

# Bonus!

**It's all about how you fit their culture not the job description.**

"I'm a results-oriented person" isn't wowing anyone. And your interviewer has no reason to believe you. Anyone can say he or she's results-oriented. Be prepared for the "Tell me about a time when..." Yes, those requests for real-world examples—also known as behavioral interview questions—are frustrating. But, they're also an extremely common part of the interview process.

Instead, use specifics. Tell a story about a time you pushed forward to get results. And don't just stop there: Mention any negative impacts of your actions and the lessons you learned from them. It makes your story more real—which means your interviewer won't feel like you're just telling her what she wants to hear.

***\*Read body language and get the hint if you're giving to long of an answer.***

**For example**, "I kept the whole team working all weekend so that we could hit our deadline. I could tell some people were close to burning out, and in retrospect, I should've treated everyone to dinner on Saturday night to keep morale going strong. However, hunger pains aside, that streak's become a point of pride that really pulls our team together."

Now, of course, that specific answer is a risk. Yes, at the company that values customer satisfaction at all costs, it's a winner. But at an organization that's all about work-life balance, you might not seem like a fit. So, instead of prepping your stories by just thinking about your attributes, be sure to research the company, so you'll be able to tell stories that make you sound perfect for this exact position.

## **6 Types of Stories You Should Have on Hand for Job Interviews**

When You Solved a Problem

When You Overcame a Challenge

When You Made a Mistake

When You Worked as a Leader

When You Did Something Interesting

When You Worked with a Team

Your best bet is to have a few stories prepared and ready to go for your next interview. Here are the six big ones you should make sure to have in your arsenal. They're general enough that they can be used for a variety of questions, but specific enough that the person asking will feel like he or she's getting a good, solid, detail-filled response.

**1. When You Solved a Problem**

You've likely seen the term "problem solver" listed as a desired skill in almost every job description you've read. But, anybody can simply slap that key phrase on his or her resume. The proof is in the pudding, so you need to be prepared to explain a time when you exercised this skill.

Did you once resolve a conflict between two team members you worked closely with? Was there a time when you managed to find a last-minute conference speaker after the original one backed out in the eleventh hour?

Dig back through your history to find an example that shows you're a creative, resourceful, and self-motivated problem solver who's always there in a pinch. No, your interviewer likely won't be impressed by the fact that you moved closer to the office simply so you could sleep later. Is that a solution to your problem? Sure. But, you're probably better off keeping that tidbit to yourself.

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**2. When You Overcame a Challenge**

The workplace can be full of obstacles. Whether you need to navigate a tricky relationship with your manager or you get stuck with an overwhelmingly difficult project, it's important to show that you aren't quick to back down from a challenge.

There are so many inspiring stories out there that it can be tempting to rack your brain until you come up with a tear-jerking example of how you overcame adversity. But, you don't need to lie about how you climbed Mount Kilimanjaro or pulled yourself out of homelessness. Interviewers aren't looking for a movie plot.

Instead, come up with a real-life instance of when something stood in your way and you did everything you could to get around it. For example, maybe you worked two part-time jobs in order to pay for your college tuition. Or maybe you turned around a huge work project on an impossibly tight deadline. Those are great stories to share about how you took initiative in order to climb over roadblocks.

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### 3. When You Made a Mistake

We've all heard it before—nobody's perfect. People make mistakes, and interviewers know that you're no exception. But, what's important to them is how you react to your slip-ups. Do you sweep them under the rug, or do you address them head on?

Mistakes are common, so you probably won't have a tough time thinking of a wide array of blunders to choose from. But, you want to be somewhat selective about the one you choose to share. After all, you don't want to tell the interviewer about the time you accidentally sent a scathing email about your boss to the entire company.

Instead, think of a more minor mistake that you made in the workplace (e.g., not something like leaking internal documents to the press). Briefly explain the situation, and then talk about everything you did to remedy the issue. Remember that the emphasis of this story shouldn't be on the actual mistake you made—it should be on the steps you immediately took to fix it, and then what you learned from it.

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### 4. When You Worked as a Leader

"Leadership" is another one of those job interview buzzwords. And, if you're applying for a management position, you want to be sure to have at least a few solid examples of your leadership skills in your back pocket.

Perhaps you previously led your team to achieve the highest sales numbers on record. Maybe you coordinated a wildly successful company-wide event. Or, perhaps you chaperoned and directed your niece's Girl Scout troupe on a three-day camping trip.

If you can come up with a time when you successfully took charge and saw positive results, you'll be prepared to wow your interviewer with your incredible leadership know-how.

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## 5. When You Worked with a Team

You know the saying—teamwork makes the dream work. And, as you know by now, collaborating with others in the workplace is pretty much inevitable. So, you need to demonstrate that you know how to play nice in the sandbox.

What sorts of examples can you bring up? Pretty much any time that you effectively teamed up with people will fit the bill! You can talk about a huge project that you were a part of or explain your volunteer position as one of the board members of a local nonprofit. As long as your example shows that you understand not just how to collaborate, but why it's so valuable (all the heads are better than one)—you'll be in good shape.

So, pick a time when you worked with others—more importantly, when you worked well with others—and give your interviewer the details.

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## 6. When You Did Something Interesting

Yes, interviews place most of the emphasis on your job-related qualifications and competencies. But, if the hiring manager has a decent handle on your background and thinks you're a potential good fit, he or she might be interested in finding out more about you personally—not just professionally.

You definitely don't want to meet the person with a blank stare when he or she concludes the interview with, "So, tell me something about what you like to do outside of work."

Whether you're currently training for your first marathon or you're in the process of doing a DIY renovation on your kitchen, you should be armed and ready with a few noteworthy tidbits. Not only will you answer the interviewer's question, but you'll also leave the hiring manager with something memorable to associate with your name!

Those tricky behavioral interview questions are enough to immediately make your palms clammy. But, they're also a perfect opportunity to demonstrate that you're a great fit for the position. Have these six stories at the ready, and you're sure to ace your next interview!

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Take away for preparation: a great article on the 6 stories you would have in your toolbox:  
<https://www.themuse.com/advice/6-types-of-stories-you-should-have-on-hand-for-job-interviews>