

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, 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:

- **Situation** – set the scene of whether you were working individually or as a team (include the size of the team/ who you reported to) and your responsibilities.
- **Task** – describe the task you completed explaining the purpose of it and the timescales.
- **Action** – talk through what **you** did to complete the task (rather than saying we did). Detail how you communicated with others, how you overcame any challenges and used processes, systems and IT.
- **Result** – outline the outcome and why it was successful, highlighting what you contributed.
- **Reflection** – an additional R can be added to show what you learned from the experience and what you might do differently in the future. Turn any negative experience into learning.

When is the STAR Technique used?

It is commonly used by recruiters during application forms and video, Skype and in person interviews. A recruiter will ask the candidate for examples of their experience, often related to a required competency; typical questions may include:

- **Commercial awareness** – what are the challenges currently facing our industry?
- **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 a teams success. What did you do?
- **Leadership** – tell me about a time you lead a team project. How did you keep the team motivated?
- **Client focus** - describe a time when you successfully resolved a customer issue. What was the outcome?
- **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.
- **Career motivation** – describe why you want to work for our organisation.

Questions may have more than one part, it is important to answer all parts. Application form answers often have a set word limit, which is important to keep to, so keeping your answers concise, while providing all the necessary detail required.

During an interview, you will need to talk through your relevant skills and experience using the STAR technique. You can have your application forms checked and arrange mock interviews at the Careers Centre.

Structuring your answers

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 including any; promotions, supervisory experience, positive feedback and recognition, training you gave to new staff, university work and projects (show how you achieved certain grades or outcomes), gap year experiences, voluntary work, personal experience, Duke of Edinburgh Award, competitions, awards, accolades or scholarships you have been awarded (show what you did to achieve it), clubs and societies or RUSU responsibility or memberships, mentoring, presenting at open days, volunteering or anywhere/ thing that allows you to provide enough detail to make a good impression.

A good example can also showcase other strengths. Always keep your answers positive.

Examples:

- **Leadership: describe a time you lead 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 first had to recruit the team members and then had to brief them as to their responsibilities. I then had to co-ordinate them in terms of their tasks and strengths, and finally I had to motivate them to achieve high standards. I organised regular meetings, in addition to our email communications, as well as managing the budget using Excel, which was regularly reported to the Student Union.”

R – “Strong communication, teamwork and social media promotion resulted in the event being organised successfully and ticket sales exceeded the target set. Although I put a lot of effort into ensuring I recruited the right staff, they did ask me a lot of questions which meant I had less time for my other tasks. In hindsight I would put some time aside for weekly team meetings.”

- **Problem Solving:**

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...”

R – “By staying calm and listening to the customer, they always felt that I was doing the best for them. On one occasion a customer returned to say thank you for helping to solve their problem.”