

### THE "STARR" APPROACH

The acronym **STARR** stands for

*Situation, Task, Action, Result, Reflection*

It is a commonly recognised communication technique designed to enable you to provide a meaningful and complete answer to questions asking for examples. At the same time, it has the advantage of being simple enough to be applied easily.

Many interviewers will have been trained in using the STARR structure. Even if they have not, they will recognise its value when they see it. The information will be given to them in a structured manner and, as a result, they will become more receptive to the messages you are trying to communicate.

**The STARR technique** = this gives a logical process to create and deliver your answer as follows:

<b>S or T =</b>	<p>Situation or Task</p> <p>Start by describing the <b>SITUATION</b> you were involved in or the <b>TASK</b> that you were asked to complete. This situation can be from a previous job, from a personal experience or from any relevant event. Give enough detail for the interviewer to understand what was involved.</p> <p>Secret R = Reasoning          Where was it?          Who was involved?          When was it?          What was the goal?          What was the duration of the action?</p> <p>This section is often forgotten in answers, but by including it you make your answer stronger and less superficial. In this section, you have to answer:</p> <p>Why you did the action?          What made you do the action that you will describe later?          What made you take on that role?</p>
<b>A =</b>	<p>Action</p> <p>Describe the action you took, the process you followed and the steps you completed. Even if you are discussing a group project or task, describe what <i>you did</i> rather than the achievements of the team.</p>
<b>R =</b>	<p>Result</p> <p>This is the most important part of the answer and you will need to show that your actions resulted in a successful outcome. Talk about what you accomplished, what you delivered in terms of benefit and what you learned.</p>

<b>R=</b>	<b>Reflection</b> The final section of your answer should reflect on experience. There are three main answers that you can use to reflect on the situation. Not all three will apply to your example, therefore pick and choose which one applies to the question and your example!  <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Why has your experience made you want to do medicine?</li><li>2. Through your experience, what have you learnt about the healthcare system or a career in medicine/ being a doctor?</li><li>3. How will the skills you've gained make you a better medical student/doctor?</li></ol>
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With **SITUATION OR TASK** using the **STARR** approach you need to set the context. Make it concise and informative, concentrating solely on what is useful to the story.

**For example:**

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** is the most important section of the **STARR** approach as it is where you will need to demonstrate and highlight the skills and personal attributes that the question is testing. Now that you have set the context of your story, you need to explain what you did. In doing so, you will need to remember the following:

- Be personal, i.e. talk about you, not the rest of the team.
- Go into some detail. Do not assume that 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.

**A. What you did and how you did it?**

The interviewers will want to know how you reacted to the situation. This is where you can start selling some important skills. For example, you may want to describe how you used the team to achieve a particular objective and how you used your communication skills to keep everyone updated on progress etc.

**B. Why you did it**

*For example*

When discussing a situation where you had to deal with conflict, many candidates would simply say: "I told my colleague to calm down and explained to him what the problem was". However, it would not provide a good idea of what drove you to act in this manner. How did you ask him to calm down? How did you explain the nature of the problem? By highlighting the reasons behind your action, you would make a greater impact.

**For example:**

*"I could sense that my colleague was irritated and I asked him gently to tell me what he felt the problem was. By allowing him to vent his feelings and his anger, I gave him the opportunity to calm down. I then explained to him my own point of view on the matter, emphasising how important it was that we found a solution that suited us both."*

This revised answer helps the interviewers understand what drove your actions and reinforces the feeling that you are calculating the consequences of your actions, thus retaining full control of the situation. It provides much more information about you as an individual and is another reason why the STARR approach is so useful.

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