

STAR Method Interview Prep Packet

The STAR method is a simple formula for answering behavioral interview questions. Please see our guide on the STAR method for a complete explanation, tips, and examples. The worksheets in the packet will help you prepare for any interview by drafting five STAR stories, step by step. STAR stands for Situation, Task, Action, Result.

Situation	What was going on?	2-3 sentences
Task	What was your goal?	1-2 sentences
Action	What did you do?	2-3 sentences
Result	What was the outcome?	2-3 sentences

Five Key Success Stories

For any interview, prepare these five success stories, ready to discuss in STAR format.

1. An accomplishment you're proud of
2. A time you went above and beyond
3. A conflict that was resolved successfully
4. A challenge that you overcame
5. A mistake that you learned from

These five topics cover the most common behavioral questions and will allow you to showcase your successes, communication skills, adaptability, professionalism, and willingness to learn. You may also find it necessary to develop other types of stories related to your field and the skills, values, and attributes most important for a particular job or program.

Please print this packet single-sided. Activities are designed to be used side by side.

Step 1: Brainstorming Related Experience

First, identify your relevant past experience. This will help you think up the most pertinent examples. Check all that apply, then jot down the specific jobs, classes and so on where you got the experience. List everything that comes to mind.

Position You Are Interviewing For: _____

Field/Industry: _____

Possible Related Experience	Where You Got The Experience
<input type="checkbox"/> College major, minor or other classes	
<input type="checkbox"/> Work or internship experience in field	
<input type="checkbox"/> Volunteer experience in field	
<input type="checkbox"/> Research or other projects	
<input type="checkbox"/> Attended a conference or other event	
<input type="checkbox"/> Trainings or certifications	
<input type="checkbox"/> Skills and abilities	
<input type="checkbox"/> Shadowing or observation experience	
<input type="checkbox"/> Similar role in a previous position (even if it was in a different field)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Other related experience	

Step 2: Brainstorming Examples

Next, you will brainstorm specific examples. Focus on the related experience you identified in Step 1 and jot down a few ideas. Aim for about 2-3 examples each.

Type of Story	Guiding Questions	Your Examples
Accomplishment you're proud of	What is the hardest project you've done in college? At work? As a volunteer? Can you think of a time a professor or supervisor recognized your work? Have you ever received an award or honors? When have you done your best work?	
Time you went above and beyond	Have you ever gone in early or stayed late at work or the library to finish a project (but not because you put it off to the last minute)? Can you think of a time that you really wanted to give a project your all?	
Conflict that was resolved	Have you ever felt frustrated working on a group project, but everything worked out in the end? Can you think of a time you had to sit down with a classmate or coworker to settle a disagreement? Have you ever felt nervous to discuss something with a coworker or supervisor, but were relieved as soon as you talked to them?	
Challenge that you overcame	Have you ever thought to yourself, "Oh !@#\$, what are we going to do now?!" in a work, school or volunteer setting? Can you think of a time that things did not go as planned, but it was all ok in the end? What was the hardest day you've ever had at work or school (not due to a personal issue)?	
Mistake you learned from	What's something you would do differently now if you had the chance? Can you think of a time you apologized to someone in a professional or academic setting? Do you ever cringe when looking back on something you said or did?	

Step 3: Choosing Quality Examples

Let's take a closer look and decide which examples are best for your interview. It's important to choose examples that demonstrate you are well-qualified for the position. Take the list you brainstormed in Step 2, and go through the following checklist.

CIRCLE any examples of...		CROSS OUT any examples of...	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Related experience (identified in Step 1)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Stories that are more personal than professional
<input type="checkbox"/>	Quantifiable results (you know numbers like how many customers, how much money, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	If you are 21 or older, any experience from high school (if under 21, high school experience is ok, but prioritize college examples when possible)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Positive outcomes (everything worked out great in the end)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Negative outcomes (it didn't work out in the end, you don't have a happy ending for the story)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Stories you'd enjoy telling	<input type="checkbox"/>	Things you feel upset about (you are angry at a classmate, you think your boss should have apologized to you)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Stories you'd feel comfortable telling your little sister (or anyone who looks up to you)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Stories you wouldn't want to tell your grandma (or anyone whose opinion you value)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Stories that would make you want to hire someone if you were in the interviewer's shoes	<input type="checkbox"/>	Stories that might make you <i>not</i> want to hire someone if you were in the interviewer's shoes

Now it's time to select one high-quality example for each type of story. Circled examples may be especially useful. Crossed out examples are probably not suitable. Pick one for each category and fill them in below.

