

Tips for Grads: Answering behavioral interview questions

[Career Development](#)

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Whether it's your fifth job interview or your 50th, preparation is the key to portraying yourself in a positive light and maximizing your chances of getting a job offer. However, knowing what to prepare for isn't always easy.

More than ever, interviewers are focusing on ["behavioral" interview questions](#) to assess what a candidate's past behavior may reveal about their ability, judgement, and personality. Interviewers use question stems like, "tell me about a time when..." to learn about qualities that aren't easy to explain or demonstrate on a résumé, such as teamwork and problem-solving.

Even if you don't know exactly what questions will be asked, you can use [the STAR method](#) to prepare for behavior-based questions. The STAR method is a great way to organize your thoughts into clear, compelling anecdotes that illustrate your value.

Situation/Task

Describe the context of a relevant situation or task. Be specific, and provide enough detail that the interviewer understands the key aspects of the situation. If you were faced with a particular problem in this situation, describe that as well.

Action

Describe the actions *you* took to address the situation, task, or problem. Be explicit about the steps that you took, and if it was a team effort what your role was.

Result

Explain the result of your actions. Focus on what you accomplished, what the (positive) outcomes were for all involved, and what you learned.

When choosing scenarios to describe, use a [list of common behavioral interview questions](#) to guide your preparation. If possible, select a scenario that demonstrates multiple positive attributes, such as resourcefulness, teamwork, and adaptability. That way, you can focus on preparing and practicing two or three broadly applicable scenarios.

If you're interested in learning more about the STAR method and other tips for crushing your next job interview, check out the [video from last year's Successful Interviewing workshop with Kristina Vack](#).