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## Behavioral interview questions

**Behavioral interview questions** help hiring managers and recruiters assess job candidates. Use the STAR format interview and ask some of the top behavior based interview questions to hire your next great employees.

### Why use behavioral questions in interviews

Behavioral questions (also known as [STAR](#) behavioral interview questions or behavior based interview questions) can reveal how candidates behaved in past work situations. These behaviors can give you insight into how people will react in similar situations at your company.

### What is a behavioral interview?

Hiring decisions shouldn't just be made on first impressions or hard skills. With behavior based interview questions, recruiters and hiring managers can identify candidates who look good on paper, but who may lack essential qualities for the job.

Ask behavioral questions during interviews to assess one or more of these qualities based on candidates past work experiences:

- [Teamwork](#)
- [Problem-solving attitude](#)
- [Leadership skills](#)
- [Interpersonal / Communication skills](#)
- [Time management skills](#)

These questions will show how candidates react in a given situation, how they collaborate on a team and how they interact with clients. A behavioral interview will help you evaluate and choose between candidates who, at first glance, may seem equally qualified for the position.

Structure your behavioral interviewing to include questions that test both your company's core values and role-specific qualities. For example, behavioral interview questions for managers or other senior roles will measure candidates' leadership skills. If you're hiring salespeople, test their reactions toward client complaints. Or, if a role involves meeting deadlines and working under pressure, include behavior based questions that assess how candidates handle stressful situations.

To make well-rounded hiring decisions, combine the best behavioral questions with other types of interview questions, such as [culture fit](#) and [situational](#) interview questions.

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Here are some sample behavioral interview questions to ask candidates during your hiring process:

## Behavioral interview questions examples

- Tell me about a time you had to deliver bad news to a manager or team member. How did you do it? What was the other person's reaction?
- Tell me about a time you had to deal with a difficult colleague. How did you communicate with the colleague effectively?
- How would you explain this industry term, 'X', to someone from a different discipline?
- How would you react if a team leader encouraged competition between team members instead of collaboration?
- Give me an example of a time you made a process more efficient. How did you do it?
- Have you ever missed a deadline? What happened? What would you do different next time?
- How do you prioritize work when there are multiple projects going on at the same time?
- What's the most stressful situation you've faced at your previous job? How did you handle it?
- What happened when you disagreed with a colleague about how you should approach a project or deal with a problem at work?
- Describe a time you had to handle complaints from a client. What happened and how did you manage to remain calm?
- Tell me about a time your team didn't meet a goal. How did you give feedback to your team members and how did you present the situation to your manager?
- Have you ever been assigned with a task you were not familiar with? How did you handle it: did you ask for help or did you try to find a solution by yourself?

## Behavioral interview questions and answers: How to evaluate candidates

- Behavioral interview questions can be hard to answer. Make sure you give your candidates enough time to reflect. Rushing an answer could have the opposite effect; they might get anxious and make something up, just to avoid an awkward silence.
- For candidates who struggle to answer your behavioral questions, think of alternatives. For example, if they can't think of a time they had to deal with a difficult coworker, ask them to give you an example of an exceptional collaboration. How was that situation different from others? And what was their role in communicating effectively?
- Some candidates mightn't be familiar with behavioral interviewing. To better evaluate their answers, ask follow-up questions until they've fully described their behavior in a specific situation.
- If you're interviewing a recent graduate or a candidate with little professional experience, they might struggle to describe a work situation. Encourage them to use an example from a

non-professional environment (e.g. study group, athletic team or volunteer work) and assess their qualities based on that.

- Pay attention to the kinds of examples your candidates choose. From their answers, you'll see how they define a challenging situation, a difficult client or a demanding work environment.
- Past behaviors can give you an idea of how people think and react, but you shouldn't rely only on them to predict future behaviors. Consider other factors, as well. For example, candidates who describe handling client complaints poorly in the past could have learned from their mistakes and become better salespeople.

## Red flags

- **Canned answers.** Candidates are usually prepared to answer common interview questions, but when they can't base their arguments on personal examples they might be simply trying to make a good impression by saying the 'right' thing. Keep an eye out for candidates who are able to include specific details and answer any additional questions.
- **Generalized or hypothetical responses.** Candidates' answers should relate to real experiences, even if they come from non-professional situations. The point of behavioral interview questions is to gauge how people actually acted in a real situation, not to describe ideal reactions.
- **No answer.** A candidate who can't think of examples might not pay a lot of attention to qualities that are important for the role they're applying for. For example, a customer service agent who can't provide a specific example of a time they helped a client may not be very enthusiastic about their job.
- **Great personality, but lacking substance.** Interviewers should focus on results. For example, when hiring a salesperson, you might expect a talkative candidate. However, a candidate who demonstrates quiet, steady behavior could achieve great quotas. Relate candidates' past behaviors to performance to find your best fit.

**Don't miss:** [The best interview questions to ask candidates.](#)

*Click the link below to download the behavioral interview questions pdf list.*