

Behavioral Interview Tip Sheet

Behavioral Interviews are based on the idea that the best indicator of how someone will perform in the future is to look at how they performed in the past. Answering behavioral-based questions can be challenging, but having a structure to frame these answers can help. Here are some suggestions for accomplishing successful behavioral interviews:

1. Thoroughly read through the job description to determine the skills needed to be successful in that position. Make a list of those skills; don't forget social skills and personality traits.
2. Reflect on past work experience and identify examples of exhibited skills for the desired position. Be prepared to connect past experiences as transferable skills for the desired position.
3. Write brief scenarios of those experiences, including the Situation, Task, Action, and Results (S.T.A.R.) of each scenario (more information below).
4. Be as specific as possible; use real stories from previous work, volunteer, or school activities. Use the template on the next page as a guide.

Situation:

Describe a situation where you had to take action to overcome a challenge. The key is to paint a picture for the interviewer of what was going on and why it was important to the organization that it be resolved. Be as precise as possible; this should be a specific scenario, not a generalized explanation.

Task:

What is the goal, or what were you assigned to do to resolve the situation?

Action:

Give a detailed account of the actions you took to accomplish the task. It is important to focus on your actions, not the actions of your team, even if the question is on teamwork. Again, this is the time to be very specific.

Result:

How did your actions contribute to resolving the situation? This is the part of the answer where you should feel confident in bragging about yourself. You are telling a story; the Result is the *"and we all lived happily ever after"* part. You want to talk specifically about what you accomplished, how your actions positively impacted the organization and any lessons you learned.

Below is an example of STAR in action!

Interview Question: Tell me about a time you were working with a team to accomplish an assignment and encountered a challenge.

Situation:

For one of my classes, my work group was asked to recruit other students for a research project. We decided to host an event to explain the project and needs to students. On the day of the event, the room was set up and we had snacks and prizes for people who came. Unfortunately, no one attended the event.



Task:

Everyone in my group was defeated and frustrated that the work they had put into the event seemed to be a waste. I realized I needed to quickly gather the group to refocus. We needed to work together to develop a new plan to increase participation.



Action:

I facilitated an on-the-spot meeting to develop a new plan. I acknowledged the frustrations of the group and helped them to see the positives—we started early enough that we still had time to develop a new plan. I helped the group develop a plan for each person to connect with 10 students in their social circles within the next two days to participate. I scheduled a follow-up meeting to discuss our progress.



Result:

When the group met for our follow-up meeting, we had 10 students who were willing and committed to participating in the research project. We were able to finish the project successfully and got praise for our results. From this experience, I learned that starting a project early allows time for challenges to be addressed if they occur. With the appropriate preparation, I can still be successful despite encountering challenges.

