

## 35 Behavioral Interview Questions to Prepare For (with Example Answers)

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Behavioral interview questions are often asked in job interviews to gauge how successful you are at problem-solving. These questions can provide the interviewer with insight into your personality, skills and abilities. Because each behavioral interview question requires you to share a specific story that highlights your strengths and skills, thoughtful preparation can help you feel confident and prepared.

In this article, we offer some tips for preparing and responding to questions by topic and also offer 10 sample questions and examples to help you form your own answers.

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### What are behavioral interview questions?

Behavioral interview questions are those that focus on how you've handled various situations in the workplace and reveal your character traits, abilities and skills. These questions give an interviewer an idea of how you would behave if a similar situation were to arise, the logic being that your success in the past will show success in the future.

Unlike traditional interview questions, behavior job interview techniques look for concrete examples of skills and experiences that relate to the position. Your answers to these questions should provide a brief story that illustrates your skills and strengths as an employee. For each answer, give the interviewer the background to the story briefly, specific actions you took and the results.

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### Behavioral interview questions

When answering behavioral interview questions, focus on providing examples of situations that are specific, personal and professional. You should be able to tell a concise story in two to three minutes. By asking behavioral interview questions, interviewers want to learn more about your thought process, and the strategies and skills you use to solve problems.

Here are some common behavioral interview questions and suggestions for how to answer them categorized by topic.

#### Time management

Employers ask questions about time management to gain an understanding of how you handle multiple responsibilities, prioritize time and delegate tasks to meet deadlines. In your response, share your thoughts around how you prioritize your to-do list. Consider highlighting your organizational skills as a tool that keeps you on track.

1. Tell me about a goal you set and reached and how you achieved it.
2. Tell me about the last time your workday ended before you were able to get everything done.

3. Give me an example of a time you had to prioritize certain tasks or projects over others.
4. Give me an example of a time when you had to handle multiple responsibilities at once. How did you prioritize your time?
5. Tell me about the last time you handle a long-term project. How did you keep the project on track?

### **Adaptability**

Plans may not always work as you plan, but the ability to adjust your approach shows your resolve to succeed. Your goal when answering questions on the topic of adaptability is to demonstrate growth, even if you weren't successful at the time.

1. Can you share about a time you had to be flexible or adaptable?
2. Tell me about a time when you had to be creative to solve a problem.
3. Tell me about a time you had to learn quickly.
4. Tell me about a time you made a difficult decision.
5. Tell me about how you work under pressure.

### **Overcoming challenges**

Employers ask questions about overcoming a challenging situation to gauge your level of perseverance. They want to gain a better understanding of how you handle stress and if you're able to break down larger problems into smaller tasks. To answer this question, try to tell a concise personal story about a specific situation. Try to avoid being too general. End your answer by identifying what you learned from the experience.

1. Tell me about a time when you handled a challenging situation.
2. Tell me about a time when you made a mistake. What did you do to correct it?
3. Give me an example of a time you made a decision that was unpopular and explain how you handled implementing it.
4. Tell me about a goal you failed to achieve.
5. Tell me about a time you felt you went above and beyond.

### **Motivation and values**

Asking questions about your values and motivations allows employers to gain insight into what you're passionate about, how you stay focused and what makes you excited. Your answers will help employers determine if you're a good match with the company's mission and style of work.

1. Give me an example of how you set goals.
2. Tell me about the proudest moment in your professional career why it was meaningful to you.
3. Can you give me an example of a time when you felt dissatisfied with your work?

4. Tell me about a body of work you felt was most impactful for you or your company.
5. How do you stay motivated when a job requires you to perform repetitive tasks?

### **Communication**

The ability to communicate effectively is needed in and out of the workplace. In an interview, prepare to answer questions about times you have had to communicate clearly verbally and in writing.

1. Tell me about a time when you had to say “no.”
2. Give me an example of a time when you persuaded someone. How’d you do it and why?
3. Talk about a time when you’ve had to manage up.
4. Tell me about a time when you had to explain a complex topic to people with less subject knowledge. How did you make sure everyone could understand you?
5. Tell me about a time you had to build rapport with a coworker or client whose personality was different than yours?

### **Teamwork**

Whether working directly with other people or working with stakeholders, the ability to interact and communicate with others effectively is key. When answering questions about teamwork, use “I” statements to focus the attention on your individual contributions to the success of the team.

1. Tell me about a time when you collaborated with others who were different than you.
2. Tell me about the best presentation you’ve given. Why was it good?
3. Tell me about a time when you felt like a good leader.
4. Can you give me an example of how you’ve contributed to the culture of previous teams, companies or groups?
5. Share an example of how you were able to motivate a coworker, your peers or your team.

### **Conflict resolution**

To successfully answer questions about tension in the workplace, highlight a situation where you took the lead to resolve conflict—not your manager or coworker. Refrain from painting the other person in a negative light. A disagreement with a coworker doesn’t always mean the relationship is damaged or that the other person is inherently wrong. These questions are meant to surface stories about how you can view an issue from someone else’s perspective to reach an understanding.

