



# Interview skills 2: Practical answering techniques

 **BARCLAYS** | LifeSkills



# Module overview

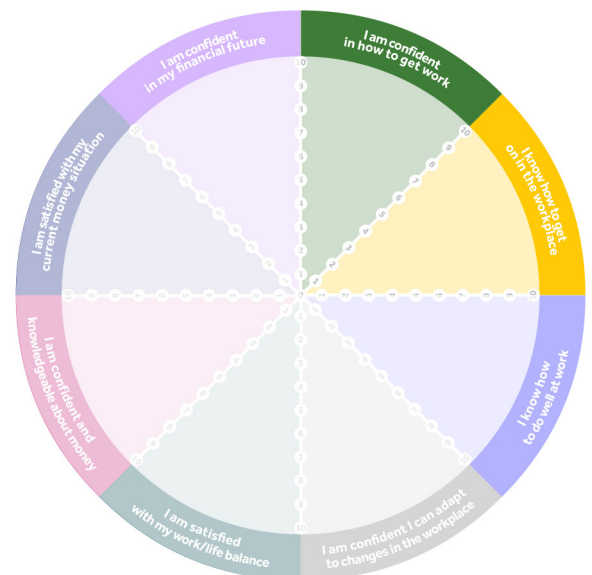
This module will introduce learners to the STAR technique – a simple technique they can use during interviews to structure their experiences and give meaningful, evidence-based responses.

Time	Key learning outcomes	Which will lead to
35 mins	<p>By the end of the module, learners will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understand the STAR technique and how this is relevant to a job interview</li> <li>Be able to apply the STAR technique to their own set of circumstances</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improved skills in answering interview questions, providing potential employers with better and more insightful answers to increase chances of interview success</li> </ul>

## Important

Introduce the activity and theme and remind your learner of the coaching-based approach. Agree the desired outcome of the session with your learner.

Throughout the activity, we have included **'do now'**, **'do soon'** and **'do later'** actions which may help your learner to think about the next steps they could take. Alternatively, you could use the 'do now', 'do soon' and 'do later' headings to help your learner come up with their own actions.



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# Introduction

Time	Educator guidance	Expected outcome
⌚ 2-3 mins	<p>Refer back to your learner's LifeSkills wheel and discuss how they scored themselves in relation to this module.</p> <p>Discuss what they need to know/do to be able to increase how they rate their satisfaction with this area.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learners are reminded of where they are now and what they need to do to reach a higher satisfaction score in this area</li> </ul>

## Core activity one

### Reflecting on previous interviews

Time	Educator guidance	Expected outcome
⌚ 3-5 mins	<p>Find out how your learner feels about their last interview. Use prompt questions to gain an understanding of their experiences and knowledge:</p> <p><b>How did your last interview go?</b></p> <p><b>Why do you think it went well/didn't go well?</b></p> <p><b>Is there anything that you'd change about the way you approached your last interview?</b></p> <p><b>What do you wish had gone better?</b></p> <p><b>What did you find most challenging?</b></p> <p>Follow up on your learner's answers to encourage further discussion by asking:</p> <p><b>What feedback did the interviewer give you?</b></p> <p><b>If you had a second chance, what would you do differently?</b></p> <p><b>What worries you the most about the interview process?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discussing a previous interview with your learner will help them identify how things could go differently the next time</li> </ul>



