

PREP FOR AN

INTERVIEW



Interview Prep

The first interview is typically called a “screening” or “cultural interview.” This means the employer is trying to figure out if you’d be a “culture fit” for their workplace. This is likely the type of interview you’re most familiar with – there will be general, sometimes vague questions (“Tell me about yourself!” “What’s your greatest weakness?”) and your job is to tell the interviewer how amazing you are.

The STAR Technique

It’s so easy to ramble when you’re asked a question in an interview. You start answering the question and then suddenly you’re talking about your childhood dog, your parents’ divorce, and that one [YouTube video of chickens running around in pants](#). We’ve all been there! STAR will prevent rambling and give you focus. When you answer a question, try to hit the following points in order:

- Situation: Describe the event or situation that you were in.
- Task: Explain the task you had to complete.
- Action: Describe the specific action you took to complete the task. What did you (not your team) decide to do? What steps did you take to address the situation? Focus on your actions, while being humble, and acknowledging the accomplishments of your team.
- Result: Close with the result of your actions.

STAR Examples

Question 1: Give an example of how you set a goal either for yourself or with a team. How did you achieve it?

STAR Answer:

Situation:

While studying at Newforce, we were fortunate enough to have worked on several group projects together. One specific project that we worked on in teams was called Trestlebridge Farms and it was the first C# project assigned to our group.

Task:

The project included a lot of starter code, so it was essentially like we were picking up the project from where another team off. So, apart from building this application as a team, we also had to understand the code that was already written and how exactly we needed to finish it.

Action:

As a team, we decided to focus on spending the bulk of our time in the planning phase where we walked through the existing code, our conceptual understanding of the project, and how we needed to divide our tasks to make it a cohesive and productive process.

Result:

Because we spent so much time as a team figuring out our tasks together, we experienced a smooth-sailing, timely, and stress free group project where we were able to efficiently work together to deliver the assigned product.

Question 1: Describe a situation in which you met a roadblock. How did you deal with it?

STAR Answer:

Situation:

A couple years ago, while I was in college, I attended a hackathon, called Technica, which is an all-female hackathon that invites women in software related fields to mentor the young women that come to participate in the hackathon. It was a cool opportunity where we could interact with representatives from places like Facebook, NSA, CIA, and Fannie Mae, who had booths set up. Even though I didn't have a coding or software background at this point, it was really amazing to me to be able to interact these awesome women with really cool careers

Task:

I was given coding challenges throughout the 24hr hackathon - There were also workshops - intro to coding languages. I realized I did not have the coding experience to code some of the challenges.

Action:

Instead of feeling defeated or quitting, I refocused my goals away from completing coding challenges. Absorb as much info as possible from the workshops

Result:

I gained more exposure than I would have anywhere else. Also, have you seen the video of chickens running around in pants? No? WELL...

Practice:

Fill Out Your Own STAR Document

Fill Out Your STAR Doc:

1. [Open this template](#).
2. On the top menu, go to File --> Make a Copy
3. Fill in the STAR prompts for these common interview questions. You don't need to write them in complete sentences. Bullet points or notes are fine. You also don't need to memorize your answers-- this worksheet just allows you to pre-think about some examples you could use so you're not coming up with them on the spot.

Note: bookmark this doc and keep coming back to it! Now that you have these questions in mind, you can be on the lookout for examples in your daily work. If you run into a situation that could work for one of these answers, jot it down in here before you forget about it.

Say It Out Loud!

Your next step is to get some practice answering some of these questions out loud. Over the next two weeks, complete the following steps:

1. Recruit a friend or family member to help you. Pick someone who is supportive and will hype you up. This is the time to build confidence! Hand them this [question bank](#) and have them ask you questions in any order they want. Practice your answers. Tell them to play [this sound effect](#) after each of your answers. It's totally fine if they don't understand some of your more technical answers-- your job is just to practice stringing words together out loud.
2. If you want more practice between now and then, you can either keep practicing with a buddy or-- if you want to practice solo-- open a Zoom call by yourself and hit record. Then practice asking yourself questions and answering them. The red "recording" light will put enough pressure on you that you'll feel like you're in an interview even if it's just you. If you're feeling especially brave, watch the recording and try to give yourself feedback. (If you do this, be sure to give yourself as much positive feedback as you do negative!)