

# Interview Questions

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# Motivational questions

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Designed to check how serious you are about applying for a particular job or course

- Why do you want to do this job?
- What do you know about our organisation? Why would you find us interesting to work for?
- Which aspects of the job interest you most?
- What do you think will be the main challenges of this job? Why does that appeal to you?
- What steps have you taken to find out more about the job role?
- Which aspects of your previous work experience have you enjoyed and why?
- Tell us about a current news story that has caught your attention and why it interests you. How might it relate to our organisation?

# Competency Based Questions

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The interviewer is looking for evidence that you have the skills that they need and so may ask questions such as:

- Give an example of when you worked in a team to complete a task. What was your role and what did you contribute?
- Tell us about a situation where you've had to overcome a difficult problem.
- Describe an occasion when you have had to manage your time to achieve a deadline. What happened and how did you meet the deadline?
- Can you give an example of when you have done work that required a high degree of accuracy? How do you ensure that your work is accurate?
- Outline a situation where you've had to communicate complex information in an easy-to-understand way.
- Tell us about a time when you have had to deal with someone who was angry or upset. How did you deal with it?

# Strength-based Questions

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Focus on what you enjoy doing and what you are particularly good at rather than what you can do, so be prepared to be open and honest.

Consider your achievements not just in your studies and at work but also in activities such as sports, interest groups or volunteering. Think about what aspects you enjoy and why you are good at them.

Types of questions that are looking for strengths include:

- How do you know if you've had a good day?
- Describe something that you learnt recently.
- What activities come naturally to you?
- Would you prefer to be a big fish in a small pond or a small fish in a big pond?
- Describe your favourite interest outside of your work or studies.
- What have you done that you are most proud of? Why was it significant?
- What are your greatest strengths? When do you use them?

# Unexpected and weird questions

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Sometimes interviewers ask questions that are so unusual you'd never predict they'd come up at interview.

This is often done to test how quickly you can think on your feet and to see how well you respond when put under a bit of pressure. Examples include:

- If I were an alien, just landed on earth, what do you think are the three key issues I would need to know?
- In a news story about your life, what would the headline be?
- If you won £20 million on the Lotto, what would you spend the money on?
- If you were a piece of fruit, what sort of fruit would you be?
- If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be?
- How do I rate as an interviewer?

The trick when answering these questions is firstly, don't panic, and secondly, to think about how you can use the opportunity to demonstrate a positive personal characteristic or skill that you know the recruiter is looking for.

# Use STAR

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## Situation

- Set the scene, don't leap into the middle of the story
- Can be a chance to point out you have worked in the area

## Task

- What you were asked or needed to do, it can also help to explain why you were asked

## Actions

- What you did, be careful here to be clear about what you personally did, rather than the team
- Try to include specific details as these make it more interesting and real

## Result

- Probably the most important part, and easy to skip over
- Try wherever possible to include number (but you need to learn and remember them accurately)

Example: Describe a situation where you have had to manage your time to achieve your goals. How did you achieve this?

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**Answer**

In my first year, I joined the University Football club and was selected for the First Team. We decided that in order to be fully competitive we would need to train twice a day and every weekend. I realised that in order to achieve this goal and not adversely affect my studies I would need to be disciplined and focused. At the beginning of each semester, I scheduled every training session, match, lecture, seminar and essay in my diary. When the morning sessions ended at 9am, I went to lectures or the library. The fact that I had to finish at 5pm in order to return to training meant that I was far more focused. If we were away at weekends I learnt not to waste any time and took my work with me and read whenever I could.

I was very successful in adapting to this schedule. I found that under pressure I studied more effectively, and my work was of a higher quality. In addition I learnt the value of time management and developed the discipline to stick to a routine. I discovered that it was possible to succeed at both my studies and my sport. I sometimes had to say no to other social activities in order to achieve my primary goals but I felt that this was worth doing. In my second year we won the Inter-University First Team Trophy at a national competition and I achieved over 65% in my course work.

# STAR analysis

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Situation	Task	Action	Result
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•"In my first year, I joined the University Football club and was selected for the First Team. We decided that in order to be fully competitive we would need to train twice a day and every weekend."</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•"I realised that in order to achieve this goal and not adversely affect my studies I would need to be disciplined and focused."</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•At the beginning of each semester, I scheduled every training session, match, lecture, seminar and essay in my diary. When the morning sessions ended at 9am, I went to lectures or the library. The fact that I had to finish at 5pm in order to return to training meant that I was far more focused. If we were away at weekends I learnt not to waste any time and took my work with me and read whenever I could."</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•"I was very successful in adapting to this schedule. I found that under pressure I studied more effectively, and my work was of a higher quality. In addition I learnt the value of time management and developed the discipline to stick to a routine. I discovered that it was possible to succeed at both my studies and my sport. I sometimes had to say no to other social activities in order to achieve my primary goals but I felt that this was worth doing. In my second year we won the Inter-University First Team Trophy at a national competition and I achieved over 65% in my course work."</li></ul>

The interviewee has focused on time management and explained how this helped them achieve their goal.

