



Behavioral Interview Tips & Examples

Preparing for the Behavioral Interview

You should respond to behavioral interview questions by giving a specific example where you have already demonstrated the skill that the search committee is looking for. You may find it helpful to remember the mnemonic CAR in composing a concise and thoughtful response to an interviewer's question. Here is how it works:

- Tell the **C**ontext in which you exercised a desired skill or strength. What was the problem, need, or concern? Include obstacles you had to overcome
- Explain the **A**ction you took. This does not mean what the group did, but what you did. Practice "I" instead of "We" statements; assume ownership of your accomplishments
- Describe the **R**esults and positive benefits you achieved. Quantify the results and relate your skills, action and results to the employer's needs when possible

How do you know what skills are important for a particular position so you can prepare targeted examples?

- Read the job description
- View prospective department's websites
- Read occupational information that describes which skills are used in different functional areas
- Networking
- Ask a friend or colleague who is working in the same position

Your Objective

Your main objective, while you are thoroughly researching the department and position should be to identify the skills, attributes, and experiences highly valued for the particular position for which you will be interviewing. Then you should review past experiences for your accomplishments.

An accomplishment is a concise statement outlining how you have used your skills and knowledge to accomplish a positive result. Accomplishments can be found in all parts of your life, such as work or volunteer experiences (when did your performance exceed past performance? Achieve something new? Make things easier? Saved or made money?).

People well trained in this interviewing technique will not let you get away with a general or vague answer. They will keep asking you for specific details on your approach to past situations and the results of your efforts such as:



- What were you thinking at that point?
- What did you do next?
- Tell me more about that.
- How did you gain support?
- Lead me through your decision-making process.
- What was the outcome?

Examples

A skill often mentioned as important for Analyst positions is strong analytical or problem-solving ability. In a behavioral interview you might be asked:

- What's the toughest analytical problem you have faced? How did you solve it?
- How do you go about gathering information to analyze problems? Give me an example.
- Describe an instance when you had to think on your feet in order to extricate yourself from a difficult situation.

Before the interview, prepare a few illustrative examples of problems you have solved. For each, outline the 5–7 main steps involved in solving the problem, the alternatives you considered, and the results you obtained.

Behavioral Interview Question Examples

Interpersonal skills

When working on a team project, have you ever had an experience where there was strong disagreement among team members or a team member who didn't do their part?

- What did you do?
- Give us an example where you mediated a conflict.
- Tell us about a time when you had to be assertive.

Communication skills

- Tell us about a time when your active listening skills really paid off.
- Tell us about a time when you had to present complex information. How did you ensure that the other person understood?
- Tell us about a time when you were able to use persuasion to successfully convince someone to see things your way.
- Tell us about a time in which you had to use your written communication skills in order to get across an important point.



Initiative

- Give an example where you pushed yourself to do more than the minimum.
- Tell us about projects you have initiated. What prompted you to begin them?
- Give an example of a situation that could not have happened successfully without you being there.

Planning and organization

- How do you determine priorities in scheduling your time? Give us an example.
- Give us an example of an important goal that you set in the past. Tell us about your success in reaching it.
- Describe a situation when you had many projects or assignments due at the same time. What steps did you take to get them all done?

Flexibility

- Describe a situation in which you were able to overcome a “personality conflict” in order to get results.
- Describe a time where you were faced with problems or stresses that tested your coping skills.

Leadership

- Tell us about a time when you influenced the outcome of a project by taking a leadership role.
- Describe your leadership style and give us an example of a situation where you successfully led a group.
- Discuss situations where you have turned ideas into action.
- Tell us about a time you had to lead people who did not want to be led.

Creativity/innovation

- When did you provide a solution that was outside the box?
- What is the most creative thing you have done?

Decision-making

- Give an example of a time you had to make a difficult decision.
- Describe a time you had to defend your decision.
- Summarize a situation where you had to seek out relevant information, define key issues, and determine the steps to get a desired result.