

Practice Interview Questions

Prepare for your practice interview by choosing a specific position of interest to you. Then think through answers to the questions below, targeting your answers to the position you seek. If you haven't written a benefit statement to help you answer the first question, see the CEL's online interview guide. Come to your practice interview dressed in interview attire with a portfolio. Bring a copy of your resume. Make sure you have written out some questions to ask the interviewer.



- Tell me about yourself.
- What interests you about this position and how does it fit into your short and long-term career goals?
- Why do you want to work for this company/organization?
- What are three strengths that you bring to this position? What do you consider one of your weaknesses?
- Tell me about a time when you took initiative beyond what was expected, why you chose that particular involvement and expended extra effort, and the outcome of your efforts.
- Describe a situation where you had to present complex information to a customer or a peer. How did you ensure that the other person understood what you were trying to communicate?
- Tell me about a time when you had to make an unpopular decision, the process you went through to reach that decision and how you dealt with the situation.
- Tell me about an instance when you played a leadership role on a team project, how you managed that project and the other team members. Describe how you dealt with team members who weren't contributing to the team's efforts.
- Tell me about a time when you were faced with multiple, conflicting priorities. How did you determine what was important? How did you go about organizing your work?
- Describe an instance when you encountered an obstacle you could not overcome and how you dealt with that situation.
- Why should I hire you over other applicants?
- What questions do you have for me?
- Is there anything else you'd like to say as we conclude today?

S.T.A.R. – Your Way to Successful Interviewing



An Interview Technique

In an interview, you are asked to share details of your experiences on the premise that **past behavior (performance) predicts future behavior (performance)**. Past examples may come from work experience, internships, academic experiences, extra-curricular activities or volunteer work.

The **S.T.A.R.** technique allows you to talk specifically about the skills you possess. This method provides concrete answers to any type of interview question but is essential for success with behavioral interviewing.

S.T.A.R. = Situation/Task ... Action ... Result

Situation/Task	description of a specific situation, project or task related to skill sought
Action	initiative shown in dealing with the situation or completing the project/task; requires description of specific steps taken
Result	outcome resulting from the action taken

EXAMPLE:

Tell me about a time when you gave exceptional customer service.

As a student worker in St. Olaf's admissions office, I am back-up for the phones. Last week I answered a call from Mrs. J who had some questions that were pretty specific. When I suggested that she call the academic departments involved, Mrs. J sounded very annoyed and said that her phone call had been transferred several times already. So I offered to gather the info for her and call her back later that afternoon. First, I talked with my supervisor and explained the situation and what I was going to do. Then I made a couple of calls to get the info I needed. I had a class that afternoon and so had to leave a message with one department, but I returned after my class, even though it wasn't a regularly scheduled work time for me, to follow through. When I returned the phone call to Mrs. J, she was very appreciative and said that the St. Olaf admissions office had been more responsive than had other colleges she called. She then made an appointment for her son to have a campus visit next month.

Think of your answer as "**story-telling.**" Tell the interviewer a story with a beginning (the situation, problem or project), a middle, (the action you took), and an end (the result of your action) that illustrates how you used a particular skill.

To be effective your answer must contain all of the S.T.A.R. components.