

STAR Method Response Framework

Turn real experience into clear interview evidence

The STAR method is an excellent framework for questions that ask about a specific past experience. It helps you explain the context, your responsibility, your actions, and the outcome. Examples may come from coursework, clubs, volunteering, internships or employment.

Situation

Set the scene briefly. Give only the context needed to understand the challenge. Who was involved, and what was happening?

Task

Explain the goal or problem and your responsibility. Separate your role from the team's overall task.

Action

Describe the steps you personally took and why. Give this the most attention. Explain decisions, communication and adjustments rather than saying only "we worked together."

Result

Explain what happened and what you learnt. Use accurate figures when available; otherwise describe completion, feedback or improvement. If the outcome was disappointing, explain your response and subsequent learning.

Illustrative answers about teamwork

Situation: Our student club had an event in two weeks, but two volunteers had different ideas about how to promote it.

Task: I was coordinating publicity and needed an agreed plan.

Action: I asked each volunteer to explain their idea, checked the time and resources available, and proposed using one design for posters and a shorter version for social media. We agreed on responsibilities and a review date.

Result: We published both versions before the event. I learnt to agree on the purpose and constraints before debating designs.

Keep the answer focused

Practise an initial answer of about one to two minutes, then adjust to the interviewer's instructions. Leave room for follow-up questions. A clear short answer is more useful than a story with unnecessary detail.

Draft and review your response

Question or skill being assessed

Situation

Task and my responsibility

Action and why I chose it

Result and learning

Review checklist

- Have I answered the question with one specific example?
- Is my individual contribution clear?
- Have I explained actions rather than only qualities or intentions?
- Is the outcome honest and supported?
- Can I explain what I learnt and answer follow-up questions?

Common traps include;

- giving too much background
- claiming the whole team's achievement as your own
- inventing numbers and skipping the result
- For a hypothetical question, explain what you would do and why; do not present it as an event that actually happened.

Prepared as a companion to the Employment Interview Guide, drawing on Interview Skills Workbook and New Interview Skills Workshop by Matthew Laubengayer, Al Qasimi Foundation. Examples and practise questions are illustrative; follow the instructions and criteria of the relevant organisation.