

## FAQs About Behavioral Interviews

### What is Behavior Based Interviewing?

Behavioral Based Interviewing focuses on experiences, behaviors, knowledge, skills and abilities that are job related. It is based on the belief that past behavior and performance predicts future behavior and performance. You may use work experience, activities, hobbies, volunteer work, school projects, family life - anything really - as examples of your past behavior. Current employment literature indicates that there is a strong trend toward this type of interviewing.

### What Do Employers Evaluate in A Behavioral Interview?

Employers are looking for 3 types of skills: Content Skills, Functional or Transferable Skills, and Adaptive or Self Management Skills.

**Content Skills** -- are work specific skills such as computer programming, accounting, welding, etc. These skills are expressed as nouns.

**Functional or Transferable Skills** -- are used with people, information or things such as organizing, managing, developing, communicating, etc. These skills are expressed as verbs.

**Adaptive or Self-Management Skills** -- are personal characteristics such as dependable, team player, self directed, punctual, etc. expressed as adjectives.

### How Are Behavioral Questions Different from Other Types of Interviewing Questions?

There are 3 types of questions typically found in interviews:

1. **Theoretical questions** -- Questions that place you in a hypothetical situation. These questions are more likely to test your skill at answering questions rather than in doing a good job.  
*Example:* How would you organize your friends to help you move into a new apartment?
2. **Leading questions** -- Questions that hint at the answer the interviewer is seeking by the way they are phrased.  
*Example:* Working on your own doesn't bother you does it?
3. **Behavioral questions** -- Questions that seek demonstrated examples of behavior from your past experience and concentrate on job related functions. They may include:
  - o **Open-ended questions** -- require more than a yes or no response. They often begin with "Tell me...", "Describe...", "When...".  
*Example:* Describe a time you had to be flexible in planning a workload.
  - o **Close-ended questions** -- Used mostly to verify or confirm information.  
*Example:* You have a degree in psychology, is that correct?
  - o **Why questions** -- Used to reveal rationale for decisions you have made or to determine your level of motivation.  
*Example:* Why did you decide to major in this program at UW- Eau Claire rather than at a small private college or larger university?

A quiz on behavioral, theoretical and leading questions

1. How would you resolve a customer service problem where the customer demanded an immediate refund?
2. Tell me about a time you had to juggle a number of work priorities. What did you do?
3. You can work weekends occasionally can't you?

Answers: A. Theoretical; B. Behavioral; C. Leading

### How Can I Best Answer Behavior-Based Questions?

Think of "PAR for the Course". A complete answer to a behavior-based question must explain the task or problem for which you were responsible, the specific action you took, and the results of your actions. Your answer must contain **all of these components to be a PAR answer. Tell the interviewer a "story" (with a beginning, a middle, and an end) about how you used a practical skill.**

**Problem (P)** -- Advertising revenue was falling off for the Daily News and large numbers of long-term advertisers were not renewing contracts.

**Action (A)** -- I designed a new promotional packet to go with the rate sheet and compared the benefits of DN circulation with other ad media in the area. I also set-up a special training session for the account executives with a College of Business professor who discussed competitive selling strategies.

**Result (R)** -- We signed contracts with fifteen former advertisers for daily ads and five for special supplements. We increased our new advertisers by twenty percent (quantities are always good) over the same period last year.

### **Can You Give Me An Example of A Complete PAR Story?**

Right before Thanksgiving break, most of the guys had gone home for the weekend break. Our fraternity president and vice president had already left for home when we got a call that one of our brothers had been involved in a car accident. I volunteered to go to the hospital to be with him and then called his parents. I also made arrangements for them to stay at the Hospital Hospitality House when they got there. They were pleased I had taken time from my own weekend to help them. Our chapter advisor congratulated me for keeping a cool head and handling the situation. I've since decided to run for chapter office.

### **A Quiz on Questions**

Determine which type of question each of the following is.

1. How would you resolve a customer service problem where the customer demanded an immediate refund?
2. Tell me about a time you had to juggle a number of work priorities. What did you do?
3. You can work weekends occasionally can't you?
4. What is your idea of the perfect job?

### **How Can I Prepare for A Behavioral Interview?**

- Analyze the type of positions for which you're applying. Try to get an actual job description. What skills do employers require?
- Analyze your own background. What skills do you have (content, functional, and adaptive) that relate to your job objective?
- Identify examples from your past experience where you demonstrated those skills. How can you "tell a story" about your use of particular skills or knowledge? Concentrate on developing complete PAR answers and remember that a good story has a beginning, middle and end.
- Wherever possible, quantify your results. Numbers illustrate your level of authority and responsibility.
- Be prepared to provide examples of when results didn't turn out as you planned. What did you do when this happened?
- Before starting the interview process, identify 2 or 3 of your top selling points and determine how you will convey these points (with demonstrated PAR stories) during the interview.
- Once employed, keep a personal achievement diary to help document demonstrated performance (PAR stories).

Material for this fact sheet is adapted from materials developed by Larry Beck, Ball State University.

For more information see:

<http://jobsearch.about.com/cs/interviews/a/behavioral.htm>

<http://www.quintcareers.com/samplebehavioral.html>