

How to answer behavioral questions - STAR Method

The easy part of perfecting your resume is that you can generally tweak it on your own time. When you get into the actual interview, though, time is not on your side. You have to make quick decisions about how to answer each question, and behavioral questions are among the toughest to react to. That said, preparation - like always - is the key. Behavioral questions are more in depth and often require longer answers so there is a formula come up with them. It's called the STAR method, a structured manner of using specific examples and details to respond to behavioral-based interview questions. On the following page, you can see examples of behavioral-based interview questions, which often begin with "Tell me about a time..." or "Give me an example of a situation when you..."

The STAR formula goes like this:

Situation

Describe the situation you were in or a task that you needed to accomplish. Use a real life example from a job, class or volunteer experience and be specific.

Task

Clearly define the goal you were working toward in that situation.

Action

The interviewer wants to hear what YOU did. Use the word "I" along with powerful action words.

Result

Describe what happened and how you were responsible for it. This is your time to shine! The story should showcase how you were the hero - how you retained the tough customer, or finished the project ahead of schedule, or saved the company \$40,000. Most of the time, candidates leave the interviewer hanging, so always give the result without having to be asked. Don't be shy! An interview is the time and place to talk about your successes.

Oh, and if you have a tendency to talk too much (or not enough), then this formula will keep you on track.

How to come up with your own examples?

In advance of the interview, think about your career and make a list of your major accomplishments. Replay each scenario in your mind. The more you think about it, the more details you will remember. Come up with 5-8 potential STAR method answers. Vary your answers, as well - don't only focus on your most recent job. And of course you may not be asked the question exactly the way you prepared it, but the prep work will give you a solid foundation to speak from. Make sure your STAR answer, just like any good story, has a beginning, a middle and an end.



Practice answering these behavioral questions using the STAR method

- Describe a situation in which you were able to use persuasion to successfully convince someone to see things your way.
- Describe a time when you were faced with a stressful situation and tell me how you handled it.
- Give me a specific example of a time when you used good judgment and logic in solving a problem.
- Give me an example of a time you when you set a goal and were able to meet or achieve it.
- Tell me about a time when you had to use your presentation skills to influence someone.
- Please discuss an important written document you were required to complete.
- Describe for me a time you went above and beyond the call of duty to get the job done.
- Tell me about a time when you had too many things to do and you were required to prioritize.
- Give me an example of a time when you made a split-second decision.
- What is your typical way of dealing with conflict? Give me an example.
- Tell me about a time when you were able to successfully deal with another person even when that individual may not have liked you or vice versa.
- Tell me about a time you set out to do something and failed.
- Describe for me a time when you showed initiative and took the lead.
- Tell me about the last time you dealt with a tough customer.
- How do you motivate others? Give an example.
- Step by step, using a real-life example, please tell me how you delegate responsibilities on a project.

Describe a time when you anticipated potential problems and developed preventative measures.