

Thinking about your strengths – it’s important to recognise your own personal strengths. This can be a lot harder than you think, especially when you then need to think about how that strength relates to the job opportunity that you are looking at.

Below, are a range of different strengths, recognising yours, which words relate to you?

Able	Accurate	Adaptable	Alert	Ambitious	Analytical	Articulate
Assertive	Astute	Bright	Capable	Calm	Confident	Committed
Common sense	Competent	Computer literate	Consistent	Cooperative	Cope under pressure	Creative
Decisive	Dedicated	Dependable	Desire to succeed	Determined	Diplomatic	Diverse
Drive	Dynamic	Educated	Effective	Efficient	Energetic	Enjoy a challenge
Enthusiastic	Fast learner	Fast worker	Flexible	Focused	Friendly	Good communicator
Gifted	Hardworking	Helpful	Highly motivated	Honest	Imaginative	Impressive
Insightful	Inter personal skills	Independent	Innovative	Initiative	Intelligent	Intuitive
Keen	Knowledgeable	Leadership skills	Loyal	Mature	Methodical	Objective
Organised	Perceptive	Persistent	Polite	Positive	Practical	Pro active
Punctual	Rational	Reliable	Resourceful	Responsible	Supportive	Tactful
Team player	Tenacious	Thorough	Trustworthy	Versatile	Willing	Warm

Have a chat about the words and identify a number of personal strengths; what are you top 5? Make some notes about times that you have demonstrated that strength that could be used on a CV or application form.

Quality	Short example
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	



Linking your strengths to buzz words

Each company will have their own recruitment processes. Some may request a CV and covering letter, others may require an application form to be submitted. It is almost certain that any recruitment being carried out in the coming weeks and months will be online so that social distancing requirements are met, including telephone and online interviews and assessments. Whatever process the employer is following, the details should be found in the job advertisement. Most vacancies will receive a number of applications from potential candidates. To help your application to stand out from others, following these simple 'buzz word' techniques can make a positive impression on the person reading them.



Step 1: Identify the buzz words from the job advert.

Look at the job advert and job description example on the right and see if you can identify all of the words that the employer has used to describe the characteristics or skills that they are seeking in an applicant. Go through the advert and highlight or circle all of the buzz words. An example is provided for you in the 'Desired skills' paragraph of the extract on the right.

Step 2: Create a sentence to demonstrate the skill/attribute Buzz word

Example:

Requirements and prospects

<p>Desired skills</p> <p>We are looking for applications from individuals who have the following skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">You need to be confident and have the ability to work independently without the need for close supervision.Communication skills are vital in this role; successful applications will be well spoken with a clear and professional telephone manner.You must have good time management skills, you must be a punctual person and be on time for work and any meetings.	<p>Future prospects</p> <p>Full time position for the right apprentice.</p> <p>Things to consider</p> <p>Can you travel there? Please check the links below www.traveline.info/ Or www.transportdirect.info</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">This role involves liaising with both internal and external customers, you must be confident when dealing with people at all levels.This role may involve unsociable hours – you must have a flexible approach to your work.Travel costs will be incurred to get to work and to access the training.You must have a customer focused approach whilst handling a large volume of queries.
<p>Qualifications required</p> <p>No formal qualifications required.</p>	

Confident - I am a very confident individual. While in 6th form, I was confident in showing prospective parents and students around the school, answering their questions and helping them to introduce them to teachers and other key staff.

CV Expectations - Things to consider when writing a CV



What is a CV? The term CV is short for Curriculum Vitae which is Latin for 'the course of one's life'.

A CV is a short, written summary of your skills, achievements and experience. You use it in the first stage of applying for jobs. Employers often ask for a CV instead of an application form.

A CV is a clear way for all relevant information to be stored together and can be updated when required. Having an up to date CV will also help to make it easier if you need to transfer information to the employer's application form.

What should a CV look like? There are lots of templates that can be found online that can be used when writing a CV. There is some good advice on the [National Careers Service](http://www.nationalcareersservice.gov.uk).

Tailoring the CV to the job advert Once you have a standard CV that you are happy with, you can enhance it by tailoring it to the role that you are applying for. To do this, you can incorporate buzz words and phrases from the advert or job description into your CV.



Hobbies and interests This section of a CV is optional, although make sure you remove the header if it is not going to be used. Writing about your hobbies or interests that are relevant to the role may support your application and they can show a little bit of your character.

Step 1: Identify skills and attributes

Think of all of the hobbies and interests that you have and the skills and attributes that this may show to a future employer.

Step 2: Other hobbies and interests

Do you have a hobby or interest that isn't included in the list provided? If so, write it down and think of the skills that this shows a potential employer.

Hobby	Skills	
Art 	Creativity, eye for detail, techniques, passion, patience, idea development.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comedy 	Initiative, resilience, creativity, idea development, humour, confidence.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cooking 	Creativity, attention to detail, patience, self-expression, multitasking, decision making.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Dance 	Creativity, dedication, resilience, confidence, perseverance, motivation, discipline, self-belief.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Drama 	Confidence, self-awareness, presentation skills, dedication, resilience, teamwork, communication skills, creativity.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gaming 	Communication skills, analytical, resourcefulness and adaptability, technical skills and problem-solving.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Make up, fashion 	Creativity, following trends, research, techniques, interpersonal skills, confidence, attention to detail.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Music 	Dedication, creativity, teamwork (if in a band/orchestra), perseverance, memory, listening, collaboration and confidence.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reading 	Imagination, empathy, creativity and attentiveness.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sports/fitness 	Motivation, communication, passion, dedication, teamwork, leadership, time-management and competitiveness.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Volunteer work 	Motivation, passion, dedication, communication, interpersonal skills, networking, sense of community and empathy.	<input type="checkbox"/>

