

Step 1: Identify Key Experiences

Below, list the critical experiences in your life that have strongly impacted who you are today (both one-time events and longer-term experiences).

Experiences in High School or Early Life

Examples Include:

Student Clubs

Sports teams

Big Class Projects

Jobs

Volunteer projects

Art / Performing Arts

1

2

Experiences during College / Grad School

Examples Include:

Research with a professor *Independent study* *Art / Performing Arts*

Internships

Class projects

Volunteer projects

Study Abroad / Travel

Part-time jobs

Sports teams

Social Event Planning

Student Clubs

Family (big events)

1

2

3

Recent Critical Experiences (Work and Non-work Successes)

Examples Include:

Work Responsibilities

Volunteering

Arts and Travel

Work Projects

Sports teams

Family

1

2

3

4

5

Step 2: Write Your Stories

Story Name: _____

1. Describe the situation

When I was the _____ (insert specific job title)
at _____ (insert name of organization),
there was a situation where _____

_____ (Paint a picture of the challenge described
in clear and specific language. What people were involved? Where was
it? If possible, quantify the problem.)

2. Describe which of your abilities could help solve problem

I saw an opportunity to use my ability to _____

(list one to three related strengths or skills) to address the challenge.

3. Describe step-by-step the actions that you took

To address the situation, I....

1. (Did you research the topic? What did you read? Did you test / experiment? Think
of any past experiences?) _____

2. (Sought advice? Recruited anyone to help you?) _____



3. (Recognized the problem or solution-to-be...) _____

4. (Developed a strategy/plan) _____

5. (Put the plan in motion with the following 3 steps)

6. (Optional section – Did you hit any obstacles / roadblocks? How did you overcome them?) _____

4. Describe the results (the more specific, the better)

As a result, (Insert specific and tangible results. If possible, use numbers, percentages.) _____



Story-Writing Checklist

Use the checklist to confirm that you've created the best story possible. We also recommend having a friend read through your stories and ask you questions.

1. Describe the situation

- ☐ There is a clear problem or challenge.
- ☐ I described the situation in an interesting way so that the audience can visualize my story.
- ☐ Everyone can understand my story. I used minimal or no technical jargon, except for technical audiences. (Note: Even people in the same industry may use different acronyms.)
- ☐ I didn't give away yet how to resolve the challenge, or tell the cause of the problem. That goes in my Actions section.

2. Describe which of your abilities helped solve the problem

- ☐ I describe a broad strength or skill that is transferable between situations.
- ☐ I may have also included a transferable skill that is relevant to the jobs to which I am applying.

3. Describe step-by-step the actions that you took

- ☐ For research, I give specific details, such as what sources I used (i.e., web search, scholarly articles, consulting an expert).
- ☐ For strategy, I clearly articulate an action plan. For example, "We developed a strategy that would target two types of customers: local community members and expert architects."
- ☐ For sales, I explain who I got to buy into the idea—maybe my boss, maybe recruiting teammates, or getting teammates on board. I explain how I persuaded them.



- ☐ For action, I list the specific actions vividly. If there were any hiccups, I tell about these problems and how I resolved them.
- ☐ I am not leaving out any details that would make the story more vivid.
- ☐ My story is as clear and as concise as it can be.

4. Describe the results (the more specific, the better)

- ☐ I gave very specific, quantifiable details. ("We delivered our final product 2 days ahead of schedule: a 20-page report, based on 1000 pages of statistics and 200 hours of work.")
- ☐ I described the change from before and after. ("We cut the number of complaint phone calls from 1 per week to 1 per month.")
- ☐ I even quantified qualitative data. I didn't say, "My boss thought that this was the best project she ever saw." Instead, I said, "My boss thought that in her ten years of work experience and 30 projects she's been a part of, this one was the best." Or: "We could now direct people to a new website for answers to their questions, which gave the team an extra four hours per week of not being on the telephone."

General:

- ☐ Everyone can understand my story without having to think too much. They don't have to make any connections between concepts, since I have been sure to make those for them.

Example Story 1

(The Yale Story, filled into the template)

1. Describe the situation

When I was the marketing intern (insert specific job title) at Yale University's Office of Public Affairs (insert name of organization), there was a situation where the university wanted more recognition for its historical architecture (Note: Explains simply but clearly a challenging situation).

2. Describe which of your abilities helped solve the problem

I saw an opportunity to use my ability to understand multiple perspectives at the same time and to work collaboratively to address the challenge. (Note: Identifies strengths relevant to the job at hand.)

3. Describe step-by-step the actions that you took

To address the situation,

1. I did some research to find out who were the various community groups we should consider.

2. After sitting down with a coworker,

3. we decided on a two-part strategy: educate the local community, and educate architects from around the world.

4. For the local community, we designed weekly tours that showed architecture ranging from the church-like Neo-Gothic residential colleges to the modern-looking ice rink dubbed 'the whale' for its unique shape. Architects were given special 'hard hat tours' of Yale's new facilities. (Note: Uses visuals Gothic, whale, and hard-hat; explains where the strategy came from, and explains more clearly who was involved.)

4. Describe the results (the more specific, the better)

As a result, over a thousand people went on these tours, and Yale got mentioned in four magazine and newspaper articles for its architecture.

(Notes: Quantifies wherever possible, which is very compelling; could add names of magazines to be even better.)



Example Story 2

1. Describe the situation

When I was working as a consultant for Finance Company Inc, I saw that the financial modeling software we used was very slow, with each model sometimes taking up to ten minutes to run. The models also tended to break, adding another half hour or more to find the error. (Note: Specific, tangible issues)

2. Describe which of your abilities helped solve the problem

I saw an opportunity to take ownership and creatively address the problem using my understanding of financial modeling. (Note: Identified the strength and related skills.)

3. Describe step-by-step the actions that you took

First, I recruited the support of my team members and got the approval of my manager. Next, I studied the financial techniques used in the model so that I could identify the various errors and know how they were created. With this information, I developed methods to correct these errors, and I also wrote and tested new software code that replaced the less efficient financial model features. (Notes: Step-by-step walk-through of the process – the technical details of this story were omitted for a non-technical audience.)

4. Describe the results (the more specific, the better)

As a result, the model that before took up to ten minutes to run now took between ten and twenty seconds, and the model support team, which I was a part of, received far fewer phone calls about model errors. Instead of getting a couple of phone calls per week, I would only get a call every couple of months. (Notes: Specific, tangible results)

Example Story 3

1. Describe the situation

When I was working as an account rep for PaperCo, I was successfully managing over 20 different client accounts, and was tasked with landing a prospect whom we had been trying to land for over two years.

2. Describe which of your abilities helped solve the problem

I saw an opportunity to use my abilities to relentlessly pursue a goal and communicate persuasively in order to win this client.

3. Describe step-by-step the actions that you took

First, I contacted the account reps who had reached out to this prospect before to learn from their experience. I discovered that none had ever managed to schedule a live meeting. In order to land this meeting, I used every approach I could think of. In addition to personally calling and e-mailing at least once per week, I also sent this prospect paper letters and catalogs, and had two of my other customers call on my behalf. After 3 months, I finally landed the meeting. While scheduled to last just 45 minutes, the meeting ran nearly 2 hours. During that conversation, I listened carefully to each of the clients' concerns, and offered potential solutions. Most importantly, I was able to resolve the biggest hang-up—namely, the customer's fear of charts and spreadsheets.

4. Describe the results (the more specific, the better)

By the end of the meeting, I successfully landed a \$120,000 account, and the customer is still with us 3 years later.



Example Story 4

1. Describe the situation

When I was working as an analyst for Legal Analysis Inc, I volunteered to become part of the Green Offices team, a group responsible for reducing the environmental impact of our 500-person company. At the time I joined the group, it had standardized using double-sided printing and added more recycling bins to each office.

2. Describe which of your abilities helped solve the problem

I saw an opportunity to have far greater environmental impact by applying my analytical thinking and process management skills.

3. Describe step-by-step the actions that you took

First, I researched what other consulting companies were doing. Based on this research, I realized that we needed to conduct a “greenhouse audit” to collect the data that would determine which pieces of our business had the greatest effect on the environment. This information would need to come from each of the offices’ facilities managers and administrative managers. To get support for this initiative, I contacted the company’s director of operations to explain this project. After I assured her that regular work wouldn’t be harmed by this side project, I got the green light and a small budget for materials, and I recruited 6 other analysts to support the project. Each analyst was responsible for reaching out to separate managers to collect the data.

4. Describe the results (the more specific, the better)

While this initial greenhouse audit isn’t finished yet, we have made some great progress. First, we calculated the impact of our physical offices and presented these findings to our office managers. This presentation included issues such as water consumption, HVAC heating and cooling systems, and the management of computer servers. Second, we developed an Excel model to measure the impact of our business and calculate the impact of implementing specific changes. When the audit is finished, we will use this model to evaluate what changes to implement on a cost-benefit basis.

Example Story 5

1. Describe the situation

When I was working in the emergency room of Yale New Haven Hospital, I was asked to sew up a small laceration on a patient who was HIV-positive and had stopped taking his antiviral medication a few months earlier.

2. Describe which of your abilities helped solve the problem

I saw an opportunity to not just tend to his wound but also to improve his long-term health by connecting with him as a person and persuading him to restart his medication.

3. Describe step-by-step the actions that you took

First, I wanted to understand why he had stopped taking these drugs. So, while suturing, I asked him what caused this decision. Initially, the patient was somewhat hostile to my questions. However, after a few minutes of polite conversation, he opened up. The patient told me that he had some negative interactions with his previous physician and, to avoid dealing with this physician again, he stopped the medication.

With this understanding, I educated the patient about the potential dangers of not taking antivirals and how he was putting himself at risk. I also offered him others ways in which he could continue receiving care without working with that specific physician.

4. Describe the results (the more specific, the better)

At the end of the conversation, the patient thanked me for my care and said that he really appreciated the honest and supportive way in which I spoke to him. He also agreed to restart his antiviral medication, and committed to doing so for the foreseeable future.

Connect your attributes to your experiences:

Using the space below, identify which key experiences align to which of your core attributes (motivations, values, strength and personality).

Motivations

Motivation 1 Name: _____

Related Experiences: _____

Motivation 2 Name: _____

Related Experiences: _____

Motivation 3 Name: _____

Related Experiences: _____

Strengths

Strength 1 Name: _____

Related Experiences: _____

Strength 2 Name: _____

Related Experiences: _____

Strength 3 Name: _____

Related Experiences: _____



Personality Traits

Personality 1 Name: _____

Related Experiences: _____

Personality 2 Name: _____

Related Experiences: _____

Personality 3 Name: _____

Related Experiences: _____

Values

Value 1 Name: _____

Related Experiences: _____

Value 2 Name: _____

Related Experiences: _____

Value 3 Name: _____

Related Experiences: _____

