

CODEPATH*ORG

Behavioral Interview Facilitation & Feedback Guide

This resource serves as a template for a 30-minute volunteer-led behavioral interview session. The overall goal is for the student to practice responding to common behavioral interview questions, strengthen their storytelling and communication skills, and receive actionable feedback. Volunteers are encouraged to keep the session conversational and focus on building the student's confidence.

If you have any questions not addressed by this guide, please contact volunteer@codepath.org.

Recommended session breakdown:

- 3 min - Introductions & Context Setting
- 20 min - Interview Practice (3-4 Questions)
- 7 min - Verbal Feedback & Wrap-up

In this guide you will find:

- [Skills to Practice](#) - what you're looking for during the practice interviews with students
 - [List of interview questions](#) - repository of questions to use with students. Most interviews will have time for 5-7 questions.
 - [Student Feedback](#) - how to format your feedback to students
 - [Feedback Rubric](#) - Optional guide for providing your student with written feedback
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Skills to Practice

1. **STAR Method** - As a candidate, students need to answer each question thoroughly. The "STAR Method" enables students to answer each question successfully. It stands for:

Situation (S)	Describe the situation that you were in. This situation can be from a previous job, from a volunteer experience, or any relevant event. You must describe a specific event or situation, not a generalized description of what you have done in the past.
Task (T)	The task that you needed to accomplish during the situation.

Action (A)	Describe the action you took and be sure to keep the focus on you. Even if you are discussing a group project or effort, describe what you did -- not the efforts of the team. Don't tell what you might do, tell what you did.
Result (R)	What happened? How did the event end? What did you accomplish? What did you learn?

2. Storytelling in Interviews - Enabled by structures like STAR, students can use storytelling in interviews to bring a relevant experience to life, share what they learned from it, and convey characteristics they want the interviewer to appreciate and remember.

Elements of a good story:

- A clear beginning, middle, and end, ensuring the audience has enough context to understand the student's actions and understands the impact of their work
- Conveys a specific quality or characteristic about the student such as their problem-solving ability, conflict resolution skills, and how well they work with others.
- Short and to the point. The story should not go on for more than ~3 minutes. A story that is overly long can cause the interviewer to lose focus/interest.

3. Explaining Technical Concepts - Oftentimes, a student will interview with a non-technical person, such as a recruiter. Students need to explain concepts and experiences in a way that is easily understood by any audience.

- Don't make assumptions - When introducing a framework, tool, etc., the student should explain what the tool does and why it was appropriate to use for the project
- Avoid data dumping - Instead of listing as many facts or statistics about a technical concept, the student should stick to data that's relevant to the conversation. For example, "We chose this software because it can reduce the number of customer complaints from 15 a day to one."
- Ask for feedback - Give the interviewer an opportunity to ask follow up questions after explaining a technical concept before moving onto the next part of your response.

List of Interview Questions

During the practice interview, you will have time for 3-4 questions. Please use this repository of questions to facilitate your practice interview with CodePath students. If you recruit candidates in your own career and have questions you prefer to use instead, that is acceptable, as well.

Technical Skills

- From your perspective, what qualities are important for a software engineer to have and why?
- What is your quality assurance process for writing code and how do you spot a bug in an application?
- Think about the most challenging piece of code you've ever written. Tell me about the project. Why was it so challenging for you and what did you learn from the experience?

Teamwork

- Talk about a time when you had to work closely with someone whose personality was very different from yours.
- Give me an example of a time you faced a conflict while working on a team. How did you handle that?
- We all make mistakes we wish we could take back. Tell me about a time you wish you'd handled a situation differently with a colleague.
- Tell me about a time you needed to get information from someone who wasn't very responsive. What did you do?

Ability to Adapt

- Tell me about a time you were under a lot of pressure. What was going on, and how did you get through it?
- Tell me about the first job you've ever had. What did you do to learn the ropes?
- Tell me about a time you failed on a project or initiative. How did you deal with the situation?

Time Management Skills

- Describe a long-term project that you managed. How did you keep everything moving along in a timely manner?
- Sometimes it's just not possible to get everything on your to-do list done. Tell me about a time your responsibilities got a little overwhelming. What did you do?
- Tell me about a time you set a goal for yourself. How did you go about ensuring that you would meet your objective?

Communication Skills

- Give me an example of a time when you were able to successfully persuade someone to see things your way at work.
- Describe a time when you were the technical expert on a topic. What did you do to make sure everyone was able to understand you?
- Tell me about a successful presentation you gave and why you think it was a hit.

