

# How to Practice Storytelling

 [coursera.org/learn/art-of-job-interview/supplement/XKUtF/how-to-practice-storytelling](https://coursera.org/learn/art-of-job-interview/supplement/XKUtF/how-to-practice-storytelling)



**Want to be more memorable** and engaging during your job interviews? Tell a good story.

**Human beings have been in love with stories** since the days of the caveman -- from cave paintings to Bible parables to the Brothers Grimm to the latest Hollywood blockbuster.

Research has shown that people are much more likely to respond to and remember information when it's presented in the form of a story.

The best stories have **likable protagonists**, obstacles to overcome, dramatic character arcs, and happy endings (of course).

They allow the listener to connect with and **root for the hero**.

**In a job interview, stories can help you make a strong** and lasting positive impression. A good interview story will **showcase strengths**, reveal a bit of your personality, and help you establish rapport with the interviewer.

And you **don't have to be Shakespeare** to craft powerful interview stories. The **STAR approach** provides a template for developing interview stories that highlight the information that job interviewers are looking for.

Go to the Big Interview Answer Builder now to start developing your interview stories.

## S.T.A.R. Approach to Great Interview Stories

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### 1. Situation/Task

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First, briefly describe a recent situation, challenge, problem, or goal. You'll want to offer enough back story to **provide context** and a clear description of what you were trying to achieve and why.

### 2. Approach

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Next, describe the **actions you took** to address the issue. Show your thinking and approach and mention any relevant skills or methods used. Highlight obstacles overcome and creative solutions.

### 3. Result

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All good stories have a happy ending. Describe yours. Outline any **tangible results** and/or feedback that you received from clients, managers, coworkers. Discuss lessons learned and how you continue to apply them.

## Sample STAR Interview Story

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### Situation/Task:

*In my current role as an assistant account manager, I support my boss on our company's biggest corporate account, which brought in \$2 million in revenue this year.*

*Recently, my boss was traveling and I got a frantic call from Ray, our client contact, that he was not able to log into our system to run reports that he needed by the end of the day.*

*Now, this was a Friday at 3pm and my boss was on a plane to London. Ray was very upset when he heard that my boss was unavailable and I knew I had to figure out a way to help him or things could get ugly.*

### Approach:

*The first thing I did was apologize to Ray about the inconvenience. I gave him a chance to vent a bit and reassured him that I would do whatever was humanly possible to resolve the problem for him.*

*I called our Help Desk, but the technician told me that the issue would have to go into the queue and he was very busy.*

*So I decided to go wait outside the office of our Customer Support Director, the technician's boss, until he could see me. I then explained the situation and expressed how important it was for us to find a solution as soon as possible for our #1 client.*

*I then set up a conference call with Ray and our Customer Support Director and, working together, we were able to identify the cause of the problem, which was related to Ray's company's security settings.*

## **Results:**

*We adjusted the settings right there while we were on the phone and Ray was then able to run his report and meet his deadline.*

*Later that day, Ray sent an email praising me for my work, cc'ing my boss and the CEO of our company. Ray said I saved the day for him with my persistence and excellent customer service skills.*

*Our CEO called me to congratulate me on my quick thinking and tell me to keep up the good work.*

## **How to Use Your STAR Interview Stories**

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**Good interview stories require advanced preparation and practice.** It's very **difficult to come up with a great story on the fly** in an interview situation when you're under pressure and in an unfamiliar environment.

That's why it's well worth your time to **write your stories** using our Interview Answer Builder and practice delivering them before the interview.

The process of writing the stories out will help you **clarify the high points** and may even remind you of details you've forgotten.

You can write the entire narrative or simply capture bullet points for each of the STAR sections.

You should **not try to memorize** these stories, though. You don't want to sound like a robot or come across as false and over-rehearsed.

The idea is to refine the key components of the story, then practice until you feel comfortable with the bullet points. Ideally, the stories will come out a little bit different each time, but will always cover the important details.

Every candidate should **develop and practice at least 3 good interview stories.** Get feedback from trusted friends or a coach about which stories are most effective.

Stories work beautifully for **answering behavioral questions** (*Tell me about a time when you solved a difficult problem. Give an example of your leadership approach. Describe a time when you had to work under pressure.*)

Think about which competencies or areas of expertise are likely to be **most important for the job opportunity at hand** and create stories to highlight your relevant experience.

You can also develop **interview stories to describe your most impressive professional achievements.**

It's the difference between saying you have an MBA and telling the story of earning your MBA while simultaneously leading your department to its biggest sales year ever.

Often, a single interview story can be **adapted for use in responding to different questions.** Your story about saving the day on a recent project could demonstrate your work ethic, your creativity, your calm under pressure, or your negotiation savvy.

You could discuss the same project but stress customer service in one interview and innovation in another.

When preparing for a specific interview, spend some time developing or adapting a **story that directly relates to the job description** and what the employer is looking for.

Include some specific detail to give your story personality, but remember to **keep it short and sweet.** Get to the point quickly and then respond to follow-up questions as appropriate.

Remember to **avoid negativity or whining/blaming.** Accentuate the positive and the lessons learned.

**Don't be shy** about that happy ending. Cite specific numbers if you can (increased sales by 10%, saved the company \$50,000, trained 400 employees in 30 days).

If you don't have hard figures, quote any rave reviews or positive feedback. For many candidates, it's much more comfortable to quote, *"My boss said it was the best presentation he had ever seen"* than to say *"I was fantastic."*