



SCHOLARS MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

PROFESSIONAL TRACK - Mentee

Session 4: Interview Part 1

Welcome to Session 4, which is to be covered in Week 7 & 8. This session focuses on helping you prepare effectively for job interviews.

Recap

Review progress from the previous session on Networking on LinkedIn and share any tasks you completed. Bring up any questions or challenges you faced so far.

Activity 1: Understanding Different Interview Formats

Objective

Gain a clear understanding of different interview formats and question types to prepare effectively and boost confidence for job interviews.

1. Overview of Interview Formats

Interviews can take various forms, depending on the role and company. Here's a breakdown of the most common formats and tips for each

1. Behavioral interviews

- **Purpose** - Assess past behavior as a predictor of future performance.
- **Key Strategy** - Use the **STAR Method** (Situation, Task, Action, Result) to structure answers.
- **Example Question**
"Tell me about a time when you faced a difficult deadline and how you managed it."
- **Tip:** Focus on specific examples, not generalizations. Prepare 4–5 STAR stories in advance. STAR is discussed in the next section.

2. Technical interviews

- **Purpose** - Evaluate job-specific technical skills through coding tasks, problem-solving, or knowledge assessments.
- **Common areas tested** (these areas are from Computer Science perspective, may be completely different in your field)



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- Coding (e.g., Python, Java)
- Algorithms and data structures
- System design
- **Example question**
"Write a function to detect a cycle in a linked list."
- **Tip:** Practice using platforms like **LeetCode**, **HackerRank**, and **Codewars** to build confidence.
- 3. **Panel interviews**
 - **Purpose** - Interview with multiple interviewers to assess communication, teamwork, and adaptability.
 - **Example question**
"How do you handle competing priorities across multiple projects?"
 - **Tip:** Make eye contact and engage **each panel member** while answering questions.
- 4. **Phone/Video interviews**
 - **Purpose** - Used for initial screening or remote hiring processes.
 - **Focus areas** - Communication skills, professionalism, and clarity.
 - **Tip**
 - Test your tech setup beforehand.
 - Choose a quiet, professional setting.
 - Keep a copy of your resume and notes handy.

2. Common Interview Question Types

Prepare for these **three main question categories** used in interviews:

a. Behavioral Questions

Behavioral questions assess past experiences to evaluate your problem-solving ability, leadership, and teamwork skills.

Key strategy: Apply the **STAR Method** to answer questions clearly and effectively.

- **S - Situation:** Describe the context.
- **T - Task:** Explain the goal or challenge.
- **A - Action:** Detail the steps you took.
- **R - Result:** Share the outcome and lessons learned.



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Examples

i) Teamwork and collaboration

- *"Tell me about a time when you worked as part of a team to achieve a goal."*
- *"Describe a situation where you had to manage a conflict within your team."*

ii) Problem-solving and analytical skills

- *"Give me an example of a challenging problem you faced and how you resolved it."*
- *"Describe a time when you had to analyze information and make a decision quickly."*

iii) Leadership and initiative

- *"Tell me about a time when you led a project and what the outcome was."*
- *"Describe a situation where you took initiative to improve a process."*

b. Technical Questions

Technical questions test your ability to solve problems and apply industry-specific knowledge.

Note: Below examples are given from a Computer Science perspective and may be different from your field.

Examples by category

1. Coding and programming

- *"Write a function to reverse a string."*
- *"Find the largest number in an unsorted array."*

2. Algorithms and data structures

- *"Explain the difference between BFS and DFS."*
- *"What is the time complexity of quicksort?"*

3. System design and architecture

- *"Design an e-commerce checkout system."*
- *"How would you scale a real-time chat application?"*



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Tip: Practice coding and algorithms using platforms like

- **LeetCode:** <https://leetcode.com>
- **HackerRank:** <https://www.hackerrank.com>
- **GeeksforGeeks:** <https://www.geeksforgeeks.org>

c. Situational Questions

Situational questions evaluate how you might handle hypothetical challenges in the future.

Examples

1. Conflict resolution

- *"What would you do if a team member wasn't contributing their share to a group project?"*
- *"How would you handle disagreement with your manager's approach to a task?"*

2. Problem-solving

- *"What steps would you take if you were given an ambiguous project brief?"*
- *"How would you handle missing a project deadline due to unforeseen issues?"*

Tip: Apply the **STAR Method** even for situational questions—describe how you would address the situation step-by-step.

3. Action plan for interview practice

1. Self-assessment

- Review sample questions and draft answers using the STAR Method.
- Record yourself answering questions to improve clarity and confidence.

2. Mock interviews

- Schedule a mock interview with your mentor or a peer for practice.
- Focus on verbal communication, tone, and timing.

3. Research the employer

- Study the company culture, mission, and recent news to tailor your answers.
- Prepare company-specific questions to ask at the end of the interview.

4. Practice tool



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- Use Pramp (<https://www.pramp.com>) for mock coding interviews.
 - Try Interviewing.io (<https://interviewing.io>) for technical practice.
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Activity 2: Mastering the STAR Method

Objective

Learn how to effectively use the **STAR Method** to structure responses to behavioral interview questions, showcasing problem-solving skills, leadership, and achievements.

What is the STAR Method?

