

The STAR(R) Technique for Researchers

What is the STAR(R) Technique?

- A useful tool to answer competency based questions (examples below)
- Using this to answer questions (on your application or at interview) to provide comprehensive and concise answers
- The second 'R' is a new addition, it may be useful for some situations or you could end with 'R' for Result

Examples of competency/skills based questions

- Tell us about a time you have successfully worked as part of a team.
- Provide an example of where you have analysed a large amount of complex data, how you achieved this.
- Describe a time when you have demonstrated excellent time management skills.
- We are looking for problem-solvers. How do you solve problems?

Using STAR(R) to answer questions:

<u>Situation:</u>	when/where – set the scene
<u>Task:</u>	the goal, aim or challenge
<u>Action:</u>	what you did/your role
<u>Result:</u>	the outcome
<u>Reflection:</u>	what did I learn

Some notes:

- See the examples below, these help explain the use of STAR
- Remember if you are demonstrating your ability to work in a team make sure you talk about the action YOU took (not the team)
- Results need to be as quantifiable as possible, something that can be referred to or looked up if necessary
- You can use the table below to build your STAR answers

Academia STARR examples

<i>Job spec criteria</i>	<i>Situation</i>	<i>Task</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Result</i>	<i>Reflection</i>
Teaching skills	University of Southampton Post-Doctoral Research Associate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lecture PhD students and UG students in C++ programming language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Created course materials Delivered lectures Assessed students' work Ran discussion groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 95% pass rate over 3 years Student award 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learnt how to design and delivery effective learning to a range of students to high standards
Research funding experience	University of Bath Research Assistant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To secure funding for 2 years from EPSRC to continue Systems Methodology research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting construction of EPSRC bid Co-presented to funding committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding secured and project commenced 4 research papers 3 co-authored 1 sole author 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learnt to work collaboratively Experienced difficulty of successful bid writing

How to translate into application or interview answer

Teaching experience

As a Lecturer in IS at Southampton University I was responsible for delivering modules in C++ programming to both undergraduate and postgraduate students. To achieve this I created course materials, delivered lectures, assessed students' work and supervised students' projects. Over a three year period I achieved a 95% pass rate and one student received an award for their high quality work.

Industry STAR examples

Job spec criteria	Situation	Task	Action	Result
Project Management	Loughborough University Research Associate	To manage research project to be completed on time and within budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Created project plan • Identified milestones • Managed resources and personnel • Monitored progress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project delivered on time and to budget • Funding for further project awarded as a result
Team working	University of Bath Research Assistant	To work with interdisciplinary team to deliver research findings on project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organised team meetings with members from different locations • Operated IT equipment to include off-site contributions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team members met each other face to face or virtually • Good team relationships developed

How to translate into application or interview answer

Managing a complex project

Whilst completing my PhD at Loughborough University I was responsible conducting research in *** and delivering results to meet submission, conference and publication dates. To achieve this I created a project plan, plotted milestones, managed resources and personnel and monitored progress. As a result of my excellent project management, I was able to submit my PhD thesis ahead of the three year timeframe.

Creating your STAR(R) stories

- These can be collected and prepared in advance of application completion or interview attendance
- Identify your areas of experience eg. jobs, PhD completion, area of interest, voluntary work
- Think about key competences for roles you seek and start creating your STAR(R) stories
- It's useful to have two or three examples for the same competency, so that you can chose which is the most appropriate to use

Preparation and practice

- Practice your answers by talking through your STAR(R) stories, either to yourself or by answering questions from others
- You could record yourself and listen to your responses (be kind to yourself!)
- Take care not to just remember answers to regurgitate as they will sound stilted

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