

Competency based interviews

Competency-based interview, is also known as skills-based, behavioral, criteria or structured interviews and it works on the principle that:

Past performance is the best predictor of future performance.

Competency based interviews are where the interviewers have clearly identified the skills required to carry out the job for which you are applying and will ask specific questions about the skills involved. The aims of a competency based interview are:

- 1) To obtain information about how you have previously demonstrated the key competencies for the post through specific questions, and
- 2) to explore the examples further to obtain a clear understanding of the situation, what you did, your contribution and the outcome.

When interviewing using competency style questions, FAO uses the **STAR model**, which allows questions to be elaborated – and answered - in a logical and concise manner.

SITUATION – Describe the situation, “Paint the picture” for the Panel, so they know what happened.

TASK – Describe what your role was, in this situation.

ACTION – Describe *YOUR* particular action, and why. Were there any challenges/obstacles and how did *YOU* overcome them?

RESULTS – Describe the outcome, what the impact of the action you took was.

Situation – Task – Action – Results = STAR

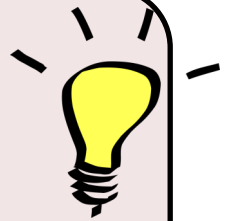


How do I prepare for a competency-based interview?

If you were called for an interview, congratulations! You passed the hardest filter, normally vacancies receive hundred of applications!

Now, it's time to start working! Review the Vacancy Announcement, and underline:

- ◆ Competencies
- ◆ Qualifications—especially those marked as “required” and “desirable”: these will help you think of the right examples!



Based on the competencies stated in the Vacancy Announcement, A starting point to prepare is to think about your past achievements:

- ◆ The things that you have done that you are most proud of,
- ◆ Situations you feel that you have handled particularly well,
- ◆ Ways in which you have contributed to the success of the projects/business where you have worked as a whole.

As the interview will be focused on past specific examples, it would be advisable to think about possible examples that you could use:

- ◆ Consider your role in the situation
- ◆ Were there any potential barriers or pitfalls?
- ◆ How did you overcome them?
- ◆ Is there anything you would have done differently?
- ◆ Is there anything that you have learned?



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When you prepare your examples, the focus should be on **YOU** even if the situation involved a group, interviewers will want to know what your specific role was in achieving the desired result. Once you have done this, select the examples, which you feel are the best illustrations of the required competence.

Here are some general, but *very important* tips:

DON'T give general examples

DO give specific examples

Avoid words like “I usually”, “ I always” and concentrate on the specific actions you carried out.



More Tips:

DO NOT ASSUME!

Don't think that because you have been working at FAO for a long time, the panel may know you.

ALWAYS prepare yourself!

GENERAL TIPS!

- ◆ Think of examples, for the competencies and the required and desirable qualifications, and structure them using the **STAR** model (**S**ituation, **T**ask, **A**ction, **R**esult)
- ◆ Practice! Prepare your examples, test them with a colleague or a friend who knows the field, make sure you have examples that will clearly demonstrate your capabilities!
- ◆ Don't repeat yourself and time your answers. Try to use no more than 3 minutes per answer.
- ◆ Do not forget about the result of your example! What if it was not positive? It is ok, but also add what you learned from that, and what you have done to avoid the negative situation.
- ◆ What if I don't have the example they ask for? Go for *the next best thing*. Be honest, say you don't have that specific example, but describe the example of the most similar situation you had.
- ◆ When preparing for the typical question: "Why do you think you are the best candidate, and what's your motivation to apply?", Keep it short, think of no more than 5 bulletpoints regarding your work history / Education / 1 or 2 achievement and never forget to mention your motivation to apply for the position!
- ◆ Avoid repeating the examples, don't use one that happened to you that very same week, prepare yourself!
- ◆ Don't use "we" too much, remember, the interview is about **YOU!**

Preparing for the day:

- ◆ Make sure beforehand, that your camera and microphone works well;
- ◆ Make sure you are in a quiet place, and have a pleasant background (not blank, not too distracting)
- ◆ Be sure not to "read" your answers;
- ◆ Lean forward, look engaged and acknowledge everyone in the "room"

