

# Your Guide to... The S.T.A.R. Technique

Employers often ask skills or competency based questions either on applications forms or face to face at interview. They are designed to look for evidence of the key skills/behaviours (competencies) identified by the employer as essential for the job role. The STAR technique is an excellent way to set out your answers succinctly and ensure that you are ticking the right boxes.



## Top Tip – It's ok to use everyday examples

Students often think that they need examples where they have solved impressively complicated problems, but you really don't need to have brokered world peace or discovered the cure for cancer! Employers are interested in you being able to reflect on an experience and articulate to them the skills and behaviours you demonstrated.

**You will have lots of examples to choose from so be careful to pick ones that best showcase the competency.**

## What is S.T.A.R.?

**STAR stands for Situation Task Action Results and helps you structure your response:**

### Situation

- Briefly give the background to the example or situation you were in.

### Task

- Briefly explain the nature of the task / problem / activity you were involved in.

### Action

- Explain what you did to make a difference, highlighting the skills you used.

### Results

- Describe the outcome – hopefully a positive outcome, and what you learned from the experience.

## Some advice

### Where can you use STAR?

- STAR is useful for situations where you have to answer competency based questions i.e. on application forms or at interviews.
- Application forms will have a strict word count for each competency – STAR will help you make best use of the word count.
- STAR will help give focus to your answers to competency based interview questions.

### Make best use of the word count

- There are no marks to be gained for the Situation or Task elements, so be as brief as you can on these to leave you more words for the Action and Results – which is where the marks are!

### Highlight what you did and the skills you were using

- Competency based questions are focussed on giving employers evidence of a time when you have demonstrated those skills.
- Focus on what you did and directly highlight the skills you were using / developed and use language which.
- Focus on a specific example and use skills based language.

This is an illustration of someone using STAR to analyse an occasion when they coped with a difficult customer. The employer asked the following question - *'Tell us about a recent difficult situation or problem that you encountered in work. How did you resolve it and what did you learn from it?'*

<b>Situation</b>	Whilst acting as a relief supervisor at a well-known pizza restaurant a customer began to loudly complain about the service being slow.
<b>Task</b> (or Target you set out to achieve)	To satisfy the person without upsetting other customers who were also waiting for their food and who had arrived earlier.
<b>Actions</b> (you took to bring this about)	Listened carefully to the customer's point of view. Calmly and diplomatically explained that there was a lack of staff due to illness. Reassured the customer that the order was being dealt with and offered complimentary drinks whilst waiting.
<b>Result</b> (this could be the concrete outcome or the personal learning that took place)	The customer calmed down and appreciated the situation we faced. They realised that that it wasn't deliberate and decided to wait quietly, with the free drinks. Learnt the importance of listening to people and seeing their point of view.

Use the STAR technique template below to help you provide evidence of the competencies specified in the job you are applying for.

<b>Situation</b>	
<b>Task</b>	
<b>Actions</b>	
<b>Result</b>	

<b>Situation</b>	
<b>Task</b>	
<b>Actions</b>	
<b>Result</b>	

<b>Situation</b>	
<b>Task</b>	
<b>Actions</b>	
<b>Result</b>	

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BG-D 1/17