CV checklist:

- * The layout, design and spacing of the words and paragraphs is consistent.
- * The contact details are correct, including a professional email address.
- * The font is the same. The most common recommended fonts for writing a CV are Times New Roman, Arial, Verdana or Helvetica. The font size is point 11 or 12.
- * The CV should be no more than 2 A4 pages.
- * The headings should be bold and clear.
- * The information should be organised and in inverse chronological (your most recent experience goes first).
- * The sentences are short and use bullet points.
- * You have referenced buzz words from the advert / job description into the CV.
- * You do not need to list references on the CV, but make sure that it is recorded that they are available upon request. Try not to use family members as referees.
- * Proofread to make sure that you check the words, spelling and grammar on their CV are correct.
- * Include hobbies or interests that they would be confident to talk about in an interview.
- * The information must be true; remember they may be asked about it at an interview.



Preparing for interview

Interviews can be a nerve-wracking experience for anyone, regardless of whether you have been to an interview, or if you have never had an interview before.

The STAR method is a helpful technique that can be used in an interview to help to answer a situational question, which are the types of questions that typically ask you to describe or explain a situation or task and how you responded to it. These may also be known as competency questions.

These types of questions can sometimes be the most difficult to answer on the spot.



What is the STAR method?

The STAR method is broken down into 4 steps:

- 1) **S**ituation - describe the situation that you were in or a task that you needed to achieve
- 2) **T**ask - explain what the goal was or what needed to be done
- 3) **A**ction - describe the action you took to address or resolve the situation
- 4) **R**esult - describe the results or outcome of your action

To take this method a step further, you can add 'Reflection' at the end. This will provide an explanation on how you felt the situation was handled and if anything would be done differently.

Why use the STAR method?

The STAR method helps you to be concise and clear in your answers and provide real examples of strengths and attributes that the employer is looking for. The employer will often ask these types of questions to get an understanding of how you might react to a situation or what your thinking is in your approach to a task, so this is an opportunity for those interviewing to share examples that demonstrate such strengths and attributes positively.

Preparing for the interview Using the STAR method

Example of the STAR method - Describe a problem you had recently and how you solved it

In my personal time, I play football and for the last year I have volunteered to run our social media accounts. January was a particularly busy time for me with my A Level study and part time job, and I was concerned I would not be able to meet the weekly target of sharing 10 posts. I explained the situation to our coach and asked if a member of the team could help me for the first two weeks. I created a template that they could use with guidelines and provided 5 examples that they could learn from. My teammate was very grateful and was able to quickly help in keeping the account going so we still met our target. It was also really positive in helping to teach someone else the process so we can ensure someone can help or cover in future situations.

Now it's your turn to think about how you could use the STAR method:

1. Can you describe a stressful situation you have been in and how you handled it?
2. Tell me about a time when you performed well under pressure
3. Can you give me an example of a goal you met?
4. Can you give me an example of a goal you couldn't meet and how you handled it?



Top tips for using the STAR method

- ✚ Describe a specific event or task that you were involved in
- ✚ Give enough description for the interviewer to understand, be concise and clear
- ✚ Keep the focus on you and what you did, as opposed to the team
- ✚ Don't be shy about your contribution, it is good to take credit for your work
- ✚ Remember to link it back to the strengths and attributes the employer is looking for
- ✚ Make sure your answer includes positive results

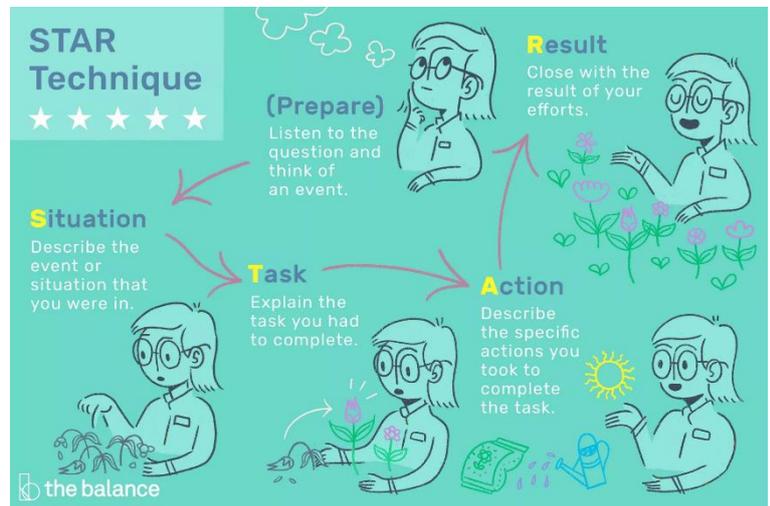


Illustration by Jon Marchione @The Balance

Whilst STAR is great for helping you to think about specific examples don't follow it too rigidly, let your response flow.

Typical STAR Interview Questions

- ✚ Questions to measure sense of judgment
 - Tell me about a difficult decision you've made in the last year.
 - Tell me about a time when you had multiple important projects to finish and how you prioritized them.
- ✚ Handling Pressure
 - Describe a stressful situation at work and how you handled it.
 - Tell me about a time you had to learn something you weren't familiar with very quickly.
- ✚ Leadership Potential
 - Describe an experience in which you used your leadership abilities.
 - Give me an example of when you showed initiative and took the lead.
- ✚ Self-Awareness
 - Give me an example of a time when you tried to accomplish something and failed.
 - Tell me about a project that wasn't going to meet its deadline and how you minimized or confronted the consequences.

This is a great summary video of how STAR can work:

