

# Practice Questions for Behavior Description Interviews

Behavior description interviews are based on the premise that past actions are the best indicators of future behavior. Therefore, questions are asked that demand specific answers in order to discover if the candidate possesses certain job skills. This method of interviewing has been around for many years, although it has become more popular recently.

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## How to Answer

Interviewers who ask behavioral interview questions expect answers with specific examples. Therefore, when preparing for this type of interview, anticipate the job skills required in the position and think of past experiences where you have demonstrated these skills. For example, a job in sales requires customer service orientation. Think of situations where you have dealt with customers and practice structuring your answer using the STAR method described below.

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## Using the STAR Method

**STAR** is an acronym for **S**ituation, **T**ask, **A**ction, **R**esult. Remembering this acronym can be helpful in organizing your thoughts when describing a specific experience.

- Q.** Can you think of a time when you dealt with the concerns of a particularly challenging customer?
- A.** “As a residence hall desk attendant, one of my main responsibilities was to handle telephone calls and requests for information [SITUATION]. One time, a parent called the desk frantic because she had tried to call her son for a couple of days and had gotten no response. She demanded that I locate her son [TASK]. I knew I had to stay calm because she was upset. I let her talk for several minutes, reassured her that I understood how frightening it must be, and carefully explained that I could not leave the desk to locate her son. I didn’t want to just transfer her to the R.A. in case she ended up talking to an answering machine, so I asked if I could put her on hold, and called the R.A. on that floor. He wasn’t in, but luckily I found the Hall Director, so I transferred the call to the Hall Director [ACTION]. By then, my patience and efforts to help had calmed down the parent [RESULT].”
- Q.** Tell me about some things in your job that you have done beyond what has been required.
- A.** “Last summer, I was head lifeguard at a large public pool that employed 20 lifeguards [SITUATION]. As head lifeguard I was in charge of training all the lifeguards [TASK]. Although it wasn’t required, I decided to put together a written training handbook to make it easier to have consistent training from summer to summer [ACTION]. As a result, training new employees is more efficient and thorough [RESULT].”

# Sample Questions

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## ANALYTIC THINKING

- ◆ What has been one of the most challenging situations which required your analysis?
  - ◆ Have you ever been in a situation where there has been a recurring problem at work? Tell me about it. What did you do in this situation?
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## CUSTOMER SERVICE ORIENTATION

- ◆ I am interested in your day-to-day experience with customers in your present job. Can you pick a recent customer interaction you've had and tell me about it?
  - ◆ Can you think of a time when you have had to deal with the concerns of a particularly challenging customer?
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## DECISION MAKING

- ◆ Can you think of a particularly challenging decision you have had to make? We have all made some decisions or recommendations we wish we could do over again. Please give me an example where this has happened to you.
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## FLEXIBILITY

- ◆ Have you ever been in a situation where you had to take on new tasks? Describe the situation and what you did.
  - ◆ In going from \_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_, what did you find to be the most difficult? What did you do to make the transition?
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## INITIATIVE

- ◆ How has your job changed since you started? Who initiated each of these changes? How was each one initiated?
  - ◆ Have you done some things in your job beyond what has been required? Tell me about some things which you've done that exceeded requirements.
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## PEOPLE MANAGEMENT

- ◆ How do you manage the performance of those who report to you?
  - ◆ Can you tell me about a situation in which you attempted to raise an individual's (or group's) level of performance?
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## SENSITIVITY / DIVERSITY

- ◆ We all have had to work with people who see things differently from us. Can you think of a person or group you have worked with who saw things quite differently from you? How about an example of when they didn't agree with what you were doing?
  - ◆ Can you give me an example of how you managed diversity in your classroom experiences, work activities, or residential living experiences during college?
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## VERBAL COMMUNICATION

- ◆ What aspects of your present job have involved the most verbal communication with other people?
  - ◆ In what areas of your present job has good verbal communication been most important?
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## WRITTEN COMMUNICATION

- ◆ What has been the nature of the writing you have done in your present position? Can you tell me about a recent example of \_\_\_\_\_?