1. Tell me about a time you disagreed with a supervisor.
2. Tell me about a time you had to stand up for your beliefs.
3. Tell me about a time when you disagreed with your manager’s leadership style or team culture.
4. Tell me about a time when you were in conflict with a peer and how the situation was resolved.

5. Tell me about a time you wish you'd handled a situation with a coworker differently.

### **Behavioral interview example answers**

Here are some examples of 10 common behavioral interview questions with sample answers:

#### **1. Tell me about a time when you handled a challenging situation.**

With this question, the interviewer wants to see how you handle challenging situations when they arise. A great example is one where you successfully problem-solved to overcome the challenge. It could also be an example of a time you made mistakes in handling the challenge but learned from the experience and know what you would do differently next time.

**Example:** *"My manager left town unexpectedly when we were in the middle of pitching large sponsors for an upcoming conference. I was tasked with putting together the slide decks for the presentations to secure these sponsors but all I had was a few notes left behind by my manager. Because he was unavailable, I called a meeting with members of our team and we generated a list of the biggest selling points that would be most impactful with potential sponsors. After creating the slide deck, I presented the presentation successfully and we got the sponsorship. I'm incredibly proud of the results we achieved when we worked together."*

#### **2. Tell me about a time when you made a mistake. What did you do to correct it?**

The interviewer understands that everyone makes mistakes. What they want to know, with this question, is how you handle mistakes. A great response to this question is one in which you take full responsibility for the mistake, worked hard to correct it and took steps to minimize the likelihood that it would happen again.

**Example:** *"When I was working at a printing company, I misquoted the fees for a particular job. I realized the mistake, I went directly to my manager and explained what happened. He said he appreciated my honesty and suggested that we waive the setup fee for the job as an apology to the customer. I spoke to the customer directly and explained what happened and that the quoted price was actually higher than my original estimate, but that we would be happy to waive the setup fee. The customer understood and appreciated the effort to make the situation right. After that happened, I printed our price sheet to have it quickly at hand and implemented a new process for quoting estimates, one in which I double-check the final estimate before sending it."*

#### **3. Tell me about a time when you were in conflict with a peer and how the situation was resolved.**

In workplaces where there are a large number of people with different personality types and communication styles, conflicts can occur. The interviewer wants to see, with this question, how you handle conflicts in the workplace and what your conflict resolution strategy is. A great answer is one where you demonstrate a specific strategy that you used to resolve a problem and find a mutually agreeable resolution.

**Example:** *"I had a sales manager who was great about stepping in to help when members of our team were struggling with meeting goals. However, she had a single approach that didn't work for everyone and members of our team were getting frustrated and felt they were being micromanaged. I suggested that I sit down one-on-one with our manager, having heard the frustrations of the team. I avoided us all*

*sitting down because I didn't want her to feel ganged up on and become defensive. After talking, we decided that she would let team members know her door was open if they needed help but that she would let them be in charge of the strategy they used to meet their goals. We also implemented a monthly, optional training program where we had different team members present what was working for them in order to offer a variety of approaches."*

#### **4. Tell me about how you work under pressure.**

The interviewer is using this question to see how well you work under pressure and what strategies you have used in the past to handle the pressure. This question is especially important if you're interviewing for a high-stress job. A great answer will give a specific example of how you managed a high-pressure situation successfully. It could also include what you would have done differently, looking back.

**Example:** *"I had been working on a large project that my team committed to turning around for the client in 60 days. My manager came to me and said that the client wanted it back in 45 days and that we would need to speed up our work without losing momentum on our other projects. I met with our team and we reviewed the calendar. We eliminated team meetings and shifted lower-priority tasks until the end of the 45-day period to add extra hours to our workweeks. I challenged my team to complete the project in 45 days or left and as a reward promised two days of extra PTO time. Our team got the job done in 42 days."*

#### **5. Give me an example of how you set goals.**

This question is designed to show the interviewer how well you plan and set goals. A great answer is one where you discuss an ambitious goal you set for yourself and how you came up with a plan for success.

**Example:** *"Within a few weeks of beginning my job as a server at a restaurant, I knew I wanted to work in the foodservice industry as a chef. I decided I would learn all I could in my current position until an opening became available in the kitchen, even for less pay. I wanted the experience of working in a restaurant kitchen environment. I also started saving up money at that time to go to the culinary academy. I knew that by the time I finished school, I would have been working in the kitchen for a number of years and would be highly competitive as a candidate for chef roles."*

#### **6. Give me an example of a time you made a decision that was unpopular and explain how you handled implementing it.**

Managers sometimes have to make difficult decisions that aren't popular with all employees. The interviewer wants to know how you handle this situation and how you implemented the new policy or plan. A great answer is one where you show you moved forward with the decision but communicated your reasoning to garner the support of more of the employees.

