
Be Prepared for Situational Interview Questions

Situational interview questions—open-ended prompts where you’re asked to describe how you solved a particular problem, aligned stakeholders on a project, or influenced someone to think a certain way—are an opportunity to show how you’d approach a new role. Here’s how to set yourself apart from other candidates.

Use a proven format. When discussing a past experience, structure your answer using the STAR(T) or CARL method. STAR(T) stands for Situation, Task, Action, Result, and Takeaways. CARL stands for Context, Action, Result, and Learning.

Tailor your stories to your audience. Be sure to connect the experiences you highlight to the job you’re applying for, especially if you’re jumping from one industry to another. Also consider who’s asking the question—for example, you might simplify technical language when talking to a recruiter but include those details when talking to a hiring manager.

Follow the two-minute rule. This one’s simple: Keep your stories under two minutes each. Consider practicing them in advance with a timer.