

MAKING A GREAT FIRST IMPRESSION IN YOUR INTERVIEW AND BEYOND

Answering Behavioural Interview Questions Using STAR

Formula: STAR = S (situation) + T (task) + A (actions) + R (results)

Behavioural interview questions work from the premise that how you behaved in the past is an accurate indicator of how you will likely behave and what skills you will likely call upon in response to a similar situation in the future. The **STAR** formula is recommended for answering questions in which you are asked or expected to provide an example of a time when you demonstrated a particular skill or asset. Following the formula will help to ensure that you provide specific details and concrete evidence for your competencies.

S (Situation) - Where were you when this happened? (e.g. Working at The Bay or in a chemistry lab). When did it happen? (e.g. Last summer)

T (Task) - What specific question, problem or challenge were you facing at the moment?

A (Actions) - What steps did you take to do a good job? What style did you use? What policies/procedures/theories, principles did you apply? This should be the longest part of the answer.

R (Results) - What happened because you did a good job? What positive impact did your actions have? What problem was avoided? Qualify and quantify your results whenever possible.

STAR Example 1

Question: Tell me about a time when you dealt with a difficult customer. How did you handle it?

S: When I was working at the Bookstore this September, a student came in who was yelling at me about getting the wrong course kit. She was very upset and it was disturbing the other customers.

T: As a Customer Service Rep, I knew it was my job to assist her.

A: I told her that I could see she was very upset and that I wanted to do what I could so I was glad that she came in so we could work on it together. I knew it was important to stay calm, speak softly, and to let her know I was listening. I asked if we could first move to a quieter place in the store so that I could hear her better. She agreed and when we got there she already seemed much calmer. She told me her situation, I looked it up on the computer and found out where the course kit was and how the mistake had happened.

R: When she left with the right kit she thanked me and said that I had just made her day.

STAR Example 2

Question: Can you give me an example of a time when you demonstrated “exceptional customer service”?

S: My commitment to exceptional customer service was best demonstrated recently while working at Coles Bookstore.

T: I was approached by a teacher with an urgent request for books appropriate for a Grade 3 unit starting next week.

A: After discussing in detail the issues and topics she wanted to address in her lesson plans, I made several suggestions and personally called other Coles stores to find them. I found the books and had them delivered to her school within 2 days.

R: She said she had never experienced such a high quality of service in her years teaching. Since then, we have had 4 more orders from teachers at the same school!

STAR Example 3

Question: Tell me about a time when you feel you made a significant contribution to an organization.

S: Last spring, I worked on contract as an assistant to the Head Event Organizer of the Canadian Student Leadership Conference which is an annual conference for 500 students from across Canada.

T: Based on my enthusiasm, creative ideas and initiative in planning meetings, I was asked to be in charge of the final dinner for the conference which all delegates would attend.

A: I first reviewed time frames, staffing availability, and budget/ supplier details. I then researched and found a diverse range of entertainers, including singing comedians and improvisation troupes. I decided on a James Bond theme, so everyone wore black and we played spy music as people arrived at their tables. I arranged for a mystery contest during the dinner that the tables had to work together to solve, and that really loosened everyone up and there was much laughter and chatter going on.

R: In the conference evaluations, the final dinner was rated the highest of all of the categories. Shortly thereafter, I was hired on from contract worker to full-time worker and was given more conferences to organize.