an employer can provide some feedback regarding your performance. But they have to choose their words carefully to avoid a potential defamation lawsuit.

How to Say You Were Fired on an Application

We've all seen that dreaded field on the work history section of an application that reads "reasons for leaving." You want to tell the truth, but you may not know how to spin a termination in a way that sounds less harsh than simply saying "I was fired."

Need a better way to say "fired" on an application? Here are some softer alternatives to consider:

- "I was let go."
- "My job ended."
- "We parted ways."
- "Mutual separation."

How to Explain Being Fired During an Interview

Got a job interview lined up? Questions about why you left your previous job may come up. But don't panic. Below, we'll show you how to explain getting fired in an interview, how to avoid mentioning it, and examples that can help you formulate an answer.

Are You Required to Disclose You Were Fired in an Interview?

If a hiring manager doesn't ask, then there's no need to tell. It's best to avoid disclosing any potentially negative information about yourself during an interview if you don't have to.

Here's how to avoid saying you were fired in an interview:

- When asked about your previous employment, discuss only your duties and job-related accomplishments.
- Try to keep the conversation focused on your qualifications and why you want the new job.

Can I Lie About Being Fired?

Our number one tip on how to explain being fired: Tell the truth. Yes, we know, explaining being fired in an interview is right up there with getting a flat tire and a bee sting and an impromptu tooth extraction. But we can't stress this enough—if you get caught covering up a firing during an interview, you're putting your career at unnecessary risk.

Lies have a way of coming to light, whether it's through references or shared connections, and you don't want to end up with a rescinded offer or worse, a tarnished reputation that follows you throughout your career.

How to Explain a Termination in an Interview

Knowing how to explain being fired when the dreaded question comes up can be difficult. But what's the best way to answer when you feel like you're being put on the spot? First of all, be

as candid about it as you can. People get fired for many different reasons; try to give your prospective employer the clearest, most objective take on it you can.

That one word—objective—is a crucial one. There are two sides to every story (sometimes more), and it'll be obvious if you're painting the situation in a manner that's primarily self-serving.

However you feel about getting fired, it's never the best idea to place the blame squarely on your old employer. Instead, calmly evaluate the circumstances of the firing (the majority involve either personality or performance), and you're more likely to telegraph maturity instead of lingering resentment.

Demonstrate That You've Learned From Your Mistakes

Rather than dwelling on the painful realities around why you were fired, use them as a springboard to showcase what you learned—both about your career and yourself as a human being. Focus on these two questions:

- What could you have done differently?
- How would you approach your old job now, with the benefit of hindsight?

Before, you were younger, more naïve, and you may have let petty personality conflicts get the better of you. Now, though, you have experience on your side—and you're not letting it go to waste. Emphasize those points to your interviewer.

Again, don't deflect blame. In an interview setting, the best approach is always to accept the mistakes you may have made. For example, saying, "I didn't have a clear understanding of expectations" is far better than saying, "They didn't tell me what their expectations were," even if your personal opinion varies.

In the end, it's about **owning your past**, not making excuses for it. And if you can drive that outlook home both in tone and content, your target employer may walk away impressed by your ability to learn and grow, rather than hung up on one moment of your career you'd rather forget.

“Why Were You Fired”: Example Answers for Your Job Interview

Below, we provide some examples that show you how to explain being fired for misconduct or performance issues. Try using these examples as inspiration when creating your answer.

How to Explain Being Fired for Misconduct: Examples

Example 1:

“My previous employer terminated my position as a customer service manager due to frequent tardiness, even after receiving several warnings. I often managed a very tight schedule between my personal life and work, but I was expected to report to my job by 8 a.m. Monday through Friday.

My supervisor was aware that I would sometimes be late and had previously asked me to communicate that beforehand. After my employer and I decided it was time to part ways, I learned the importance of punctuality and communication (for example, letting my employer know when I will be late).”

Example 2:

“I previously worked a clerical job from home, but I was let go after frequently using my work-issued computer for personal reasons. The rules regarding computer use were outlined in the employee handbook, but I must have missed some of the details.

I was under the impression that we were only prohibited from accessing social media sites and I used the computer to shop online. Being terminated from my clerical job has taught me the importance of reading every detail outlined in the employee handbook. This is something I will always do moving forward.”

How to Explain Being Fired for Performance: Examples

Example 1:

“When I worked as a sales associate for a well-known software company, I was expected to meet a certain monthly sales quota. I was able to reach my sales quota during some months and even exceed it a couple of times. But for the most part, I fell short of reaching my sales quota, even after receiving additional training and being placed on a performance improvement plan.

My supervisor and I finally agreed that the job wasn’t for me, and we mutually agreed to part ways. While I have a full understanding of the sales process (from generating leads to the sales funnel), I have learned that my performance was linked to a lack of passion for and knowledge of the products I sold.”

Example 2:

“I was recently let go from my job as a social media marketer due to repeated complaints from clients. The complaints were due to inaccurate information in posts, missed deadlines, and accidentally mixing posts with those of other clients. These errors often stemmed from poor organization, time management, and task prioritization. I worked in a very fast-paced environment with a lot of moving parts, which my employer and I agreed wasn’t for me.

Since parting ways with my last employer, I have learned the importance of staying organized so I can avoid making errors. I have also taken some courses that teach strategies for improving organization and time management, which I intend to apply to future marketing jobs.”

Take Your Learning Experience to a New Job

Now that you know how to explain being fired, you'll feel more secure going into that interview room. But that's just part of the process. There's a lot more you can do to put yourself in an advantageous position before you even walk through the door. Want to know more? Start by creating a [Monster profile](#) for free. We can send you interview insights, career advice, and more job-hunting tips so you have a better grasp on the process from start to finish.

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