

QUICK GUIDE TO PREPARING FOR AN INTERVIEW



DO THE PREPARATION



Research the skills and attributes the employer is looking for from the job description and identify skills and experience you have which are relevant for the role. Learn how to use the STAR technique.

Research the company using their website and social media. To really impress, conduct a more in-depth search by using our resources on the Careers Network website: www.intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/careers

Research the job using the job description and other occupational sources such as Prospects www.prospects.ac.uk

Plan the route and if possible practice the journey prior to your interview.

Know the name, job title and phone number of the person who is going to interview you. If you are going to be late always ring and let the employer know.

Appropriate dress – suit/smart business attire, formal shoes – no trainers.

TYPES OF QUESTIONS YOU MAY BE ASKED



Competency questions – use examples of your past experience which best showcase the skills in the person specification eg, Teamwork – ‘Describe a situation in which you were a member of team. What did you do to positively contribute to it?’ Use the STAR technique to answer these types of questions.

Motivation questions (also referred to as strength-based questions) – eg, ‘Which tasks do you get the most satisfaction from?’ ‘What interests you about working for this organisation?’ ‘What do you think you would find most challenging in the role?’

‘Difficult’ questions – eg, ‘What is your biggest weakness?’ or ‘If you were an animal/biscuit, what would you be?’

Chronological – the questions link directly to your CV or completed application form.

Technical – for jobs which require technical specialist knowledge. Questions may focus on what you are doing in your final-year project, or on real or hypothetical technical situations. Use positive/strong language in your responses.

ON THE DAY!



Arrive on time and switch off your phone. Smile and shake the interviewer's hand.

Be clear about your achievements, be positive about your weaknesses but be honest and truthful. Highlight your enthusiasm for the role and why you are the best person for the job.

Show you are interested and engaged, stay calm and maintain eye contact.

Give yourself time before answering questions and don't be afraid to ask the interviewer to repeat anything you don't understand. You can even come back to the question later in the interview if you wish.

Prepare a list of questions you would like to ask at the end of the interview.

FURTHER HELP



Book a careers appointment at: www.intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/careers

Have an upcoming interview or assessment centre? Request a practice interview at: www.intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/practiceinterview

Go to our Canvas pages for help with applying for vacancies, interviews, assessment centres and psychometric tests: www.intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/careerscanvas

Ask a careers question, or send your CV, covering letter, application or personal statement and receive feedback from a careers adviser: www.intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/careers/contact

PRACTICE USING THE STAR TECHNIQUE

The STAR (Situation, Task, Action, Result) format is an interview technique used to answer competency based questions such as 'Tell me about a time that you solved a problem to a tight timescale.'

SITUATION

Present a recent challenge or situation

TASK

What did you achieve?

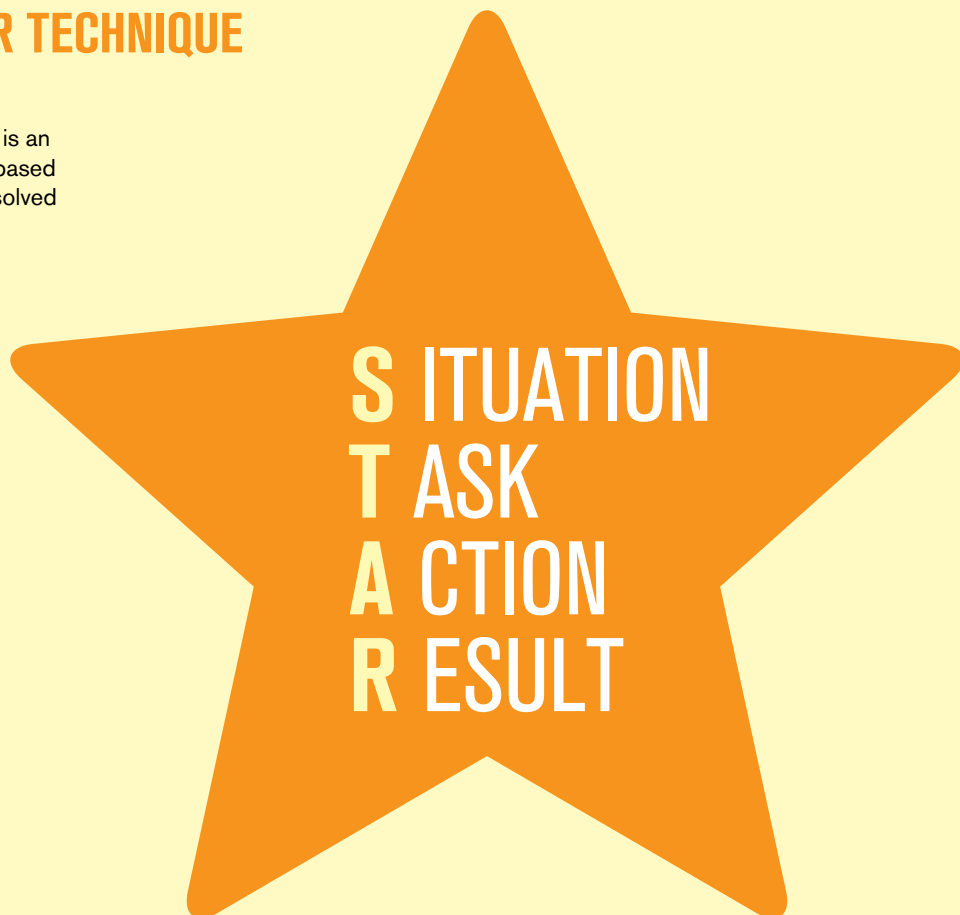
ACTION

What did you do, why did you do it that way and what were the alternatives?

RESULT

What was the outcome of your actions, what did you achieve and did you meet your objectives?

What did you learn and have you put this knowledge into practice?



FILL IN THIS GRID USING YOUR OWN EXAMPLES:

SITUATION	TASK	ACTION	RESULT
Treasurer of the Economics society.	Plan a ball for 300 people on a reduced budget.	Asked for student feedback. Contacted local employers.	Ball was organised within the agreed budget. Good student feedback.