

COMPETENCY BASED INTERVIEWS

In an interview situation, it is important that you can back up the claims you make in your CV.

Anyone can say, "I have strong leadership skills," or, "I can keep my head in a crisis," but can you substantiate these statements with real examples from past experience?

Competency-based interview questions ask you about your behaviour and actions in specific circumstances. The interviewer will look for a specific example of a problem you addressed, a challenge you faced or a decision you made, as well as an explanation of why you took a particular course of action and insight into the consequences.

Examples of common competency-based interview questions

- Describe a time when you used your initiative to resolve a difficult problem.
- Tell me about a time when you demonstrated good leadership skills.
- Tell me about a time when you've faced a crisis and how you responded.
- Describe a time when you had to win over someone who was reluctant or confrontational.

How to answer competency-based interview questions

Employers are not looking for general answers about your behaviour. They are seeking detailed and specific information about an event or experience and how you acted in the circumstances.

Whichever way you answer the questions, it's essential to focus on you and your personal role, as the interviewer will be looking for evidence of how your skills were used to achieve your objectives.

Using "STAR"

The best way to tackle these questions is to base your answer on a genuine experience using the "STAR" technique.

Situation – outline the situation you were in

Task – describe what you needed to do as a result of the situation

Action – explain what you did, how you did it and why

Results – describe the successful outcome of your actions using specific examples

Preparing for the Interview

Remember that although these questions may be about specific situations and actions, their actual purpose is for you to demonstrate your skills, traits and methods of working to the interviewer.

Competency-based questions are an opportunity to really sell yourself and emphasise your unique abilities.

Think about the requirements of the specific job you are interviewing for and the key competencies that a successful candidate would be expected to demonstrate (refer to the job description or person specification if you have access to it). Then, try to come up with some real examples from your past experiences through college/career or volunteering work where you have excelled in those areas and practice explaining the situations in a way which is clear, thorough, and emphasises your abilities.