In a behavioral interview, job candidates are asked to provide examples of how they've handled work-related situations. This offers the interviewer insight into the candidate's experiences and character.

Learn more about behavioral interviews and how to prepare for one.

What Is a Behavioral Interview?

If you've interviewed for jobs in the past, you've likely already had a behavioral interview. Many employers feel this type of interview increases the chances of finding a successful candidate.

With this type of interview, employers focus on your past experiences. The interviewer will expect candidates to demonstrate their capabilities by giving specific examples from their past experiences at work, school, and in life.

How a Behavioral Interview Works

Before meeting with a candidate, the interviewer will determine what competencies are required to perform the job. Next, they develop a series of behavioral questions that will allow them to find out if a candidate has those skills.

Many behavioral interview questions ask about [soft skills](https://www.liveabout.com/soft-skills-525745), which are skills that are difficult to quantify. They include problem-solving, critical thinking, interpersonal skills, and listening, writing, and speaking skills. The basic premise of the behavioral interview is that past performance is a good predictor of future performance.

Most behavioral interview questions start with "Tell me about a time when..." or "Give me an example of when..." For example, if conflict resolution is a required competency, the question may be, "Tell me about a time two people you had to work with weren't getting along and how you responded."

If you have work experience, give an example involving two current or former coworkers. If this is an interview for your first job, it will be challenging to discuss a past job-related experience. Instead, select an experience that occurred during a group project for a class, while participating in team sports, or while you were doing volunteer work. As long as you clearly state the problem, demonstrate the steps you took to resolve it, and discuss the results, it doesn't matter what experience you draw from as long as it's appropriate to discuss in a work environment.

Preparing for a Behavioral Interview

Since many job interviews are behavioral, it's best to be prepared for any interview with appropriate examples. To do that, determine what competencies the employer is seeking by thoroughly reading the job description and researching the company. If you're working with a recruiter, talk to them about what to expect.

Here are some of the competencies you should be prepared to discuss during your behavioral interview:

* Enthusiasm
* Decision making
* Resolving conflicts
* Technical skills specific to the job
* Problem-solving
* Leadership
* Flexibility
* Listening
* Verbal Communication

Look back at your past jobs to come up with examples of when you've had to use those competencies. List those examples and practice explaining them to an interviewer. Discuss who was involved, what occurred, and the things you did to try to reach the desired outcome. Consider examples that had positive results and those with negative ones. Interviewers may ask about situations that you couldn't resolve favorably and what you learned from those experiences.

Using the STAR Technique

One way to structure your examples is by using the STAR method. STAR stands for:

* **Situation**: Give the background needed for the interviewer to understand your example.
* **Task**: Discuss the problem or issue you were resolving or the task you were asked to complete.
* **Action**: Discuss the steps you took to address the problem or complete the task.
* **Result**: Discuss what happened as a result of your actions.

For example, the interview might ask you to describe a mistake you made and how you handled it. A sample answer might sound like this: "We were handling a complex marketing project for a client. I was asked to prepare a presentation on the campaign for a client meeting, but I brought the wrong version of the presentation to the meeting, which lacked a few critical slides. I apologized to the client, verbally explained what was on the missing slides, and sent the correct version following the meeting. Thankfully, the client was understanding. I also reflected on how I name files and created a folder to hold the latest version of client files so I don't make the same mistake again."

Key takeaways

* In a behavioral interview, job candidates are asked to provide examples of how they've handled work-related situations.
* Many employers feel these interviews are the best way to find successful candidates.
* Before an interview, an employer will develop questions to uncover whether the candidate has the skills required.
* Candidates should prepare for interviews by considering what skills they need to demonstrate and thinking of appropriate examples. These examples can be from work, school, or volunteer experiences.

how to handle behavioral interview

Handling a behavioral interview requires careful preparation and strategic responses. Behavioral interviews focus on your past experiences and actions as indicators of how you might behave in the future. Here's a step-by-step guide on how to handle a behavioral interview:

**1. Understand the STAR Method:** The STAR method is a structured approach to answering behavioral interview questions. It stands for Situation, Task, Action, and Result. It helps you provide clear and concise answers by breaking down your response into these four components.

**2. Review the Job Description:** Carefully read the job description to identify the skills and qualities the employer is looking for. This will help you anticipate the types of behavioral questions they might ask.

**3. Identify Key Competencies:** Based on the job description and industry standards, identify the key competencies or skills that are relevant to the position. Common competencies include teamwork, problem-solving, leadership, communication, adaptability, and more.

**4. Prepare Examples:** For each competency, think of specific examples from your past experiences that showcase your skills. Use the STAR method to structure your responses. Be ready to discuss various situations, both positive outcomes and challenging situations.

**5. Practice:** Practice your responses out loud or with a friend. Focus on being concise while providing sufficient detail. This will help you feel more confident during the actual interview.

**6. Be Specific:** When sharing your examples, be specific about the situation, the tasks involved, the actions you took, and the results achieved. Numbers and measurable outcomes can help quantify your achievements.

**7. Align with Company Values:** Tailor your examples to align with the company's values and culture. This shows that you've done your research and that you're genuinely interested in the company.

**8. Stay Positive:** Even if you're discussing a challenging situation, frame your responses in a positive light. Focus on how you learned and grew from the experience.

**9. Listen Carefully:** Listen to the interviewer's questions attentively. Make sure you understand the context of their inquiry before diving into your response.

**10. Ask for Clarification:** If you're unsure about the specific competency the interviewer is asking about, don't hesitate to ask for clarification. It's better to make sure you're on the same page before answering.

**11. Use a Variety of Experiences:** Draw examples from various aspects of your life, including work, volunteer activities, academics, or personal experiences. This showcases your well-rounded skills.

**12. Maintain Professionalism:** Maintain a professional demeanor throughout the interview. Remember that the interviewer is trying to gauge your suitability for the role, so stay focused and composed.

**13. Follow Up with Questions:** After sharing your example, consider asking follow-up questions that demonstrate your interest in the company and role. This can help turn the interview into more of a conversation.

Remember, the goal of a behavioral interview is to provide evidence of your skills and experiences to predict your future performance. By preparing thoroughly and using the STAR method, you can effectively handle behavioral interview questions and leave a positive impression on the interviewer.