NURTURING EXPECTATIONS

CAREER BY DESIGN

Competency-Based *Interviewing Guide*

A Practical Guide & Answer Prep for structured interviews.

PART 1

The STAR Method

Competency-based interviews ask you to demonstrate past behavior as evidence of future performance. Every answer should follow the STAR structure below.

Component	Guiding Prompt
S *Situation*	Describe the context. Where were you? What was the challenge?
T *Task / Role*	What was your specific responsibility? What were you accountable for?
A *Action*	What exact steps did YOU take? Focus on your individual contribution.
R *Result*	What was the measurable outcome? What did you learn?

Tips for Strong STAR Answers

- Be specific: name the situation, the organization, the timeframe.
- Use 'I,' not 'we': interviewers want to know your individual contribution.
- Quantify results where possible: numbers, timelines, outcomes.
- Keep each answer to 2–3 minutes when spoken aloud.
- Prepare 4–6 strong stories that can flex across multiple competency areas.

PART 2

Competency Areas

01. Technical & Functional Expertise

Behavioral Indicators

- Understands and performs all job responsibilities to a high standard.
- Applies deep knowledge; recognized for expertise in their domain.
- Delivers high-quality, accurate results.

Sample Interview Questions

- Describe a work-related goal where you successfully achieved the desired outcome.
- Tell me about a recent project where you expanded your technical or functional expertise.
- Tell me about a time you delivered an end result you were not completely satisfied with.

02. Work Management & Organization

Behavioral Indicators

- Structures, plans, and prioritizes work effectively for short- and long-term goals.
- Anticipates obstacles and develops contingency plans.
- Is reliable and meets commitments and deadlines.

Sample Interview Questions

- Describe a situation where you experienced extreme pressure: tight timelines or understaffing.
- Describe a situation where available resources changed mid-course. How did you adapt?

03. Problem Solving & Analytical Skills

Behavioral Indicators

- Resolves complex issues independently with sound judgment.
- Challenges the traditional way of doing things; moves beyond the obvious.
- Addresses root causes and considers long-term implications.

Sample Interview Questions

- Tell me about an unusual or unexpected task or situation you had to solve.
- Describe the biggest challenge you have faced in the last 6–12 months.
- Describe a particularly difficult or complex project you have been involved in.

04. Communication Skills

Behavioral Indicators

- Demonstrates advanced oral, written, and active listening skills.
- Adjusts communication style to the situation and audience.
- Is able to influence others effectively and appropriately.

Sample Interview Questions

- Tell me about a time when you had to communicate a difficult message to a group.
- Describe a situation where you delivered an important presentation to a large group.

05. Interpersonal & Teaming

Behavioral Indicators

- Works positively and collaboratively with others; builds strong relationships.
- Identifies and manages conflict appropriately.
- Demonstrates flexibility, open-mindedness, and considers impact on others.

Sample Interview Questions

- Give me an example of how you made an effort to build relationships within a new team.
- Describe a situation where you had to gain buy-in from others on a change or idea.

06. Customer & Business Focus

Behavioral Indicators

- Demonstrates responsiveness, initiative, and an orientation toward service.
- Manages customer expectations and team needs proactively.
- Facilitates the implementation and acceptance of change within the workplace.

Sample Interview Questions

- Give me an example of a change you proposed to meet a customer or stakeholder need.
- Describe a situation when you were confronted with a very difficult stakeholder request.

07. People Management & Leadership

Behavioral Indicators

- Creates a positive and productive work environment.
- Motivates team members to work independently and deliver to the highest standards.
- Effectively coaches and develops staff; provides timely, actionable feedback.

Sample Interview Questions

- Tell me about a time when you coached someone to help them improve their skills.
- Describe a situation where a team member was not performing up to standards. What did you do?

08. Organizational Fit & Values

Behavioral Indicators

- Treats all others with respect and generates trust.
- Performs their role with the highest level of integrity.
- Aligns individual goals with organizational goals; protects the organization's interests.

Sample Interview Questions

- Describe a situation where a team member's style or approach was very different from yours.
- Tell me about a time you had a different opinion from the group and argued to convince them.

