Despite the type of job, candidates can expect to be asked behavior-based questions in most of their job interviews. The theory behind behavioral interviewing is this: the most accurate predictor of future performance is past performance in a similar situation. Employers use the behavioral interview technique to evaluate a candidate’s experiences and behaviors so they can determine the applicant’s potential for success. To answer these questions well, applicants should give detailed descriptions of actual situations and how they handled those situations. Some of the characteristics employers try to assess through behavioral interviewing include:

- Critical Thinking Skills
- Organizational Skills
- Work Ethic
- Problem-Solving Skills
- Self-Confidence
- Tactfulness
- Analytical Skills
- Motivation/Initiative
- Conflict Resolution
- Communication Skills
- Honesty/Integrity
- Maturity
- Flexibility
- Teamwork
- Decision Making
- Achievement
- Detail Oriented
- Managing Stress
- Technical Expertise
- Leadership

Questions are typically not structured as questions, but are intended to elicit a specific example from you. Questions typically start out: “Tell me about a time…” or “Describe a situation…” or “Give me an example…”

To demonstrate the desired behavior, arm yourself with examples that include past internships or work experiences, related classes or projects, extra-curricular activities, leadership, team involvement, participation in athletic sports, and community service.

The STAR Approach

One strategy for preparing for behavioral interviews is to use the STAR Approach:

**Situation:** Discuss in detail the situation or setting

**Task:** Describe the specific task or problem that had to be addressed

**Action you took:** Thoroughly describe the action you took (what you did). Keep the focus on you.

**Results achieved:** What occurred? What were the results? What did you accomplish? What did you learn?

Example of a STAR Q & A: “Describe your best example of using your initiative to complete a project.”

**Situation:** “During my internship last year I was responsible for organizing benefit sessions for employees.”

**Task:** “I noticed that attendance at these events had dropped by 50% over the past two years and wanted to improve these numbers to ensure more employees were made aware of changes and updates to benefits.”

**Action:** “I organized two alternate session dates, sent an e-mail to all employees two weeks prior, provided refreshments, and gave away door prizes. I also created an evaluation form for feedback.”

**Result:** “Over 95% of employees attended and the results from the evaluation form were overwhelmingly positive about the new format. This format will now be used for all future benefits update sessions.”

Sample Behavioral Questions

“Describe a situation that illustrates how well you can manage multiple projects/assignments at once.” (Organizational Skills)

“Describe a situation where you used your communication skills to get an important point across.” (Communication Skills)

“Tell me about a time when you were having a problem with a co-worker or employer.” (Conflict Resolution)

“Give me an example of a situation when you had a new idea for completing a job assignment or task.” (Achievement)

“Describe the ideal job for you.” (Maturity)

“What was the most difficult decision you have made in the last six months? What made it difficult?” (Decision Making)

“Describe one of your most stressful experiences. How did you cope with it?” (Stress Management)

“Describe your best example of taking the initiative to do something that needed to be done, even though it wasn’t your responsibility.” (Initiative)

“Tell me about a situation in which you had to coordinate people to achieve a goal. How did you coordinate and lead the group?” (Leadership)