The **STAR Method** is a structured approach to answering **behavioral interview questions** by providing specific examples from past experiences. It helps you clearly communicate your qualifications and demonstrate how you've handled challenges.

STAR stands for

- **S** - Situation: Set the context.
- **T** - Task: Explain your role or responsibility.
- **A** - Action: Describe the steps you took.
- **R** - Result: Highlight the outcome and impact.

1. Breaking Down the STAR Method

a. Situation – Set the scene

Provide a brief overview of the context or challenge you faced. Keep it specific and relevant.

Example

"In my previous role as a project manager, we were tasked with delivering a new client portal in 6 weeks. Halfway through the project, a key developer left unexpectedly, risking a delay."

Pro Tip: Focus on providing enough background to help the interviewer understand the situation without going into unnecessary detail.



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b. Task – Define your role

Explain your specific responsibilities in the situation. Highlight your role in addressing the challenge.

Example

"As the project manager, it was my responsibility to keep the project on track, reorganize tasks, and ensure seamless communication with the client to manage expectations."

Pro Tip: Use action-oriented language to emphasize ownership and accountability.

c. Action – Highlight what you did

Describe the steps you took to resolve the issue or achieve the goal. Focus on **what YOU did** rather than the team.

Example

"I immediately held a team meeting to reassign tasks, prioritized the most critical features, and negotiated an extension for less urgent deliverables. I also hired a freelance developer to fill the gap temporarily and conducted regular check-ins to monitor progress."

Pro Tip: Highlight skills such as problem-solving, leadership, and communication.

d. Result – Share the outcome

Explain the results of your actions. Whenever possible, **quantify the impact** to demonstrate success.

Example

"As a result, we delivered the project on time, earning positive feedback from the client and securing an additional contract worth \$50,000. My ability to lead under pressure also earned me a promotion to Senior Project Manager."



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Pro Tip: Tie your results back to the original goal and emphasize how your actions made a measurable impact.

2. Practice with Examples

Example 1: Conflict Resolution

Question: *"Tell me about a time you faced a conflict within your team."*

Answer using STAR method

- **S:** "While leading a team on a marketing project, two members disagreed over the design approach, causing delays."
- **T:** "I was responsible for resolving the conflict and ensuring the project met its deadline."
- **A:** "I held a meeting with both members to listen to their concerns, facilitated a brainstorming session, and proposed a compromise that combined their ideas."
- **R:** "This resolved the conflict, and we completed the project two days early. The client praised the final design, and both team members felt valued."

Example 2: Taking Initiative

Question: *"Describe a situation where you identified an opportunity to improve a process."*

Answer using STAR method

- **S:** "At my previous company, I noticed that the manual data entry process was error-prone and slowed down project timelines."
- **T:** "I decided to research automation tools that could streamline the process."
- **A:** "I proposed and implemented a new automated system, trained the team, and tested its effectiveness."
- **R:** "This reduced errors by 30% and improved data processing speed by 50%, saving the team 10 hours per week."

3. Tips for using STAR effectively

1. **Match your story to the role** - Choose examples that highlight skills relevant to the job description.



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2. **Keep It Concise** - Stick to 2–3 sentences per STAR component to keep your answers clear and engaging.
 3. **Quantify results** - Use numbers, percentages, or timeframes to make outcomes more impactful.
 4. **Practice aloud** - Rehearse your answers to improve delivery and confidence.
 5. **Prepare multiple examples** - Have 3–5 stories ready to cover key skills like leadership, teamwork, and problem-solving.
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4. Tasks to Complete Before the Next Session

1. Prepare and practice answers for at least 5 behavioral and 5 technical questions.
 2. Complete one mock interview with a peer or an online mock interview site and request feedback.
 3. Research and identify **3 companies** you are interested in and learn about their hiring processes.
 4. Identify 3 STAR examples
 - Write down 3 experiences where you demonstrated key skills.
 - Structure each response using the STAR format.
 5. Practice Out Loud
 - Rehearse your STAR answers with a mentor or peer.
 - Ask for feedback and refine responses.
 6. Prepare for Common Questions
 - Review behavioral questions provided in **Activity 1** and create STAR-based answers for 5–7 of them.
 7. Mock Interview Exercise
 - Practice delivering STAR answers in a timed mock interview setting to improve clarity and confidence.
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Additional Resources

- STAR interview guide (MindTools) - [MindTools STAR Method](#)
- Mock interview tools
 - Pramp - <https://www.pramp.com>
 - Interviewing.io - <https://interviewing.io>
- Sample behavioral questions



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- The Muse Behavioral Questions list -
<https://www.themuse.com/advice/30-behavioral-interview-questions-you-should-be-ready-to-answer>

Interview Guide:

https://www.linkedin.com/posts/tsitati-mayenga_repost-share-ugcPost-7282326901275164672-Q5OY?utm_source=share&utm_medium=member_desktop

Ace Your Job Interview:

https://www.linkedin.com/posts/george-stern_the-secret-to-acing-your-job-interview-activity-7282381715321303041-yTqe?utm_source=share&utm_medium=member_desktop

Preparation for Session 5

Focus Area: Interview Part 2

Prepare to discuss professional presentation and post-interview follow-up skills.

Feedback Form

Please fill out the feedback forms at the end of your meeting, the feedback will help us improve the program.

- [Mentee Feedback Form](#)