

THE S.T.A.R. TECHNIQUE FOR ANSWERING INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The S.T.A.R. technique is regarded as an objective, professional way to evaluate whether the skills, qualities and experiences candidates have, are a fit for the position on offer. It is therefore a common interviewing technique used by many Australian employers.

Preparing your students to respond to interview questions following the S.T.A.R. structure will ensure their answers showcase their abilities in the context of the job they are applying for – placing them ahead of the competition.

What is the S.T.A.R. interview technique? The S.T.A.R. technique is a structured method of responding to interview questions using these three steps:

1. Describing a Situation and/or Task
2. Describing the Action taken
3. Describing Results achieved

Situation or Task	Describe the situation that you were in and/ or the task/s that you needed to accomplish. You must describe a specific event or situation. Be sure to give enough details to ensure understanding. The situation can be taken from a previous job, from a volunteer experience, or any other event that addresses the question type.
Action you took	Describe the action you took. Be sure to keep the focus on you. Even if you are discussing a group project or effort, describe what you did – not the efforts of the team.
Results you achieved	Describe the positive outcome you achieved. What happened? How did the event end? What did you accomplish? What did you learn?

Sample questions and answers using the S.T.A.R. technique

Question:

Describe a time when you had to work in a team

Answer following the S.T.A.R. technique:

Situation/Task: (Describe the situation you were involved in or the task you had to achieve) When I worked in the hardware store we were often understaffed when people were on leave etc. One week when we had three people away, the remaining team members were responsible for packing away two palettes of paint before midday, while still performing customer service and other duties.

Action: (Describe specifically what you had to do). I nominated to clean the floor first thing, before things got busy, and started unpacking the palettes straight away after that. I managed to get nearly all of the palettes unloaded before the 10:00 am crowds, so I was able to help on the registers knowing we had plenty of time to finish with the palettes. The last few paint tins were unpacked by 11:00 am – well before people started going for their lunch breaks.

Result: (Share the positive impact and outcome of your actions). I managed to get the floor cleaned and to pack away most of the paint tins, leaving the rest of the team to deal with walk-in customers. The manager was really happy because everything got done, despite us being several team members down.

Question:

**Describe a time when you've had to overcome
a challenge**

Answer following the S.T.A.R.

technique:

Situation/Task: I was asked by a customer for a type of paint sample I couldn't find on the shelves.

Action: I made sure that I was clear about what the customer wanted by asking her more questions. Once I realised that she couldn't help me any further I looked on our computer for more information and was able to discover the samples were of a type we'd never stocked before but that we had some on a trial order that was due to arrive the next day. I was able to inform the customer of this, and was also able to add her order to our requisition.

Result: The customer was pleased she could receive her paint the next day and the manager was glad to get the extra order for the new stock.