

# STAR TECHNIQUE TEMPLATE

FOR PUBLIC SERVANTS

## What is it and how can you use it?

It can be tricky to know whether you've convincingly demonstrated a certain behaviour or competency when applying for a new role, especially when you're on the spot in an interview.

The STAR technique (Situation, Task, Action, Result) is a great way to showcase your ability and ensure the information you're providing is detailed and meaningful. The technique can be used in both written applications and interviews. The method is particularly useful when it comes to interviews and is recommended by many civil services, including the UK and Canada.

Structuring your answers in this way can help you feel confident that you've shown how you are right for the job and fully answered your interviewer's question.

S

SITUATION

T

TASK

A

ACTION

R

RESULT

Below you can see a breakdown of the STAR technique:

### SITUATION (5-10%)

- Set up your example and provide context for the actions you're going to talk about.
- You might include your job role, the circumstances, the resources available, the context and your responsibilities.
- Keep it short!

### TASK (10-15%)

- Describe the task you needed to do to meet the objectives.

### ACTION (50-60%)

- Describe what you actually did in response to the situation and task. The 'I' statements are very important to show your individual competence, knowledge, and abilities.
- This is the most important part, so most of your words should be used here.

### RESULT (20-30%)

- Explain what the outcome of your actions was and why it was successful. If you weren't as successful as you could have been, explain the lessons you learned and what you would do next time.

### Example:

Here you can see an example of the STAR technique being used in an interview question.

**Q:** Tell me about a time when you have managed a difficult stakeholder. How did you work with them?

**A:**

#### SITUATION

During my previous role I was managing a review conducted by the Cabinet Office of another department, with the goal of improving commercial capability in that department. Senior leadership in the department were wary of being told what to do via a review led by a more junior person from another department.

## TASK

My job was to carry out a series of interviews and gather data from the department, then analyse and synthesise it, and present recommendations for change back to the department. Ultimate success was the department implementing those recommendations.

## ACTION

First, I tried to gain internal buy-in from senior management in the department. In my introductions to them, I positioned the review as an opportunity for them to gain more insight into their own department. I asked them whether they experienced any frustrations with current commercial processes and how the review could help them.

I suggested they assign someone within the department to partner with the review team and act as liaison. I fed back interim findings to the departmental liaison, giving them an opportunity to provide further insight. I linked what I shared to the specific pain points they had first highlighted.

I also identified those inside the department who were more aligned with the review's agenda, and made allies of them - asking them to have input to internal briefings to senior management.

When I did present my findings I first laid out all the evidence that I had been provided with, and gave seniors an opportunity to ask questions and interrogate the data themselves. I was careful not to seem like they were being blamed: I presented it as something that we could together act on to improve.

## RESULT

When I eventually presented my recommendations, several key people inside the department were already familiar with what I had found and expressed support for the proposed changes.

Seniors I presented to had a way to 'save face'. They could acknowledge that things needed to be improved, and that they could be a part of that improvement, without looking like they were responsible for the challenges identified.


My recommendations were adopted by senior management.



**Tip:** Most governments will have a hiring framework; make sure you familiarise yourself with this before starting any application. It is likely that your application and interview answers will be compared against this predetermined criteria and marked accordingly, so it's essential you know what these criteria are.

Use this template to help you practise interview questions or plan your written application.

Below you can see a table with some commonly asked interview questions. Next time you're preparing for an interview, use this table to help you construct your answers. For each question fill out the situation, task, action and result in bullet form. Once you've got all the essential information you can start practising your responses.

 **Tip:** You can also use this table to help you plan your written application. Next time you're applying for a role in government, go through the job description and identify the core competencies you're being asked to demonstrate and add them to this table. For each competency think of a time you were able to demonstrate it and fill out the table in the same way.

Question/Competency	SITUATION	TASK	ACTION	RESULT
Describe a time when you delivered a task at pace.	A coworker was off sick leaving an important project unfinished and without a manager	I was instructed to take on the project by my supervisor with no leniency on the deadline	I requested a reduction on my other weekly goals and outputs. I also delegated small tasks to other team members	I delivered the project on time and was given further responsibility on future projects
Tell me about a time when you collaborated as part of a team to complete a challenging task.				
Describe a time when you responded to change within an organisation.				
Tell me about a time you had to make a difficult decision.				
Describe a time when you made a mistake and how you fixed this.				

## Useful sentence starters:

Here are some useful sentence starters which will help signal to assessors your use of the STAR technique.

### SITUATION

In my last role as...  
During a project on...  
Whilst working on....

### TASK

My supervisor asked me to...  
My task was...  
I was responsible for...  
It was my role to...

### ACTION

I provided...  
I organised...  
I developed...  
I conducted...  
I mediated...

### RESULT

By doing [X] I was able to...  
As a result...  
This allowed my team/department to...  
I achieved...  
I advanced...  
I learnt...