

# Behavioral Interviews

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## Behavioral Interviews Defined

In a behavioral interview, employers ask questions that force applicants to describe specific situations where they have utilized skills needed for the job. Questions typically begin with phrases such as “Tell me about a time when...” or “Describe a situation in which you...” Behavioral questions are extremely popular and are asked in nearly every industry type.

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## Answering Behavioral Questions

Effectively answering behavior-based interview questions requires a structured procedure and a lot of practice. It is critical to use a *specific* example when answering these questions. Examples will ideally come from current or previous employment, internships, research projects, relevant volunteer activities, class projects, or organization involvement. Successful answers require two components:

1. Articulating *specific* examples that best illustrate what you can do for an employer.
2. A *comprehensive* answer including four components known as the “S.T.A.R.” technique:

<b>Situation:</b>	What was the setting or situation of this example?
<b>Task:</b>	What specific task or problem had to be addressed? (Related to the question)
<b>Action★:</b>	What specific skills/tools did you use to address the above task?
<b>Result:</b>	What was the result of your behavior?

★Action is where most of your time should be spent in your answer because it is the area where you are able to showcase your skills. Use skill words in your answer!

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## Sample Question/Answer

Question: Tell me about a time you were in conflict with a co-worker and how you handled this situation.

Answer: I was working on a research project on the effects of the oil spill on birds in the Gulf of Mexico with a team of four student researchers. **(Situation)** We were charged with collecting mortality data and two of us had differing opinions about collection protocol. **(Task)** When I became aware of this conflict I requested a meeting for us to discuss our different approaches. I *politely* asked him to explain his, and *listened* carefully to his reasoning. Then, I was able to present a research methodology with which I had some experience and *tactfully explained* my point of view. Through understanding each other’s experience and reasoning, we came to an agreement about the best way to proceed. **(Actions)** As a result of our professional approach, we continued to work well together and our conflict did not interfere with the team’s goal or morale. **(Result)**

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## Sample Behavior Based Questions

The following are examples of Behavior Based Interview questions that focus on a wide range of performance attributes that employers frequently try to assess during an interview.

In every response you should answer the following questions even if it is not asked directly by the employer:

What was the **Situation** or setting?

What specific **Task** or problem had to be addressed?

What specific **Actions** did you take?

What was the **Result** or outcome?

- Tell me about a time you used creativity to solve a problem.
- Explain the most difficult decision you have made in the last six months and your process for deciding.
- Describe your best example of taking the initiative to do something that needed to be done, even though it wasn't your responsibility.
- Describe a situation in which you believe you were effective in achieving an aggressive goal.
- Tell me about the most significant project you have worked on in which it was crucial to keep track of details while still managing the "big picture."
- Tell me about a time you lacked the resources necessary to complete a project.
- Tell me a time when you voiced a concern or disagreement to a co-worker, supervisor, or professor.
- Tell me about a situation in which you had to lead several other people to achieve a goal.
- Describe one of your most stressful experiences and how you coped with the situation.
- Tell me about a time that you were effective in putting your technical expertise to use to solve a problem.
- Describe a recent group project you experienced when you peers were not pulling their weight.
- Tell me about a time when someone was critical of your work and how you dealt with the criticism.
- Give me a time when you were responsible for a project that didn't go the way you expected. How did you handle it?
- Tell me about a time when you built strong relationships where none existed before.
- Describe a time when you were working with a team that needed to make a group decision, yet there was not agreement in the group.
- Tell me about a time when you faced an unexpected emergency at work.
- Describe a time when you used persuasion convince someone to see things your way.
- Tell me about your best example of customer service.
- Describe a time when you anticipated potential problems and developed preventative measures.
- Tell me about a time when you successfully worked with someone you didn't particularly like.

Answering behavioral questions correctly takes practice. We suggest scheduling a mock interview at Career and Internship Services to practice before an actual interview. Call 612-624-2710 for an appointment.

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