

# The STAR Method

Behavioral interview questions ask you to tell a story about your past experience in order to demonstrate your skills and qualifications. Interviewers ask behavioral questions based on the idea that your past behavior is predictive of your future behavior. Behavioral questions are common in interviews for jobs, graduate school, and other programs, and they require a strategy to answer well. The STAR method is a simple formula for answering this type of interview question. You can also use the STAR method any time you want to discuss examples from your past experience in an interview.

You can often spot behavioral questions by listening for phrases like “tell me about a time when” or “give me an example.” Common behavioral interview questions include:

- “Give me an example of a time you faced a conflict with a coworker or supervisor.”
- “Tell me about a time when you made a mistake and learned from it.”
- “What professional accomplishment are you most proud of?”

STAR stands for Situation, Task, Action, Result.

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

## Tips

- Tell a story that reflects well on you. You get to choose the example, so put yourself in the best possible light.
- Don’t bad-mouth anyone. You may be asked to discuss challenges you’ve faced with colleagues. Be honest about difficulties, but focus on what went wrong with the situation and take care to speak respectfully about people. If you cannot be respectful about a particular colleague, choose a different example.
- Emphasize your individual contributions. Use the word “I” more than the word “we.” It’s okay to do this even if you were working as part of a team.
- Take responsibility. When discussing mistakes or challenges, own up to whatever role you played in what went wrong. This allows you to demonstrate maturity, accountability, and self-awareness.

- Emphasize the positive. Though it is important to be frank about challenges, don't get bogged down in them. Strike a positive tone and always come back to beneficial results and learning.
- Always conclude with a positive outcome—the happy ending to the story.
- Quantify when possible. If you can use numbers to describe the result, do so.
- Relate your answer back to the position you're seeking. How does the story show you will be successful in your next job?
- Use the STAR method for other types of questions. This formula works well any time you want to share examples from your past experience. It's good to include plenty of examples—they are the evidence to support your claims about your strengths and qualifications.
- Complete the STAR Method Interview Prep Packet from Career Services. These worksheets will walk you through a step by step process to develop five STAR stories. Ask a staff member for a copy.

### Examples

Below are examples of answers to common behavioral questions in STAR method format. Notice how these examples engage directly with challenging situations while emphasizing positive actions and outcomes. These examples also use lots of I-statements, highlighting the candidate's individual actions, and include just enough specific detail to be convincing, without overwhelming the listener with unnecessary information.

**“Give me an example of a time you faced a conflict with a coworker or supervisor.”**

<b>Situation</b>	While I was working as a server, I got frustrated with a coworker who had stopped doing a lot of his side work. This left me and the rest of the team to pick up the slack. There were days we had to stay late to finish the work he should have done on his shift.
<b>Task</b>	I wanted to figure out a way to make the division of labor more equitable for the whole team.
<b>Action</b>	I decided to go to my coworker and ask him why he was not finishing his share of the work. I explained that the work ended up falling to the rest of us and that we had even had to stay late to finish everything.
<b>Result</b>	As soon as I asked, he got very embarrassed and apologized. He shared that he was going through a tough time personally and hadn't realized how his actions were affecting everyone else. He did his full share of the work from then on, and it was a relief for the whole team. My manager heard about it and thanked me for resolving the issue.

**“Tell me about a time when you made a mistake and learned from it.”**

<b>Situation</b>	During my freshman year, I really struggled to manage my time between classes, homework, and my job on campus. I started getting behind and I ended up writing an important paper for my English class at the last minute.
<b>Task</b>	I got a bad grade on the paper and was in danger of failing the class. I needed to bring my grade up.
<b>Action</b>	I went to my professor to discuss the situation. I took responsibility for my mistake and acknowledged that I got the grade I deserved on the paper. I asked if there was any way I could improve my grade in the course.
<b>Result</b>	My professor was willing to work with me and assigned a research paper for extra credit. I worked hard on the paper, waking up extra early so I would have time for homework before my shift at work. I earned an A on the research paper and ultimately brought my grade up to a B in the course. I learned a lesson about managing my time and keeping my priorities straight, and I was able to be successful throughout the rest of my college career.

**“What professional accomplishment are you most proud of?”**

<b>Situation</b>	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.
<b>Task</b>	We needed to raise money to make up the difference. As Treasurer, I saw this as my responsibility.
<b>Action</b>	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.
<b>Result</b>	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%.