

Prepare for Structured Behavioral Interview

These frequently asked questions and answers can help you prepare for a structured behavioral interview:

What kinds of questions will I be asked?

You will be asked questions that focus on situations you've encountered in the past. When you answer, there are three pieces of information the interviewer will collect for each behavioral example:

- The **S**ituation or **T**ask that you faced
- The **A**ctions that you took
- The **R**esults or changes caused by the action

Following is an example of a candidate's response that includes all parts of a behavioral example:

Question: Can you tell me about a time where you effectively handled a customer complaint?

Situation/Task: There was one time when a customer was upset because the ATM at our branch was down. The customer needed to check her account balance and the ATM was under repair.

Action: I saw that the customer was upset, so I asked her if I could help. After finding out that she was interested in checking her account balance, I walked her over to our phone kiosk and let her know that she could obtain her balance by calling our 1-800 number.

Result: The customer thanked me and two weeks later my manager received a letter of appreciation from her.

How is this approach different from traditional interviewing?

Traditional interviewing techniques tend to focus on general concepts. Our interviewing approach is more structured and focuses on examples of how you've performed in previous work-related situations. The following comparison illustrates some of these differences:

Traditional Interviewing questions	Behavioral Interview questions
Where do you see yourself in five years?	Tell me the last time you handled a customer complaint?
What are your three strengths and weaknesses?	Describe an example of when you became frustrated with a peer/team member.
Why should we hire you for this job?	When was the last time you gave feedback to an employee who was not performing up to standards? What did you do?
What do you think is important in being a good manager/team member?	Tell me about the last creative idea that you implemented in your work area.

What can I do to prepare myself for this interview?

Practice sharing examples in the format (STAR) listed above. The next time you're telling someone about an experience you've had or what happened on your favorite TV show, tell the story by sharing the three parts of a STAR: describe the situation or task, tell what action was taken, and describe the result. In addition, you might want to think about challenging, difficult, and rewarding experiences in your past work history and write them down.

In addition, keep these tips in mind:

- During the interview, it is expected that you will need some time to think back to specific experiences. Don't feel pressured to answer the question quickly or feel uncomfortable asking the interviewer to repeat the question.
- If you are unable to think of a specific experience in the past, let the interviewer know that you may need to come back to that question, or that you haven't had that situation happen to you. However, be sure you are able to give discuss enough experiences so the interviewer can assess your skills accurately.

There may be questions included in your interview that seek experiences that didn't work out the way you intended. This information gives the interviewer a balanced, realistic picture of your background and shows how you have learned from those experiences.