

Quick Reference Guide to Interviews



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Here are a few useful tips:

Preparation is Key:

You've been invited to an interview, so there must be a chance that you could match what someone is looking for. You've read the job description and that seems fine, but have you read your CV from the employer's perspective? NO: So, try to anticipate what questions they are likely to ask from your CV.

Beginning the Interview:

- ▶ A reassuring greeting, including a firm handshake & a smile is always good start.
- ▶ Always maintain eye contact with the interviewer.
- ▶ Answer questions succinctly, do not go off at tangents.
- ▶ Keep your body language, including posture, professional at all times. This means stay upright, don't fidget.
- ▶ Never over criticise your current employer for it can often raise unwanted alarm bells.
- ▶ Avoid replying with monosyllabic 'yes / no' answers.
- ▶ Always be positive in your interview, but conversely be realistic about how you would adapt to your new job and how you may overcome initial difficulties.
- ▶ The timing of salary negotiations is often paramount in the process of interviews. You should not start negotiating salary during your first interview; leave this until the end of the interview process (2nd or 3rd interview).
- ▶ Always ask your interviewer questions. Remember that employment is a two way process.
- ▶ Do not say anything that cannot be supported by examples.
- ▶ Do not try to be somebody you are not, be yourself.

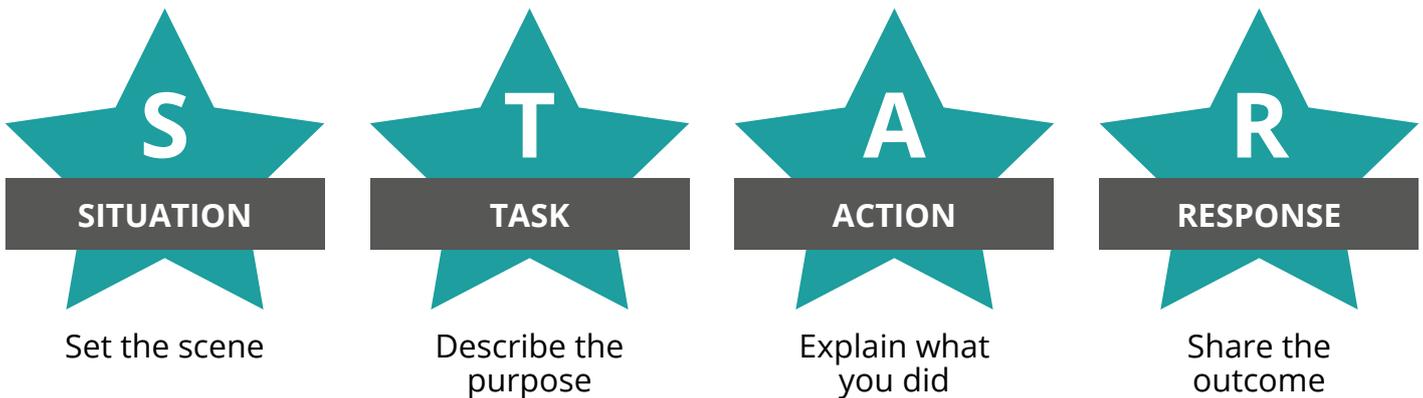
Interview Advice:

Before reading this it is important to say that you must not dwell on any of these points too much or you may become too conscious about what takes place in the interview. Instead, refer to the quick tips guide once you have read this as it encompasses many of these points stated here.

Like any form of communication, whether in our personal or professional lives, there are some things that require thought, commitment & dedication so we get the right messages across. So often, we communicate effectively when we "think on the spot" in our day – to – day working lives. However, delivering effective in a normal or frequented type of situation does not mean that we can have them in "stressful situations," like interviews.

Interview Preparation

Competency questions make up a large part of most job interviews and from a company's point of view they allow an objective assessment of a candidate's experience, and the qualities that make them suitable for the job. Thankfully there's a tried and tested technique that will help you to answer these tricky situations.



It's known as the **STAR technique** and by using questions that require these types of answers it is easier for the employer to compare all the people who are applying for the job in a methodical and structured way. By using this step-by-step method you will be able to answer each question in a systematic manner, without forgetting the important stuff. Here we take a look at every stage of the STAR interview method.

Which questions need a STAR response?

The questions will usually start along the lines of "tell me about a time when you". This will be followed by those competencies that have been listed on the job specification, so it is important to be familiar with these so that you can prepare. Asking about soft skills such as teamwork, negotiation and communication is especially popular for graduate job interviews.

A lot of the questions will require you to think about past work experiences you've had. For those who are applying for internships, apprenticeships or have no previous work experience, you can still talk about extra-curricular activities, what you achieved while being a member of a university society, or school projects you have been involved in, as an example. The answer to these questions will usually be between a minute and three minutes long.

Situation

This is about setting the scene, giving a context and background to the situation. So if you're asked a question about time management, your reply would need to include the details of the project you were working on, who you were working with, when it happened and where you were.

Task

This is more specific to your exact role in the situation. You need to make sure that the interviewer knows what you were tasked with, rather than the rest of the team.



Action

This is the most important part of the STAR technique, because it allows you to highlight what your response was. Remember, you need to talk about what you specifically did, so using 'I' rather than team actions – otherwise you won't be showing off the necessary skills the employer is looking for. Be sure to share a lot of detail, the interviewer will not be familiar with your history, although remember to avoid any acronyms and institutional language.

What you're trying to get across here is how you assessed and decided what was the appropriate response to the situation, and how you got the other team members involved – which in turn is a great way to demonstrate your communication skills.

For example if you are asked about dealing with a difficult personality on your team you would talk about how you decided to take a certain course of action to avoid making the situation worse or upsetting the individual.

Result

The result should be a positive one, and ideally one that can be quantified. Examples include repeat business, an increase in sales by 15% or saving the team 5 hours a week. The interviewer will also want to know what you learnt from that situation, and if there was anything you'd do differently the next time you were faced with that situation.

The STAR technique enables you to showcase your relevant experience with the interviewer in a methodical manner. We recommend doing some in-depth preparation before the interview so that you can have some great examples to quote.

We love hearing about how your experience is relevant to a career at Enterprise, whether you are looking for work experience, an apprenticeship or a graduate management role. Take a look at the opportunities we have available and get in touch soon.

Typical Interviewer Styles

The Poker Player – A cool customer, the poker player is stern faced and seldom changes verbal or non-verbal expressions and therefore gives you little feedback from which to gauge his or her behaviour. This does not mean to say that they are a total bore; it is just a tactic that they are using to assert conversational pressure in you. They are likely to examine you closely. Sometimes it may be a good idea to call their hand, by asking them questions about their organisation or themselves. (Be careful not to get too personal though!)

The Salesman - The salesman always spends too much time selling himself / herself or the company that they represent. Sometimes this can set alarm bells ringing, as it can mean that they are seeking someone in desperation. Conversely, it can be the case that they are genuinely happy with the company and interested in your pursuit of employment. Ask them questions to find out.

“Do not assess the interviewer's personality on their interview style”



The Split Personality - Very tricky to work out, the split personality throws together a spectrum of humour and seriousness, which seem incongruent. Often quick-thinkers who can be very intelligent. They are difficult people to work out, but often thrive within industry because of their ability to adapt to situations very quickly. Apparently very rare to come across. They are always worth giving straight honest answers to.

The Fox - Full of surprises, the fox tries to catch you off guard by collating snippets of information from you which may seem to be insignificant at the early stages of an interview. Without realising what you have given away the fox collates these pieces of information in a stealth-like fashion, before unleashing 'killer questions' to test whether you are evasive, confrontational or adaptable. Of course, the latter is always the winning move.

"Remember that the interviewer is only doing their job. Imagine being the interviewer yourself for the specific job that you are going for!"

Finally, Enjoy Yourself!

Sounds stupid because interviews are STRESSFUL. This is a myth. After all, at a fundamental level all you are doing is conversing with another human being, somebody who you could potentially be working with so SHOW UNDERSTANDING, be diplomatic and friendly towards them, show real interest in their organisation. Be yourself, firstly in a professional manner and secondly in a personal one.

Simplicity is the key, surely? We go to an interview and we are confident calm and deliver the interview with great conviction. Surely it can be that simple? And why not?

According to one of the world's most prominent linguists, conversation the effectiveness of conversation can be measured in terms of **Quality, Quantity, Relevance** and **Manner**. These four key principles will now be examined, in turn, and applied to interview contexts for purposes of illustration:

The **QQR** principals are interdependent; they are very easy to understand and to put into context. It is very important to understand that these principles relate to VERBAL & NON-VERBAL aspects of communication.

Quality

To get the right message across you must use appropriate language in the right order so that your messages are conveyed succinctly. When you go to the pub and have a few drinks with close friends you will do this naturally. So YOU ARE capable of it. The fact that you're in an interview should make you no different. After all if you are unable to strike a sufficient level of rapport with the interviewer, then it is unlikely that you will be successful.



Quantity

It is said that the 80/20 principal is a general rule of thumb that interviewers should try to conform to. (You, the candidate, do 80% of the talking). This, by no means is a standard, as individual style significantly affects this. Have you ever come away from an interview and feel like you have been for a lecture? Interviewing people correctly is extremely difficult. Let's face it – how many Michael Parkinson's do you meet every day? So have a level of understanding for your interviewer too. It is important that you try to construct your answers to his or her questions properly. Do not specify incredible detail about is a simple question, for example.

Relevance

Never go off at tangents and "answer the question". Getting side tracked in an interview may give the impression that you also get 'side tracked' at work, or distracted easily.

Manner

Of course you want to be seen as the professional type. However, it is important to interject your own personality so that you can develop a rapport with the interviewer. It is important to make sure that your manner is the right one. For example, saying that you want to be a company director in 2 years when you only have three years post graduate experience will be seen as insulting. The interviewer probably has more than twice your experience and is still not a company director. Showing ambition is fine, but do it in measured doses and justify your assertions. Your manner should always carry undertones (or overtones – dependent on the question) of pleasantness, genuine interest and resolve.

To follow are some examples of the different types of interview styles that people often come across. They are not to be taken as gospel because all people are different and unique in their own right.

Best of luck with the interview!

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