**Example:** *"I took over management of a gym where the trainers were allowed to cover one another's shifts without the knowledge or approval of management. I didn't like the uncertainty involved, because if someone failed to show up for a class, there was no way to know which trainer was supposed to be there. I implemented a new policy that required trainers to go through management to make schedule changes. I also explained the problem with the previous approach and how this would resolve any possible issues."*

#### **7. Share an example of how you were able to motivate a coworker, your peers or your team.**

With this question, the interviewer is evaluating your ability and willingness to lead, even informally. A great answer is one that shows you provided encouragement and offered help in some way. This could mean you offered to help with some work if they've fallen behind or that you suggested helping them with strategies to move through their work more quickly and efficiently.

**Example:** *"I noticed that one of my coworkers was having a hard time meeting her sales quotas each month. I told her that not every sales technique works for every personality and that it can take time to figure out what will work best for her. I suggested we find time over the next day or two and I would show her some techniques I was using that I found highly effective. And it worked! After a couple of weeks of practice and trial and error, she was consistently hitting her quota."*

#### **8. Tell me about a goal you set and reached and how you achieved it.**

For this question, the interviewer wants to see how you plan to achieve a goal. A good answer is one where you were given a goal, created a plan and followed the necessary steps to achieve it. A great answer is one where you set your own goal, especially a large goal, and took the necessary steps to reach it.

**Example:** *"In my last role, I managed all social media content. One quarter, I set a stretch goal to increase conversions to our website by 75%. I broke it down into weekly goals and researched what other brands were experimenting with. I noticed they were using videos and seeing great engagement from their customers, so I asked my boss if we could do a low-budget test. She agreed, so I produced a video cheaply in-house that drove double the engagement we normally saw on our social channels during the first week. With the new strategy, I not only met my stretch goal, but I also exceeded it by 5% increasing total conversions by 80% over the quarter."*

#### **9. Tell me about the last time your workday ended before you were able to get everything done.**

This question is designed to evaluate your commitment, work ethic, prioritization skills and ability to communicate. While the interviewer doesn't expect heroic efforts daily, they do want to see a level of dedication to getting your job done. A great answer is that you either stayed late to finish your work, came in early the next day or prioritized differently. It's also important to emphasize that you communicated to others that you might miss a deadline in case changes need to be made or clients need to be contacted.

**Example:** *"We had a client who wanted us to deliver new social media content to them by Wednesday of each week to get it scheduled for the following week. One week they requested double the content in order to increase their online activity in advance of a big launch. I decided to stay late the night before the deliverable was due. I also let the manager know that we might be a few hours behind for our content that week. A coworker and I went in early the next morning, together, made our deadline."*

#### **10. Tell me about a goal you failed to achieve.**

With this question, the interviewer is evaluating how you handle disappointment and failure. They also want to see how you decide when it's time to give up, accept that something didn't work and move forward. A great response is one where you set a huge goal, didn't achieve it, took responsibility and learned from the experience. Some examples of things you could learn from it are what you would do differently next time, something about yourself, what motivates you or what is truly important to you.

**Example:** *"I was working on a start-up where our goal was to create content that would educate parents about why it's important to spend time as a family around the dinner table. Unfortunately, we were never able to figure out a way to monetize the business. We polled our audience and tried many different ideas, but after a year we had to move on. However, I learned so much from the process. I developed numerous skills and realized I'm incredibly good at shifting direction when something isn't working. I realized I don't let defeats discourage me for long. Each time something didn't work, I picked myself back up and moved forward."*

### **Tips for answering behavioral interview questions**

Here are some tips you can use as you answer behavioral interview questions:

- **Prepare ahead of time:** While you may be asked a few uncommon questions, most interviewers ask many of the same interview questions, which is why it's helpful to review common behavioral interview questions in advance and practice your responses. This will ensure you have thoughtful anecdotes ready in advance.
- **Prepare specific examples:** Another way to feel fully prepared with anecdotes is to think of examples for every responsibility or challenge listed on the job description. Keep in mind that they don't have to be direct examples. For example, if you're applying for a manager job but have never been a supervisor, talk about how you were the go-to person on your team for training new employees and were widely known as a problem-solver.
- **Draw from the job description:** Carefully review and use the job description to craft your answers. It's important that you explain exactly why you're a good fit for the role by preparing examples of times you've proven yourself to be the ideal candidate. For example, if the job description explains that the role requires a person who can handle conflict, you should prepare a specific example of a time you handled conflict well—and then relate it back to the job.
- **Take your time answering:** After a question is asked, give yourself a moment to think of an appropriate story before answering. Take a breath, pause or even take a drink of water to calm any nerves before responding.
- **Be positive:** While behavioral interview questions require you to think of a failure or problem at work, don't focus on that part of your story. Describe the background enough so that the interviewer understands the situation and then quickly move on to how you solved the problem and the results you achieved.

- **Follow the STAR method:** Use the STAR method to answer any question. STAR stands for situation, task, action and result. For Situation, briefly share context and relevant details for the challenge or problem you were facing. For Task, describe your role in overcoming the challenge or handling the situation. For Action, explain what action was taken by you or your team, although it's important to focus on the role you played, specifically. For Result, share the successful outcome. If possible, provide quantifiable results or concrete examples of the effect of your effort.