

How to Prepare for a Behavioral Interview?

First, you'll want to put yourself in the shoes of the employer and imagine what the ideal candidate for the position would answer from the interviewer's perspective. Then, thoroughly review the job description and research the company and its culture. Look for clues about skills necessary for the job and valued by the organization. Next, think about the sorts of questions an interviewer might ask to determine those skills.

Here are a few examples of skill sets and some behaviorally focused interview questions aimed at surfacing them:

Decision Making and Problem Solving

- Describe a situation in which you used good judgment and logic to solve a problem.
- Give me an example of a time when you had to be quick in coming to a decision.

Leadership

- Have you ever had trouble getting others to agree with your ideas? How did you deal with the situation, and were you successful?
- Describe the most challenging group from which you've had to gain cooperation.

Motivation

- Tell me about a time when you went above and beyond the call of duty.
- Give me an example of a situation in which you positively influenced the actions of others.

Communication

- Describe a situation in which you were able to communicate with another individual who did not personally like you (or vice versa).
- Describe a time you had to use written communication to convey an important argument or idea.

Interpersonal Skills

- Give me examples of what you've done in the past to nurture teamwork.
- Give an example of an unpopular decision you've made, what the result was and how you managed it.

Planning and Organization

- When scheduling your time, what method do you use to decide which items are priorities?
- Describe how you've handled a sudden interruption to your schedule.

Once you've determined which behavioral-based questions you might be asked during an interview, look back on your past experiences and develop stories to answer those questions. Your stories should be detailed yet succinct, and they should always include the following three elements:

1. **A description of a specific, real-life situation or challenge you encountered.**
2. **A description of the specific tasks and actions you took to overcome that challenge.**
3. **A summary of the results of those actions. (Try to quantify these results whenever possible.)**

Here is an example answer to a behavioral interview question that incorporates each of these elements:

Question: *Give an example of a goal you reached, and tell me how you achieved it.*

Answer: *Due to cuts in funding to our continuing education program, we faced the daunting task of drastically reducing our promotional budget without sacrificing our media presence in the community. As program director, I researched alternatives to the effective, yet costly, brochure that was distributed biannually to 60,000 residents of our service region. I was able to negotiate with two local newspapers to produce and distribute a new course brochure that increased distribution by 33 percent, to 80,000 residents, and decreased costs by 50 percent.*



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