# Core activity two

## Using the STAR technique

Time	Educator guidance	Expected outcome
🕒 10-20 mins	<p><b>STAR</b> is a simple, structured technique that helps you answer competency questions in an interview, such as 'tell me about a time you did X', which are used to find out how candidates would react to certain situations. It stands for: <b>S</b>ituation, <b>T</b>ask, <b>A</b>ction, <b>R</b>esult.</p> <p>Introduce your learner to the STAR technique, explaining each letter of the acronym, using <b>Case study A</b> as an example.</p> <p>Talk through the case study and then ask your learner to read through <b>Case studies B and C</b> independently.</p> <p>Then ask your learner to think of their own STAR example from a personal or professional perspective.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Your learner should identify a professional or personal Situation that led to a specific challenge or obstacle that relates directly to them</li> <li>2. Your learner should identify the major Task in overcoming the situation or challenge</li> <li>3. Your learner should identify the Action (or approach) they took to ensure a successful outcome</li> <li>4. Your learner should then be able to explain the Result of their work and, specifically, how it relates back to the employer's original question</li> </ol> <p><b>Explain to your learner that interviewers are likely to ask learners to give specific example of a time when [blank]. For example:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'Tell me about a time when you needed to work as part of a team'</li> <li>• 'Tell me about a time when you demonstrated good leadership skills'</li> <li>• 'Tell me about a time that you managed to meet a tight deadline'</li> </ul> <p>Remind your learner that it's important to listen to the question and tailor their responses to meet the interviewer's specific requirements.</p> <p>Depending on the time you have available, you could ask your learner to answer a few different examples using the STAR technique.</p> <p><b>Do now:</b> Spend more time thinking of positive examples that you could talk about in an upcoming interview using the STAR technique</p> <p><b>Do soon:</b> Look at job descriptions for roles you might like to apply for and research typical interview questions for these roles. Think about how you could apply your STAR examples to these roles</p> <p><b>Do later:</b> Practise answering interview questions with a trusted person using the STAR technique, or try the <a href="#">Virtual Interview Practice tool</a></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learners will gain a good understanding of the STAR technique and how to apply it to their own learner circumstances</li> <li>• Learners should also understand why it's important to tailor their responses to the interviewer's specific requirements</li> </ul>

# Wrap up

Time	Educator guidance	Expected outcome
⌚ 5-7 mins	<p>Discuss any gaps that your learner feels they have in their knowledge of the STAR technique.</p> <p>Reflect on the score that your learner gave themselves on the LifeSkills wheel in relation to this module – do they feel closer to improving their score on the wheel now that they have an understanding of the interview process?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learners should gain a deeper understanding of the STAR technique and how this can be applied to almost any situation</li> </ul>

# Optional extension

Time	Educator guidance	Expected outcome
⌚ 10-20 mins	<p>Learners should use any extra time to practise using the STAR technique with a specific focus on how it applies to them.</p> <p><b>Prompt your learner to think about situations where they have:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Worked as part of a team</li> <li>Demonstrated leadership ability</li> <li>Met a challenging deadline</li> <li>Delivered a particularly difficult piece of work</li> <li>Taken part in a project</li> <li>Organised an event under difficult circumstances</li> <li>Won an award or were officially recognised for defeating odds</li> <li>Delivered excellent customer service despite facing a difficult customer complaint</li> <li>Dealt with a lot of pressure and managed to work through it</li> <li>Made a mistake and how they put it right</li> </ul> <p>Depending on the time you have available (and whether you have computer access), you could use the <a href="#">Virtual Interview Practice tool</a> to help your learner put the STAR technique into practice.</p> <p>This interactive tool allows learners to work through a range of questions they might be asked in an interview, with prompts on what they should include, relevant skills they could reference and pointers on how to use the STAR technique to structure their answers.</p> <p>They can choose whether to write or record themselves giving their response. We recommend using the record function, as it's good practice for learners to try saying their answers aloud as they would in a real interview, and gives them the opportunity to listen back and reflect on what they said.</p> <p>Encourage learners to think about how they can use the STAR technique to make each of their answers as persuasive as possible.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learners should gain a deeper understanding of the STAR technique and how this can be applied to almost any situation</li> <li>Learners should feel more confident responding to typical interview questions</li> </ul>

# Case study

## STAR technique: Case study A

**'Tell me about a time when you've delivered excellent customer service'**

In Lisa's job, working as part of the social media team for a large household cleaning brand, she was tasked with responding to inbox messages across three social channels: Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

STAR model	Description
<b>Situation</b>	The company launched a new cleaning product. Following a major advertising campaign, the social media channels were inundated with chatter, comments and inbox messages from customers. One customer in particular had purchased the product the previous day and found it ineffective. They initially complained via social media but, due to the number of messages received on that day, it was accidentally overlooked by the social media team. This made the customer even more irate and they began to post bad reviews on the company's public social media feeds.
<b>Task</b>	Being one of the most experienced members of the team, and recognised as someone with good customer service skills, Lisa was tasked with resolving the situation and asking the customer to retract their public comments.
<b>Action</b>	<p>Lisa contacted the customer via the original inbox message and did two things. First, she sincerely apologised to the customer that their original message had been missed and introduced herself as the person responsible for resolving the complaint. Second, she offered the customer a telephone number that they could call and speak with her directly to freely air their views.</p> <p>The customer did not call, but instead exchanged a series of social media messages with Lisa who responded immediately. Lisa discovered that the customer had been using the product incorrectly, so she offered detailed instructions, using a caring and supporting tone, to ensure the customer could get the desired results from the product.</p> <p>Lisa then offered the customer a voucher that heavily discounted their next purchase of the product.</p>
<b>Result</b>	Not only did the customer retract their public bad reviews, they replaced them with positive reviews that praised both the product and the customer service team. This saved the company from embarrassment and a potentially negative situation that could have impacted on sales revenue for their new product.



# Case study

## STAR technique: Case study B

**'Tell me about a time when you managed a project on a tight deadline'**

The charity that Marvin works for is often gifted with product donations from local companies. These products are often end of line stock, or things that the company can no longer sell. They contact Marvin to see if the charity can make use of them or sell them to raise funds.

STAR model	Description
<b>Situation</b>	A local shop selling short-dated popular vegan beauty products was closing down and had a huge surplus of stock. They offered the stock to Marvin to sell in his small charity shop, but Marvin knew he'd never sell it all before it went out of date.
<b>Task</b>	Marvin faced the choice of either turning down the stock and potentially thousands of pounds in lost sales or taking the stock and being left with a huge amount that he'd have to send to landfill. After some serious thought and discussion with his team, Marvin decided to take the stock and hold a flash sale, gaining as much local support as possible.
<b>Action</b>	Marvin's team set about preparing the shop to take delivery of the stock. They set things up to hold a 'one day only' sale. While the team were busy, Marvin took to social media and made a personal video with Facebook Live that he posted to the charity's Facebook page, telling people about the sale. He also contacted as many local businesses as possible and they all helped Marvin to promote his event.
<b>Result</b>	<p>At 9am the next morning, there was a queue of people outside the charity shop. The team worked hard all day, selling the stock to customers who continued to flock through the doors until well after the shop was due to close. The products proved to be so successful that the charity shop took over £4,500 in sales in just one day, with people still asking for the product long after it had sold out.</p> <p>It was the most successful day of trading in the charity's history and their Facebook page gained over 500 new followers in 24 hours.</p>





# Case study

## STAR technique: Case study C

**'Tell me about a time when you've demonstrated leadership skills'**

As the manager of a small warehousing team at a furniture company, it was Arjun's responsibility to ensure that all orders were dispatched on time to meet customer demand.

STAR model	Description
<b>Situation</b>	The Christmas season is always the busiest for Arjun and his team, with more orders than normal to prepare and dispatch. Just before the holiday season, the marketing team decided to spend the left over annual budget on an extra final push in an attempt to drive up sales. However, they did not discuss the impact that extra orders might have on Arjun and his team, at an already busy time of year.
<b>Task</b>	Two weeks before Christmas, Arjun's team were overwhelmed with orders and under enormous pressure to meet the company's promises to customers of a pre-Christmas delivery. Arjun was tasked with ensuring that every order was dispatched on time, despite the extra pressure on his team.
<b>Action</b>	Arjun called two emergency meetings: one with the company's senior managers to ask for his warehousing team to be compensated with overtime, and also to gain permission to hire in two temporary members of staff to help to cover the extra work; the other with his own team to gain their support in getting the job done despite the extra pressure.
<b>Result</b>	<p>With the promise of overtime payments and the help of two temporary workers, Arjun pulled his team together and they dispatched every order with 24 hours to spare.</p> <p>Arjun managed to squeeze a little extra budget from the company's senior managers to take his warehousing team out for a Christmas meal as a way to say thank you.</p>

