

BEHAVIORAL & INTERPERSONAL INTERVIEW PREP (20 minute exercise)

Use the below form to help you develop your responses to the types of behavioral and interpersonal questions you may encounter during a job interview. Complete Sections A and B (10 minutes) and then prepare to practice your responses with your teammates in Section C (10 minutes).

1. **“Tell me about yourself!”**   
   We are best equipped to answer this question when we frame the response using our personal characteristics and professional accomplishments. Don’t just repeat your resume, give the interviewer a sense of who you are as a person! This will make you more memorable and help the recruiter understand how you might fit onto their team.

Identify three professional qualities that you embody, qualities that make you unique (e.g., curiosity, dependability, adaptability, ambition, teamwork, leadership, organization, [other examples here](https://www.businessnewsdaily.com/7950-personality-traits-hired.html)). Use these words to describe yourself below. There are no right or wrong answers, just think of three that feel like a good fit for you!



Now, find a way to weave those qualities into the story you tell when you reiterate your resume. For example, if you’re a very organized person, note how that personality trait helped you succeed in a challenging class. If you are a team player, mention that you’re interested in jobs that give you a lot of opportunity for collaboration. If you are a curious person, say that your openness led you to take an unusual class and helped you identify a new career path.

Remember, recruiters use this question to help them understand what kind of person you are, not just what you have done. Your personality traits can also help recruiters connect the dots between your resume items (e.g., how your participation in chess club is related to your project management experience). Help them see the person behind your resume!

Keep in mind that your response to the “Tell me about yourself” question will vary - not all of your personal qualities are relevant to each job interview. For example, if you excel at creative problem solving but are applying for a job coding data, you might want to highlight your natural attention to detail instead. Always end your answer with an explanation of how your story and skills connect back to the position being discussed.

Pretend that you are interviewing for an entry-level job in your preferred field (e.g., public health, data science, journalism). Write an outline of your personal story below in a way that highlights at least two positive and relevant personality traits. Keep your answer to 2-3 minutes in length (don’t let the interviewer zone out before you finish!).



1. **Other Interpersonal Questions & Your Story Library**

Next, we want to build a Story Library. These are personal anecdotes that you can use to illustrate your professional abilities. A single anecdote can be used to answer several different behavioral interview questions related to the same theme (conflict, time management, negotiation, leadership, creativity, etc.). It’s also easier to remember each anecdote in your Story Library when you think about them thematically.

Review the clusters of behavioral interview questions below. To the best of your ability, think of a professional or academic experience which you might use to effectively answer one of the questions in each cluster. This is the basis of your Story Library.

* Tell me about a time you encountered conflict and how you handled it. / How do you handle disagreements with your coworkers? / Tell me about a time you had to persuade a teammate to handle a project your way.  
  *(With these questions, the interviewer wants to learn how you handle communication, diplomacy, and conflict - think of a story that positively highlights your skills in these areas.)*

Notes:

* Give me an example of a time when you showed initiative at work. / Tell me about a time you set a goal and were able to accomplish it. / What do you consider a significant professional achievement?

*(With these questions, the interviewer wants to observe your confidence, commitment, and resilience - think of a story that positively highlights your skills in these areas.)*

Notes:

* Give me an example of a time when you had to organize or complete a complex project. / Tell me about a time when you had too many things to do and had to prioritize your tasks. / What organizational tools do you use?

*(With these questions, the interviewer wants to know if you are organized, diligent, and good at problem solving - think of a story that highlights your skills in these areas.)*

Notes:

You should now have a rough set of 3 stories for your Story Library. For this exercise, pick the story you like best of these 3. Write an outline for how you would tell that story to someone else using the [STAR Method](https://www.vawizard.org/wiz-pdf/STAR_Method_Interviews.pdf). Keep it to about 2 minutes long!

* **Situation**: Describe the situation and give a bit of background

(*I was having a hard time understanding a core concept in my Data Analytics 101 course. The lectures were confusing and the readings didn’t seem to help.)*

* **Task**: Describe the task you needed to perform or obstacle you needed to overcome  
  (*I wanted to get an A in the class because I was applying for a summer internship with the professor. I needed to improve my grade.)*

* **Action**: Describe the actions you needed to take or the skills you used  
  (*I was trying to figure out how to improve my grade and wanted to lean into my strengths. Because I’m a people person, I knew I would learn best if I worked on this problem with other people. I started a study group with other students struggling in the class.)*

* **Result**: Describe the outcomes of your actions

(*I started to understand the class content and my grades improved. By the end of the semester, I had a B+ and I also grew my leadership skills. I made several friends in my cohort and found a good internship opportunity through my network. Although the experience wasn’t what I expected or anticipated, I gained confidence in myself as a leader and a student.)*

1. **Practice!**

The only way to get better at answering interview questions is with practice! Ask a teammate about their responses to either sections A or B above. Remember to share constructive feedback only! This is a supportive learning environment.

Going forward, keep practicing, but don’t memorize! You want your answers to sound natural and conversational.

**Other Resources**

* [Personality Traits That Will Get You Hired](https://www.businessnewsdaily.com/7950-personality-traits-hired.html)
* [Desired Candidate Attributes](https://career.missouri.edu/interviews/desired-attributes/)
* [The Most Impressive Answers to "Tell Me About Yourself" in an Interview](https://www.careercontessa.com/advice/tell-me-about-yourself/)
* [How to Prepare to Answer and Ask Behavioral Interview Questions](https://www.careercontessa.com/advice/behavior-based-interview-questions/)
* [The STAR Method of Behavioral Interviewing](https://www.vawizard.org/wiz-pdf/STAR_Method_Interviews.pdf)
* [30 Technical Interview Questions and Tips for Answering](https://www.coursera.org/articles/technical-interview-questions)
* [Top 20 Technical Interview Questions with Example Answers](https://builtin.com/software-engineering-perspectives/technical-interview-questions)
* [Power Posing Tips](https://www.headspace.com/articles/how-to-power-pose-like-a-pro)