Using words such as 'disciplined', 'focused' and 'scheduled' helps to make this question sound positive and active. They have made it clear that they understand what is meant by time management.

The result demonstrates that their time management skills produced a successful outcome



Example: Give an example, from outside of your studies, of when you have worked in a team. What was your role and what did you contribute to the team's performance?

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As a committee member of the Drama Society I recently worked with the other members to organise a community event. Our aim was to run some workshops for local primary school children. The group met initially to plan and allocate tasks. My role was to generate the funds for the event. I established a plan for this task with a time-line of what I had to do and by when. I contacted the local Chamber of Commerce who put me in touch with local companies and I managed to generate £200 sponsorship money which covered our costs and enabled us to have money to be used for prizes. Our group met weekly to discuss progress and stayed in touch in the interim via Facebook. This ensured that if one team member was having problems completing their tasks on time then others could provide additional support.

The event was a great success with very positive feedback from the pupils and teachers. The team members said that they appreciated me taking on the task of raising funds, as this was something that no one else wanted to do, and that the prizes had significantly contributed to the success of the event.

# STAR analysis

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•"As a committee member of the Drama Society I recently worked with the other members to organise a community event. Our aim was to run some workshops for local primary school children."</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•"The group met initially to plan and allocate tasks. My role was to generate the funds for the event."</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•"I established a plan for this task with a time-line of what I had to do and by when. I contacted the local Chamber of Commerce who put me in touch with local companies and I managed to generate £200 sponsorship money which covered our costs and enabled us to have money to be used for prizes. Our group met weekly to discuss progress and stayed in touch in the interim via Facebook. This ensured that if one team member was having problems completing their tasks on time then others could provide additional support."</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•"The event was a great success with very positive feedback from the pupils and teachers. The team members said that they appreciated me taking on the task of raising funds, as this was something that no one else wanted to do, and that the prizes had significantly contributed to the success of the event."</li> </ul>

The interviewee has successfully answered the question that was set out, focusing on the teamworking elements of the project.

They have outlined how the team worked as a whole, but they have also explained their individual role and how they contributed to the team.

They have also given clear details of the outcome, which demonstrates the importance of their teamworking skills in leading to a successful result.

Example: Describe a challenging project or activity which you have planned and taken through to a conclusion. What was your objective, what did you do and what was the outcome? Include any changes you made to your initial plan.

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As a member of my College Theatre Society I helped organise a visit to the West Yorkshire Playhouse for twenty five people to see Hamlet.

My role was to arrange travel and accommodation for anyone wishing to take part. I promoted the event by using posters across the campus and emailing Society members, emphasising the main benefits of the visit. I also set a deadline for payment to create an efficient cash-flow. Based on this I arranged a mini-bus and negotiated a reduced rate booking at the Leeds Youth Hostel. As an additional ten students expressed an interest after the deadline, I decided to change my plans. To cope with this, I ordered a larger bus and secured extra accommodation with the Hostel. The visit was a huge success receiving positive feedback and staying within our budget, while generating £25 revenue for the Society from a raffle held on the trip.

# STAR Analysis

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>"As a member of my College Theatre Society I helped organise a visit to the West Yorkshire Playhouse for twenty five people to see Hamlet."</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>"My role was to arrange travel and accommodation for anyone wishing to take part."</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>"I promoted the event by using posters across the campus and emailing society members, emphasising the main benefits of the visit. I also set a deadline for payment to create an efficient cash-flow. Based on this I arranged a mini-bus and negotiated a reduced rate booking at the Leeds Youth Hostel. As an additional ten students expressed an interest after the deadline, I decided to change my plans. To cope with this, I ordered a larger bus and secured extra accommodation with the Hostel."</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>"The visit was a huge success receiving positive feedback and staying within our budget, while generating £25 revenue for the Society from a raffle held on the trip."</li></ul>

The answer has used positive action words such as 'promoted', 'negotiated' and 'arranged' which demonstrates the interviewee played an active role, giving the answer much more impact.

They have also provided specific information such as figures for revenue generated, and the number of members involved.