Behavioral interviewing is designed to minimize personal impressions that might cloud the hiring decision. By focusing on the applicant’s actions and behaviors, rather than subjective impressions that can sometimes be misleading, interviewers can make more accurate hiring decisions.

While your skills and experiences could be a perfect match for a position you are seeking, an interviewer could discount your candidacy if you are unprepared, or struggle with the behavioral interview format.

**STAR Method** (Situation Task Action Result): Use fairly recent stories to answer these questions. Vary your examples between academic and work experiences. Try to choose experiences that show you in the most positive way. Here is a good example using the STAR Method:

**Situation:** A description of a specific, real-life situation or challenge you encountered.

“Advertising revenue was falling off for the Oklahoma Daily and large numbers of long-term advertisers were not renewing their contracts.”

**Task:** What was your role in this project?

“I was asked to meet with the top three advertisers to find out why they were not renewing.”

**Action:** A description of the tasks and actions you took to overcome the challenge.

“I designed a new promotional packet to go with the rate sheet and compared the benefits of OU Daily circulation with other ad media in the area. I also set up a special training session for the account executives, discussing competitive selling strategies, with a College of Business professor.”

**Result:** A summary of the results of those actions. (Try and quantify results whenever possible.)

“We signed contracts with 15 former advertisers for daily ads and five special supplements. This increased our new advertisers by twenty percent over the same period last year.”

If you are an entry-level candidate with no previous related experience, the interviewer will look for behaviors in situations similar to those of the target position:

“Describe a major problem you have faced and how you dealt with it.”

“Give an example of when you had to work with your hands to accomplish a task or project.”

“What class did you like the most? What did you like about it?”

Follow-up questions will test for consistency and determine if you exhibited the desired behavior in that situation:

“Can you give me an example?”

“What did you do?”

“What did you say?”

“What were you thinking?”

“How did you feel?”

“What was your role?”

“What was the result?”

You will notice an absence of such questions as, “Tell me about your strengths and weaknesses.”

**HOW TO PREPARE FOR A BEHAVIORAL INTERVIEW**

- Recall recent situations that show favorable behaviors or actions, especially those involving coursework, work experience, leadership, teamwork, initiative, planning and customer service.
- Prepare short descriptions of each situation; be ready to give details if asked.
- Be sure each story has a beginning, a middle and an end; i.e., be ready to describe the situation, your action and the outcome or result.
- Be sure the outcome or result reflects positively on you (even if the result itself was not favorable).
- Be honest. Don’t embellish or omit any part of the story. The interviewer will find out if your story is built on a weak foundation.
- Be specific. Don’t generalize about several events; give a detailed accounting of one event.