PART 3

Your STAR Story Worksheets

Prepare 4–6 strong stories before your interview. Each story should be drawn from real experience: professional, academic, or community-based. A well-built story can flex across multiple competency areas.

STORY 1 OF 6	*Give this story a memorable name, e.g., 'The Turnaround'*
Story Title	
Source	☐ Work ☐ Internship ☐ Academic ☐ Campus ☐ Volunteer ☐ Personal

S: Situation

T: Task / Role

A: Action

R: Result

Which competency areas does this story cover?

☐ Technical & Functional Expertise	☐ Interpersonal & Teaming
☐ Work Management & Organization	☐ Customer & Business Focus
☐ Problem Solving & Analytical Skills	☐ People Management & Leadership
☐ Communication Skills	☐ Organizational Fit & Values

STORY 2 OF 6	*Give this story a memorable name, e.g., 'The Turnaround'*
Story Title	
Source	☐ Work ☐ Internship ☐ Academic ☐ Campus ☐ Volunteer ☐ Personal

S: Situation

T: Task / Role

A: Action

R: Result

Which competency areas does this story cover?

☐ Technical & Functional Expertise	☐ Interpersonal & Teaming
☐ Work Management & Organization	☐ Customer & Business Focus
☐ Problem Solving & Analytical Skills	☐ People Management & Leadership
☐ Communication Skills	☐ Organizational Fit & Values

STORY 3 OF 6	*Give this story a memorable name, e.g., 'The Turnaround'*
Story Title	
Source	☐ Work ☐ Internship ☐ Academic ☐ Campus ☐ Volunteer ☐ Personal

S: Situation

T: Task / Role

A: Action

R: Result

Which competency areas does this story cover?

☐ Technical & Functional Expertise	☐ Interpersonal & Teaming
☐ Work Management & Organization	☐ Customer & Business Focus
☐ Problem Solving & Analytical Skills	☐ People Management & Leadership
☐ Communication Skills	☐ Organizational Fit & Values

STORY 4 OF 6	*Give this story a memorable name, e.g., 'The Turnaround'*
Story Title	
Source	☐ Work ☐ Internship ☐ Academic ☐ Campus ☐ Volunteer ☐ Personal

S: Situation

T: Task / Role

A: Action

R: Result

Which competency areas does this story cover?

☐ Technical & Functional Expertise	☐ Interpersonal & Teaming
☐ Work Management & Organization	☐ Customer & Business Focus
☐ Problem Solving & Analytical Skills	☐ People Management & Leadership
☐ Communication Skills	☐ Organizational Fit & Values

STORY 5 OF 6	*Give this story a memorable name, e.g., 'The Turnaround'*
Story Title	
Source	☐ Work ☐ Internship ☐ Academic ☐ Campus ☐ Volunteer ☐ Personal

S: Situation

T: Task / Role

A: Action

R: Result

Which competency areas does this story cover?

☐ Technical & Functional Expertise	☐ Interpersonal & Teaming
☐ Work Management & Organization	☐ Customer & Business Focus
☐ Problem Solving & Analytical Skills	☐ People Management & Leadership
☐ Communication Skills	☐ Organizational Fit & Values

STORY 6 OF 6	*Give this story a memorable name, e.g., 'The Turnaround'*
Story Title	
Source	☐ Work ☐ Internship ☐ Academic ☐ Campus ☐ Volunteer ☐ Personal

S: Situation

T: Task / Role

A: Action

R: Result

Which competency areas does this story cover?

☐ Technical & Functional Expertise	☐ Interpersonal & Teaming
☐ Work Management & Organization	☐ Customer & Business Focus
☐ Problem Solving & Analytical Skills	☐ People Management & Leadership
☐ Communication Skills	☐ Organizational Fit & Values

BEFORE YOU GO

Quick Reminders

Specificity wins.
Vague answers lose credibility. Name the situation, organization, and timeframe.

Own your contribution.
Say 'I,' not 'we.' Interviewers are evaluating you specifically.

End with results.
Never leave an answer without an outcome. Quantify wherever possible.

It's okay to pause.
Take a moment to think before answering. Composure is noted.

Prepare an imperfect story.
Interviewers value self-awareness. Have a story ready that didn't go perfectly.