

# Star Technique

## What is the STAR Technique?

The STAR Technique stands for **S**ituation, **T**ask, **A**ction and **R**esult, and is a useful structure for answering application form and interview questions in order to highlight examples of your experience. It helps you to articulate your answers in a clear and logical way – particularly in response to competency-based questions, which relate to specific behaviours or capabilities commonly required by recruiters.

## The STAR Technique broken down

The STAR Technique allows you to break down your example, to make your answer flow:

* **S**ituation – set the scene for example, when it was, where you were, whether you were working individually or as a team (include the size of the team/who you reported to) and your responsibilities.
* **T**ask – describe the task you completed, explaining the purpose of it and the timescales.
* **A**ction – talk through what **you** did to complete the task (rather than saying 'we' did). Detail how you demonstrated the competency, e.g. how you communicated with others; how you overcame any challenges; how you used processes, systems, and IT. This is the longest part of your answer.
* **R**esult – outline the outcome. Was it successful; what impact did it have; what feedback did you get?

## When can the STAR Technique be used?

It can commonly be used in application forms and video, online, and in person interviews. A recruiter will ask the candidate for an example of their experience, often related to a required competency. Typical questions may include:

**Communication** – give an example of a time when you experienced a difference of opinion in a team. How did you persuade others to understand your point of view?

**Teamwork** – describe a time when you contributed to a team's success.

**Leadership** – tell me about a time you led a team.

**Client focus** - describe a time when you successfully resolved a customer issue.

**Decision-making** – give an example of when you had to make an important decision.

**Problem solving** – tell me about a time where you found a solution to a complex problem.

Application form answers often have a set word limit, which is important to keep to, so keep your answers appropriately concise, while providing all the necessary detail required.

You can have your application forms checked and arrange mock interviews at the Careers Centre.

## Choosing what to talk about

Consider examples from your experiences that allow you to answer the question and describe your skills. These could be from part-time or full-time work, university coursework and projects, gap year experiences, voluntary work, personal experience, caring responsibilities, competitions, clubs and societies or RUSU responsibility/memberships, as well as mentoring, presenting at open days, volunteering or anything that allows you to provide enough detail to make a good impression.

## Examples

### **Problem Solving: describe a time when you have solved a problem.**

* **S** – “A good example of problem solving is when I worked in customer services.”
* **T** – “One of my tasks was to deal with customer problems, a specific example was helping a customer who had lost their receipt.”
* **A** – “I listened very carefully to the customer, summarised their problem and repeated it back to them to ensure I’ve not misunderstood, I then considered the various ways that the problem could be solved. The first solution I considered was *x*, but I discounted that because…”
* **R** – “By considering all the various ways I could solve the problem I was able to ensure that I chose the right one. On this occasion the customer returned to say thank you, and my manager complimented me for combining customer service with a low-cost solution.”

### **Leadership: describe a time you led a team successfully.**

* **S** – “When at university I was president of the Student Union...”
* **T** – “…one of my tasks was to lead a team of ten organising the Winter Ball.”
* **A** – “As team leader, I ensured that I clearly briefed them about their responsibilities, which I’d allocated taking into account their individual strengths and motivations. I then co-ordinated their activities, which I did via regular meetings, in addition to email communications. I was careful to keep everyone up to date with how the whole project was going, recognise and acknowledge good work, and also to address issues fairly and quickly.”
* **R** – “The event was organised successfully, and ticket sales exceeded the target set. But even more importantly the whole team told me that they’d really enjoyed the process and hoped that we could work together again.”