

What is the STAR technique?

The STAR technique is a way of structuring your answers in an interview, by discussing a specific **S**ituation, **T**ask, **A**ction and **R**esult. This technique is most commonly used to answer behavioural questions. These are questions which assess how you behave in certain situations.

Interviewers are often keen to understand how you have or how you would react in a certain situation. This is why using the STAR technique is so important; it ensures you provide a clear response including concrete examples of the skills and/or experiences the interviewer is looking for.

Now that you understand why we use this technique, let's discuss what each letter involves.

- **Situation** – This is the first part of your response; where you set the scene and provide context to help the interviewer understand the task you will explain in the next step.
 - Be sure to describe the who, where and when.
 - Be specific but include only what is necessary.
- **Task** – Now that you've set the scene, describe what the specific task or responsibility.
 - Make sure to highlight any specific challenges you faced.
- **Action** – Once you have described the task, you want to explain how you completed or tried to complete the task.
 - Focus on what you did, instead of what your team did.
 - Highlight the skills and/or qualities relevant to the job you are interviewing for.
- **Result** - Explain the outcome that resulted from your actions.
 - Talk about how you specifically contributed to that outcome, what you achieved and what you learned.

Preparing for an interview, using the STAR technique

1. Start by researching the job and the related skills and experiences. Make a list so you know what to include in your STAR responses.
2. Using your list, brainstorm specific examples of when you displayed those skills. Consider any work experience, schooling, and volunteering or life experience such as sport or travelling.
3. For each example, go through the STAR letters and identify the situation, task, action and results.
4. Continue to practice using the STAR technique for other relevant skills and/or qualities. Another great way to prepare yourself, is to practice answering behavioural questions using the STAR technique.

Example Behavioural Questions

All interview questions are intentional and aimed at assessing specific skills and/or qualities related to the job. Therefore, you want to make sure you address the relevant skills and/or qualities in your response.

The following headings are common skills and/or qualities interviewers are looking for, followed by an example question.

- **Teamwork/Conflict Resolution**
 - Provide an example of a time you faced a conflict while working in a team. How did you handle that?
- **Customer- Service**
 - Tell me about a time when you made sure a customer was pleased with your service.
- **Adaptability**
 - Describe a time when you experienced change and what you did to adapt.
- **Time Management**
 - Share an example of a time you had to manage multiple tasks and responsibilities.
- **Problem-Solving**
 - Describe a time when you faced a difficult problem at school or work. How did you solve it?
- **Growth Mindset**
 - Provide an example of a time when you failed. What did you learn from the experience?

Example STAR Response

“Give us an example of when you were faced with an uncomfortable situation and how you overcame it” (Adaptability)

S: I am passionate about drama, theatre and acting. Every year, I am involved in the school production, usually a supporting role or helping at rehearsals. While I love acting, public speaking is something I find very uncomfortable and a skill I struggle with.

T: Last year, I was asked to play the main character and of course, with that role came the task of public speaking. As the main character, I often had solo performances where the focus was on me and only me. I only had a few months to learn my lines as well as overcome my fear of public speaking.

A: To overcome this fear and adapt to the situation, I sought advice and tips from friends who enjoyed public speaking and those who had lead roles in previous productions. I also practiced my lines in front of friends and family to slowly build confidence.

R: As a result of pushing myself out of my comfort zone and learning how to cope with uncomfortable situations, I felt a sense of accomplishment and was able to perform well on the day. Since then, I have progressively become more confident in my public speaking and this confidence has flowed through to other aspects of my life. For example, I find oral presentations much easier and less intimidating. I also tend to raise my hand and participate more in class discussions. While it is a skill I still actively have to work on.

3 Tips to Help You Succeed

- **Be specific but concise.**
When providing examples, share only the relevant and important details. If you add too much unnecessary information, you risk reducing the impact of your key points.
- **Be quantitative where possible.** Provide numbers in your examples to back up your results.
For example: you increased raffle ticket sales by 25% or 30%.
- **Be honest.**
It is better to admit you failed at something or if you haven't faced a certain situation than to lie.
Trustworthiness is important in all jobs – no one will hire you if they don't trust you.

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3 Common Mistakes to Avoid

- **Over-rehearsing**
While it is good to practice questions ahead of time, you want your responses to be authentic and natural (not robotic and rehearsed).
- **Using 'we' instead of 'I'**
It is great to talk about your team's achievements, however, you should focus on what actions you took and what you achieved. You want the interviewer to know the role you played in achieving success.
- **Not answering the question at all.**
Always answer each question you are asked. Even if you haven't encountered a specific situation and have no examples to share, let the interviewer know this – but be sure to follow up with “but if I find myself in that situation, I would...”

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