	Accomplishment you're proud of	Time you went above and beyond	Conflict that was resolved	Challenge that you overcame	Mistake you learned from
Quality Example					

Step 4: Writing Your STAR Stories

Now you're ready to write your stories in STAR format. Here is an example.

1. Accomplishment you're proud of

Example Film Club Bake Sale

Situation	What was going on? 2-3 sentences	<i>While I was serving as Treasurer of the Film Appreciation Club, I was asked to determine our annual budget for the monthly movie nights we host for students. I ran the numbers, and I realized we were \$200 short.</i>
Task	What was your goal? 1-2 sentences	<i>We needed to raise money to make up the difference. As Treasurer, I saw this as my responsibility.</i>
Action	What did you do? 2-3 sentences	<i>I decided to organize a bake sale. I spearheaded the project, recruiting members to help, promoting the sale on social media, obtaining all the baking supplies, and coordinating the preparations. I supervised the team on sale day, leading the volunteers, tracking purchases, and making sure it all ran smoothly.</i>
Result	What was the outcome? 2-3 sentences	<i>We raised over \$350, surpassing our goal. Because of this, we were able to add a special extra screening that year. Best of all, the bake sale helped promote our club, and as a result, attendance at our movie nights increased by 10%.</i>

1. Accomplishment you're proud of

Example _____

Situation	What was going on? 2-3 sentences	
Task	What was your goal? 1-2 sentences	
Action	What did you do? 2-3 sentences	
Result	What was the outcome? 2-3 sentences	

2. Time you went above and beyond

Example _____

Situation	What was going on? 2-3 sentences	
Task	What was your goal? 1-2 sentences	
Action	What did you do? 2-3 sentences	
Result	What was the outcome? 2-3 sentences	

3. Conflict that was resolved

Example _____

Situation	What was going on? 2-3 sentences	
Task	What was your goal? 1-2 sentences	
Action	What did you do? 2-3 sentences	
Result	What was the outcome? 2-3 sentences	

4. Challenge that you overcame

Example _____

Situation	What was going on? 2-3 sentences	
Task	What was your goal? 1-2 sentences	
Action	What did you do? 2-3 sentences	
Result	What was the outcome? 2-3 sentences	

5. Mistake you learned from

Example _____

Situation	What was going on? 2-3 sentences	
Task	What was your goal? 1-2 sentences	
Action	What did you do? 2-3 sentences	
Result	What was the outcome? 2-3 sentences	

Step 5: Practice

Nice work! You have brainstormed related experience, identified the best examples, and written five stories using the STAR method. You have done considerable work to get ready for your interview, and you will be more prepared, professional and convincing as a result. There's just one step left—practicing your stories so you can deliver them with clarity and confidence in the interview. Below is a list of ways you can practice. For best results, complete all of the steps below. We suggest doing at least three of these activities.

Practice Checklist	
<input type="checkbox"/>	After completing this packet, take a day or two to sleep on it. Then, reread all your stories, and revise any passages you think could be improved. Rewrite the complete revised versions on a new page.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Say the stories out loud to yourself in the mirror. Practice a few times until it starts to feel more comfortable.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Use your phone to record yourself telling the stories, and listen to the recordings. Try to notice whether you sound positive and confident, speak clearly, and so on. Then, record yourself again.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ask a trusted friend or family member to listen. Ask for their suggestions and feedback. Choose someone you consider professional and who has been successful in their own interviews.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Call Career Services at 505-277-2531 to schedule a mock interview. We will tailor the interview to the position you're seeking and provide in-depth feedback to help you improve and prepare.
<input type="checkbox"/>	If you've already done a mock interview, call Career Services to schedule a follow-up appointment. Bring this packet and ask for feedback on your STAR stories.