

What are competency-based interview questions?

Competency-based interview questions are questions that ask for real-life examples of a candidate's skill. Even though they might seem challenging, these questions give you a great opportunity to showcase your experience and way of thinking. Recruiters ask these questions to identify skills, such as:

- Communication
- Management
- Leadership
- Problem-solving
- Risk-taking
- Adaptability

The S.T.A.R technique

The S.T.A.R technique is the most recommended to go with when you respond to such questions. This technique is easy to understand and implement naturally, just with practice. Breaking down the acronym we have:

Situation – What happened?

Task – What did you have to do?

Action – How did you do it?

Results – What was the outcome?

Competency-based interview questions examples

We've covered the basics. Now, let's see some examples of competency-based interview questions. For each question, we will give you the skill that's been evaluated and guidelines on how to answer. If you feel like it, read the question, try to identify that skill, and think of an answer before looking at our suggestion. Here are eight examples of competency-based interview questions:

1. Tell me about a time when you led a challenging project. What was that and how did you manage it?

Yes, this question asks directly about your management skills, but how would you showcase them? Think of a time when you successfully led a team – it could either be from your professional, or personal experience. Following the S.T.A.R. method, state the project/case, the goal you had to achieve, how you managed the team, and the results of your actions.

Example: "I was the leader of the localization project for the company's product. For this project, we were a team of five that had to do everything within two months and had a low budget. At first, I

came up with a structured plan, asked for the team's contribution, and then distributed tasks amongst members. For every turnaround, we quickly found solutions and delivered the project on time and within budget. I enjoyed that project!"

2. Describe one time when you helped your manager solve a problem. What did you do?

This question seeks your problem-solving skills. This is a great opportunity to showcase the way you thought and solved a problem that your manager couldn't solve. Describe the problem, the solution(s) you proposed, and what the outcome was. Don't forget to point out how you combined your experience and knowledge with the situation to overcome this problem.

Example: "We were using a software that didn't meet our needs and my manager wanted a solution as soon as possible. Within a week I managed to do comprehensive research, talk with multiple software providers, and found three alternatives that covered all of our needs and were cost-effective. We ended up switching to one of my proposals."

3. Tell me about something you learned that you applied to your work.

With this question, you can highlight your transferable and adaptability skills. You can use a previous working experience, a course, or even a blog post you read that inspired you to apply a practice at work. Describe the primary source of knowledge, how you acquired it and how you successfully implemented it to a situation.

Example: "At college, I took a lesson about Corporate Philosophy that had to do with Company Social Responsibility. When I heard that our HR department sought ways of giving back to society, I wrote a brief paper with suggestions of what they could do. Three out of five suggestions are still among the company's practices."