

Behavioral Job Interviews

What is a behavioral job interview?

The “behavioral job interview” is a popular method used by employers to learn about your past behaviors (way you act) in situations and in relationships. Behavioral interview questions are questions employers ask during the interview. Why do employers like to ask behavioral job interview questions when selecting workers? Because employers know that a person’s past behavior may be the person's future behavior. In other words, how you acted in situations and relationships in the past will give the employer clues on how you will act when working on this new job, if you are hired.



Behavioral job interview questions are designed to evaluate the following skills:

- 1) **Teamwork Skills:** How you work with coworkers, customers, and supervisors.
- 2) **Problem Solving Skills:** How you think of new ideas and ways to solve problems.
- 3) **Initiative Skills:** How you can be trusted to do what needs doing without being asked.
- 4) **Interpersonal (person to person social) Skills:** How you talk to and treat others.
- 5) **Adaptability Skills:** How you accept interruptions, changes, and learn new ways of doing things.
- 6) **Stress Management Skills:** How you act during tough times and under time limits.
- 7) **Leadership Skills:** How you organize and motivate a group to work together.

During a behavioral job interview, the interviewer will ask you to “Tell me about a time when . . . ”

- You had to deal with a difficult problem.
- You went above and beyond the call of duty.
- Your work or idea was criticized (judged as faulty or wrong).
- You had a problem working with others on a team project.
- Your schedule was suddenly interrupted.
- You did not agree with an employer’s policy or decision.
- You started a project with others and completed it.



Use “STARS” answers for behavioral job interview questions!

Situation: Describe a situation from a paid job, volunteer experience, school activity, or hobby activity.

Task: Explain the goal you wanted to reach in this situation.

Action: Describe the actions you took in the situation to reach the goal.

Result: Explained what happened as a result of your action.

Skills: Describe 2-3 skills you used to accomplish (do) what you did.



Ready, Set, Go

Get ready for a surprise behavioral interview question by writing down 3 STARS answers for you and your skills BEFORE a job interview. Think of situations at: a) paid job; b) volunteer experience; c) school activity; d) hobby activity; e) other activity — that used one or more of the 7 skills listed:

TEAMWORK — PROBLEM SOLVING — INITIATIVE (doing what needs doing without being told) — INTERPERSONAL (person to person social skills) — ADAPTABILITY (can adjust and change) — STRESS MANAGEMENT — LEADERSHIP

What if my prepared STARS answers do not fit the employer's question?

You will have to quickly think of a volunteer or paid experience from your past, and describe that situation with a STARS answer. **With practice**, it will become easier to think of STARS answers.

**Question: Tell me about a time when you thought of a solution to a problem.**

You need to talk 2 minutes or less to give the employer your STARS answer. So, keep each part of your answer short and to the point! **Here is a sample STARS answer:**

SITUATION: I have been on the Careerville High School tennis team for 3 years. We had no money to buy new tennis rackets for team members who could not afford to buy their own before the playoffs.

TASK: I sat down with the tennis team captain and coach. We figured out that we needed \$150 to buy the new tennis rackets. If we each thought of a way to raise \$50 within two weeks, we would have the money in time to buy new rackets before the playoffs.

ACTION: I contacted brothers and sisters of tennis team players and asked them to help with a project to raise \$50 for the tennis team. We decided ask friends and neighbors if they wanted their car washed for a donation to the Careerville tennis team to buy new tennis rackets before the playoffs.

RESULTS: After 5 days of washing cars, we had raised the \$150.

SKILLS: During this situation I used problem-solving skills, teamwork skills, and leadership skills.

Sample Behavioral Interview Questions: "Tell me about" or "Give me an example of"

- Tell me about a time you had to deal with a difficult problem. What did you do?
- Give me an example of a time you had to go above and beyond the call of duty to get something done.
- Tell me about a time that your work was criticized. How did you deal with it?
- Tell me about a time you had to work with an unhappy customer or person. What did you do?
- Give me an example of a time that you were under a lot of stress. How did you get through it?
- Tell me about a time when you saw a problem coming and did something rather than waiting.
- Give me an example of a time that you worked on a project with others. What did you do?
- Tell me about a time when your plans were changed by a situation or others. How did you deal with it?

QUICK CHECK:

1. What is a behavioral job interview?
2. Why do employers like to ask behavioral job interview questions when selecting workers?
3. How you acted in the past will give employers clues on what?
4. List the 7 skills that behavioral job interview questions are designed to evaluate.
5. Describe the following skills: a) Initiative; b) Adaptability; c) Interpersonal; c) Leadership.
6. Give 2 examples of questions that employers may ask that start with "Tell me about a time when . . ."
7. What types of answers do you use for behavioral job interview questions?
8. What are you to describe for SITUATION?
9. What do you explain for TASK?
10. What do you describe for ACTION?
11. What do you explain for RESULT?
12. Describe what for SKILLS?
13. With practice, what happens?
14. How long do you talk to present your STARS answers?
15. In the example: a) What was the SITUATION? b) What was the TASK? c) What ACTION was taken? d) What were the RESULTS? e) What SKILLS were used?
16. List 2 behavioral interview questions that begin with: a) "Tell me about"; b) "Give me example"
17. a) Do you think you will enjoy answering behavioral job interview questions? b) Give a reason for your answer.

DEEP THINK ACTIVITY: BEHAVIORAL JOB INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**Directions:**

- 1) Use a piece of notebook paper as your answer sheet.
 - 2) You may work with other students to help you think of STARS answers to the questions.
 - 3) Be sure to write down YOUR OWN ANSWERS for your experience and your skills.
 - 4) STARS answers will help you learn to describe you experiences and your skills in a positive way.
1. Give me an example of a time that you worked on a project with others. What did you do?
 2. Tell me about a time you had to deal with a difficult problem. What did you do?
 3. Tell me about a time when you saw a problem coming and did something rather than waiting.
 4. Tell me about a time you had to work with an unhappy customer or person. What did you do?
 5. Tell me about a time when your plans were changed by a situation or others. How did you deal with it?
 6. Give me an example of a time that you were under a lot of stress. How did you get through it?
 7. Tell me about a time when you organized and motivated others to do something and meet a goal.

MY STARS ANSWERS

Select one behavioral job interview question from the 7 questions listed above. You need to verbally present the entire STARS answer to an employer in two (2) minutes or less, so keep each part of your answer short and to the point!

- 1) Write down the behavioral job interview question you selected.
- 2) Describe the SITUATION.
- 3) Explain the TASK.
- 4) Describe the ACTION you took in the situation.
- 5) Explain the RESULT (what happened as a result of your action).
- 6) Describe the SKILLS you used to accomplish (do) what you did.



Select a second behavioral job interview question from the 7 questions listed. You need to verbally present the entire STARS answer to an employer in two (2) minutes or less, so keep each part of your answer short and to the point!

- 7) Write down the second behavioral job interview question.
- 8) Describe the SITUATION.
- 9) Explain the TASK.
- 10) Describe the ACTION you took in the situation.
- 11) Explain the RESULT (what happened as a result of your action).
- 12) Describe the SKILLS you used to accomplish (do) what you did.

