

MDXworks presents:

The successful guide to answering interview questions:

Predicting what questions you'll be asked

The questions that you're likely to be asked, will depend on the type of job and sector you want to work in, so we can't cover every possible question here! To help you predict questions, we suggest that you...

- **Carry out a simple internet search to identify likely questions**, such as searching for 'Interview questions for law firms' or 'Lab Assistant interview questions and answers'.
- **Think about questions you were asked at previous interviews**. Next time, make a note!
- **Use your networking skills**. Try to connect with people that already work in that company or role, talk to them about the selection process and what questions they were asked.



Common questions

Some common interview questions include:

- [Tell me about yourself \(Practice your 'Elevator Pitch' to help answer this question\)](#)
- [What do you know about us? / What do you know about this job?](#)
- [What are the skills you think are needed for this job?](#)
- [What are your strengths / weaknesses?](#)
- [What motivates you?](#)
- [Why do you want this job?](#)
- [Do you have any questions for us?](#)

Competency questions

A 'competency' interview asks you to give examples of your past actions, such as...

- 'Tell me about a time your communication skills made a difference to a situation'
- 'Tell me about a time you worked as part of a team to achieve something, what did you contribute?'
- 'Tell me about a time you had to deal with a difficult person, how did you handle it?'
- 'Tell me about a time you overcame a problem / obstacle.'

Competency questions ask for examples of what you've done in the past, as this gives an indication of how you might perform in the future.

You don't want to be too brief with your answer, or to waffle, miss the point, go round in circles or spend the whole time talking about how great your manager is! You can avoid all these issues by giving a well-structured answer, and there's a straightforward technique to help: 'STAR technique'.

STAR Technique

STAR stands for...

- **Situation**. Give your answer some context by outlining the company you worked for and your role.
- **Task**. Give a bit more context by explaining the specific project or activity you were involved in.
- **Action**. Explain what actions you took. This should take up most of your answer.
- **Result**. Finish with a positive outcome resulting from the actions you took.

Tips for answering competency questions

- Give examples of actions that went beyond just doing your day-to-day job.
- When talking about your skills and qualities, ensure they are relevant to the job you are applying for. Read the job description. If they want a candidate with a good eye for detail who can work under pressure, then why tell them you're a creative person who loves learning new things?
- Your interviewers may not ask the questions in exactly the same way as the questions you've prepared for. Don't let this put you off. It seems obvious, but really think about what they're asking before you start to answer. Your prepared answers may fit a range of different questions.

- Talk about things you did recently. This will be more impressive than things you did a long time ago.
- Be interesting, vary your tone of voice to emphasise key points. Generally it's best to avoid technical jargon or talking about complex processes. Make good eye contact and break out your least-creepy smile.

General tips for answering questions in interviews

- Show your interest by asking appropriate questions at the end of the interview. Don't be a mercenary! Leave questions about pay, hours of working and time off until after you've received a job offer.
- When talking about why you want to work for them, use it as an opportunity to show that you've done some research. Perhaps explain how well you will fit in with their culture and values, rather than focusing on what you'll gain.
- You may have your commercial awareness tested, so keep your skills and knowledge up-to-date.
- If you're unsuccessful, make sure you ask for feedback, so you can learn from mistakes and improve.

Example: *'Tell me about a time you've demonstrated your customer service skills'.*

A bad answer: *'Customer couldn't find beans, so I pointed in the direction of my manager so they could tell the customer where the beans are kept.'*

This answers the question, but it's a terrible answer! There's not sufficient detail to sell the candidates skills or abilities. This answer is too brief and it's not even interesting. You're competing against other candidates, so make sure, you're giving the best answers!

A good answer: *'In my previous role working as a customer assistant in the online shopping department of FridgeMagnates Ltd. I was contacted by a customer that had received the wrong fridge-freezer, due to an error in the warehouse. They were very unhappy and wanted to make a complaint and get a refund.'*

'So to resolve this, I first listened to the customer's problem and repeated back what they'd said to check that I'd fully understood their problem. I assured the customer that I would take responsibility for resolving the issue.'

'The product they wanted was no longer available, but rather than just give them a refund, I used my knowledge of current products to suggest several suitable alternatives which matched their needs. This helped me to reach an agreeable resolution with the customer.'

'This happened right at the end of my shift and I was already due to finish, but I stayed late to ensure the order got processed the same day without any errors. I followed this up with a call to the customer the next day to ensure they had received their order and that everything was ok.'

'They were extremely happy and they even asked to speak to my manager so they could feedback about how helpful I'd been. I won the 'employee of the month award' because of this.'

This answer has sufficient detail and a clear structure, describing the 'Situation', 'Task', 'Action' and 'Result'. The 'Action' takes up most of the answer and really sells the candidates skills and abilities. This answer would fit a number of different questions, including 'Tell me about a time you overcame a problem' or 'Tell me about a time you had to deal with an angry customer' or 'Tell me about a time your communication skills made a difference.'

Need more help?

Take a look at [MDXworks.com](https://www.mdxworks.com) It includes lots of great resources to help you prepare for interviews, including the handy '[MDX Interview simulator](#)'.

If you're also expecting an assessment at your interview, you may find it helpful to use the [mock assessment day tests](#), including numerical, verbal, 'e-tray' tests and more (Use your MyUniHub ID and password to log in).

If you'd like to arrange a mock interview (either face-to-face or over the phone) with a member of the MDXworks team, contact MDXworks@mdx.ac.uk. Alternatively, if you're feeling shy, you might prefer to write down your answers and email them us for some feedback (however, we recommend doing your mock interview face-to-face for the full 3D experience!)

Your feedback matters: If you've got any comments or suggestions, please [give us your feedback](#). Your feedback will help us to improve our service for students and graduates just like you!

We hope you found this template helpful. Good luck with your applications and please don't hesitate to let us know if you require any further support



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