

Story answers (STAR)

Easy · 30 min to prepare three stories · Free

When they say "Tell me about a time when..." or "Give me an example of..." answer with a short story: the Situation, your Task, the Action you took, and the Result. Behavioral questions are the most common kind you'll face. Prepare three or four true stories ahead of time, use a number when you can, and keep each answer to about two minutes.

YOU'LL NEED

- ☐ Paper, or a notes app
- ☐ The job posting
- ☐ Three or four moments from work, school, sports, volunteering or family

DO IT LIKE THIS

- 1 **Spot the question.** Behavioral questions often start with "Tell me about a time when..." or "Give me an example of...". Employers ask them because how you acted in the past is seen as a predictor of how you'll act on the job.
- 2 **Situation: give the background the interviewer needs to understand what was going on.** One or two sentences.
- 3 **Task: name the goal you were responsible for, or the obstacle you had to get past.**
- 4 **Action: describe what you did, step by step, and the skills and resources you used.** Say "I," not "we," so it's clear what you did.
- 5 **Result: say what came of it, good or bad, and what you learned.** Use numbers to show what you accomplished where you can.
- 6 **Prepare for the common prompts: handling a deadline or stress, something that went wrong or a mistake you made, a goal you set and reached, an unexpected problem, a difficult customer, and a skill you learned recently.** One good story can often answer more than one.
- 7 **Practice out loud, on paper and with a friend or a free practice site.** About two minutes per answer is normal.

Watch out Keep it true. Interviewers may ask follow-up questions, and they can compare what you say with what your references say. Keep it short too. A story that wanders loses people. If the interviewer looks distracted, shorten your answer, give an example or ask a question.

DAD NOTE *Three good stories, practiced out loud, will carry most interviews.*

Full lesson: aptkeys.com/work/interviews/story-answers-star/

Checked October 2, 2026. Sources: LSU Olinde Career Center; U.S. Department of Labor; CareerOneStop (U.S. Department of Labor).