Motivation and Values

- Describe a time when you saw some problem and took the initiative to correct it rather than waiting for someone else to do it.
 - Tell me about a time when you worked under close supervision or extremely loose supervision. How did you handle that?
 - Tell me about a time you were dissatisfied with your work. What could have been done to make it better?
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Student Feedback

Focus on these areas when giving students feedback after the practice interview.

- 1. Giving a Thorough Answer** – A student’s answer should follow the STAR method and follow guidance under “Storytelling in Interviews” and “Explaining Technical Concepts” when relevant. Below are example answers of how a student could answer the question “Tell me about a time when a team project did not go as expected.” If their response was below expectations or considered as having significant gaps, then you should give the feedback that the student needs to work on giving a more thorough response to interview questions.

Far exceeds expectations	When I worked for ABC company, the team I worked on was responsible for developing instructional materials and providing training for a new system that was being implemented across the country. To do so, my team worked across the organization, gaining insights about the new technology and associated operating procedures. As a part of this team, I was self-directed and worked diligently to communicate and share resources to complete this task according to our project deadlines; however there was a software glitch that didn't occur during initial testing, and came up during training. As a result, the program implementation was delayed and I needed to support my team as we revised the training materials appropriately and prepared our instructors to understand the impact of this change. We were able to have the materials ready for the next round of systems training and as a result of our efforts, the system was well received by our clients.
Exceeds expectations	When I worked for ABC company, the team I worked on was responsible for developing instructional materials and providing training for a new

	<p>system that was being implemented across the country. To do so, I worked with a colleague to interact with members throughout the organization, gaining insights about the new technology and associated operating procedures. During this project there was a software glitch that didn't occur during initial testing, and came up during training. As a result, the program implementation was delayed and my team needed to revise the training materials appropriately. We were able to have the materials ready for the next round of systems training.</p>
Meets expectations	<p>When I worked for ABC company, the team I worked on was responsible for developing instructional materials and providing training for a new system that was being implemented across the country. To do so, I supported my colleagues by incorporating their system and operational procedure findings into new training materials. During this project there was a software glitch that didn't occur during initial testing, and came up during training. As a result, the program implementation was delayed and we needed to revise the training materials appropriately. I was able to help my team prepare the materials in time for the next round of systems training.</p>
Below expectations	<p>When I worked for ABC company, the team I worked on was responsible for developing instructional materials and providing training for a new system that was being implemented across the country. I put together the training materials, and while we were getting them ready there was a system glitch that occurred. I thought it was how the system was supposed to work and didn't report it to anyone. During training this issue came up again and as a result they had to delay the implementation. Someone else on my team changed the training materials so that they were correct.</p>
Significant Gap	<p>When I worked for ABC company, the team I worked on was responsible for developing instructional materials and providing training for a new type of software. During training there was a glitch that came up and we had to change the training materials.</p>

2. Answering the right question/Comprehension Skills - Be on the look-out for students correctly understanding and responding to a question. For example, if you ask "Give me an example of a time

when you were able to successfully persuade someone to see things your way at work,” and the student instead describes a time when they were persuaded to change their mind then you need to remind them to listen carefully to the interview question. If a student doesn’t answer the question clearly the first time, they should pause and ask for clarification from the interviewer.

3. How they handled a question they didn’t know how to answer – If you ask a student a question and they respond along the lines of “I don’t know how to answer this question,” then you should provide feedback on how to address a question they cannot answer.

- First the student should ask the interviewer to restate the question or they should rephrase the question in their own words to ensure they understand.
- Next, if they do not have a past experience that fits the question, they should explain this to the interviewer and then give a response on what they would **hypothetically** do in that situation.
- If they have a response that’s indirectly related to the question, they should explain they have a similar experience they can share before going into their response.

4. Eye contact/engagement – The student should be clearly engaged and participating in the interview. They can demonstrate this by:

- Having their camera on during the interview
- Being professionally dressed and having a clean background
- Looking at the interviewer through the Zoom window while answering questions

If a student seemed disinterested or disengaged during the interview, please provide them with that feedback. Appearing disengaged can demonstrate to a company that the candidate is not a good fit for their program(s).

Feedback Rubric

Please provide verbal feedback to your student during or at the end of the session. If you’d like to take notes or provide additional written feedback afterward, feel free to [make a copy of this Feedback Rubric](#). This is completely optional and meant to support you in offering helpful, specific guidance.

Question	Did answer follow the STAR format?	Did answer respond to what interviewer wanted to know?	Was answer length appropriate for question?	Other comments:

Overall engagement/eye contact: