

Advice for competency based interviews

Competency based interviews are more systematic than normal interviews, where questions target a specific skill or competency. Candidates are asked questions relating to their behaviour in specific circumstances, which they then need to back up with concrete examples. The interviewers will then dig further into the examples by asking for specific explanations about the candidates behaviour or skills.

Skills and competencies for competency based interviews (dependent on role and role requirements)

Adaptability	Delegation	Leadership
Compliance	External awareness	Leveraging diversity
Communication	Flexibility	Organisational awareness
Conflict management	Independence	Resilience and tenacity

How competency-based interview questions are marked

Before an interview, interviewers will have determined which type of answers would score positive points and which types of answers would count against candidates.

Below is an example of a marking schedule:

0	No evidence	No evidence reported
1	Poor	Little evidence of positive indicators. Mostly negative indicators, many decisive
2	Areas for concern	Limited number of positive indicators. Many negative indicators, one or more decisive
3	Satisfactory	Satisfactory display of positive indicators. Some negative indicators but none decisive
4	Good to excellent	Strong display of positive indicators

Here is an example of positive and negative indicators for the following question:

"Describe a time when you had to deal with pressure"

Positive indicators

- Demonstrates a positive approach to a problem
- Considers the wider need of the situation
- Recognises own limitations
- Able to compromise
- Willing to seek help when necessary
- Uses effective strategies to deal with pressure/stress

Negative indicators

- Perceives challenge as problems
- Attempts unsuccessfully to deal with the situation alone
- Used inappropriate strategies to deal with pressure/stress



S - Situation

T - Task

A - Action

R - Result

Situation or Task

Describe the situation that you were confronted with or the task that needed to be accomplished

Make it concise and informative

E.g.

If the question is asking you to describe a situation where you had to deal with a difficult person, explain how you came to meet that person and why they were being difficult.

If the question is asking for an example of teamwork, explain the task that you had to undertake as a team.

Action

This is where you need to demonstrate and highlight the skills and personal attributes that the question is testing.

Now that you have set the context of the story, you need to explain what you did.

Remember the following:

Be personal i.e talk about you, not the rest of the team

Go into some detail, do not assume they will guess what you mean

Steer clear of technical information, unless it is crucial to your story

Explain what you did, how you did it, and why you did it

Result

Explain what happened eventually, how it all ended.

Describe what you accomplished and what you learnt in that situation (This helps you make the answer personal and enables you to highlight further skills)

Interviewers want to know that you are using a variety of generic skills in order to achieve your objectives.

You must be able to demonstrate in your answer that you are taking specific actions because you are trying to achieve a specific objective and not simply by chance