

Competency-based interview questions for students

For college students, competency-based interview questions are usually designed to assess behaviours such as teamwork, communication, problem-solving, and adaptability. They're commonly used for apprenticeships, internships, graduate schemes, part-time jobs, and entry-level roles.

For mock interviews, encourage students to answer each question using the **STAR** framework:

- **Situation** – Set the context.
- **Task** – Explain your responsibility.
- **Action** – Describe what you did.
- **Result** – Explain the outcome and what you learned.

This approach helps students give clear, structured examples that interviewers commonly expect.

Example questions suitable for mock interviews, each one is designed to tease out how the candidate aligns with the behaviours that are important for the role or opportunity. The interviewer is looking for real life examples, made up examples will be pretty easy to detect.

Communication

- Tell me about a time when you had to explain something complicated to someone.
- Describe a situation where you had to communicate with someone who had a different viewpoint.
- Give an example of when you persuaded someone to support your idea.
- Tell me about a time you had to give or receive constructive feedback.
- Describe a presentation or talk you've delivered.

Teamwork

- Tell me about a time you worked successfully as part of a team.
- Describe a time when your team experienced conflict. What did you do?
- Give an example of supporting a teammate who was struggling.
- Tell me about a time when you took on extra responsibility within a group.
- Describe a project where teamwork was essential to success.

Problem Solving

- Tell me about a difficult problem you solved.
- Describe a time when something didn't go according to plan.
- Give an example of when you had to think creatively to solve a problem.
- Tell me about a time you identified a problem before others noticed it.
- Describe a decision you made with limited information.

Organisation and Time Management

- Tell me about a time when you had multiple deadlines.
- Describe how you prioritised competing tasks.
- Give an example of meeting a challenging deadline.
- Tell me about a time you planned and organised an event or activity.
- Describe a situation where your organisational skills made a difference.

Leadership

- Tell me about a time you led a group or project.
- Describe a situation where you motivated others.
- Give an example of taking initiative without being asked.
- Tell me about a time you delegated tasks.
- Describe a leadership challenge you faced.

Adaptability

- Tell me about a time you had to adapt to change.
- Describe a situation where you learned something quickly.
- Give an example of working outside your comfort zone.
- Tell me about a time when your priorities changed suddenly.
- Describe how you dealt with uncertainty.

Customer Service

- Tell me about a time you dealt with a difficult customer or client.
- Describe excellent customer service you've provided.
- Give an example of exceeding someone's expectations.
- Tell me about resolving a complaint.
- Describe a time you remained calm under pressure.

Initiative

- Tell me about a time you spotted an opportunity for improvement.
- Describe a situation where you went beyond what was expected.
- Give an example of teaching yourself a new skill.
- Tell me about a time you solved a problem independently.
- Describe a project you started yourself.

Resilience

- Tell me about a setback you've experienced.
- Describe a time when you received criticism.
- Give an example of persevering through a difficult task.
- Tell me about a time you made a mistake.
- Describe how you handled disappointment.

Decision Making

- Tell me about a difficult decision you made.
- Describe a time when you weighed different options.
- Give an example of making a quick decision.
- Tell me about a decision you would make differently now.
- Describe a time when your judgement led to a positive outcome.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

- Tell me about working with people from different backgrounds.
- Describe how you've made someone feel included.
- Give an example of respecting different opinions.
- Tell me about challenging inappropriate behaviour.
- Describe how you promote an inclusive environment.

Motivation

- Why are you interested in this role?
- What achievement are you most proud of?
- Tell me about something you've committed to over a long period.
- What motivates you to do your best work?
- Describe a goal you set yourself and how you achieved it.

Learning and Self-Development

- Tell me about a new skill you've learned recently.
- Describe a time you asked for feedback to improve.
- Give an example of learning from a mistake.
- Tell me about a time you had to learn independently.
- What development goals have you set for yourself?

Strengths and Reflection

- What is your greatest strength? Can you give an example?
- Tell me about an accomplishment you're proud of.
- What would your teachers or classmates say about you?
- Describe a skill you'd like to improve.
- What have you learned from your work experience or volunteering?

Closing Questions

Why should we hire you?

- What do you know about our organisation?
- What are your career aspirations?
- What would you do in your first few weeks if offered this role?
- Do you have any questions for us?

Other Questions

Similar to the previous questions but from an alternative source and explains the rationale behind the question.

1. Tell me a little about yourself. What subjects, hobbies, or activities do you enjoy most, and why?

This is your chance to share what makes you unique—there are no right or wrong answers.

2. Can you describe a time when you solved a problem or figured something out on your own? What did you learn from the experience?

Technology is all about curiosity and problem-solving, whether it's fixing an app, organising an event, or helping someone.

3. What interests you about technology, and are there any apps, games, websites, or devices that inspire you?

We're interested in what excites you, not how much technical knowledge you already have.

4. If you could create a piece of technology to help people, what would you build and who would it help?

This question explores creativity, empathy, and innovation.

5. Tell me about a project or activity you're proud of, either in school or outside of it. What was your role?

We're looking for examples of initiative, teamwork, and determination.

6. Describe a time when you worked as part of a team. What did you contribute, and how did you help the group succeed?

Collaboration is a key skill in technology careers.

7. Technology changes quickly. Can you tell me about a time you had to learn something new? How did you approach it?

A willingness to learn is often more important than already knowing everything.

8. Have you ever faced a challenge that felt difficult at first? What did you do to overcome it?

We're interested in resilience and how you grow through challenges.

9. If you could spend a day working in any technology role, such as software development, cybersecurity, AI, data science, UX design, or engineering which would you choose and why?

This helps us understand your interests and aspirations.

10. Who inspires you, and what qualities do you admire about them?

Inspiration can come from anyone—a family member, teacher, friend, public figure, or someone in technology.

11. Imagine you're designing an app or website for students your age. What features would you include to make it useful and enjoyable?

This explores creativity, user-focused thinking, and innovation.

12. What skills would you like to develop over the next few years, and how do you think they could help you in the future?

We're interested in your goals and willingness to grow.

13. How do you think technology can make the world a better place, and what role would you like to play in shaping that future?

There are many ways to make a positive impact through technology.

14. Some people think technology careers are only for certain types of people. What would you say to another young woman who was unsure whether she belonged in tech?

This encourages confidence, reflection, and supporting others.

15. Why would you like to take part in this technology programme or opportunity, and what do you hope to gain from the experience?

We want to hear about your ambitions, curiosity, and what success looks like to you.

These questions are designed to create a welcoming interview environment that values potential, curiosity, and confidence over existing technical expertise. They encourage students to recognise their transferable skills, express their ideas openly, and see technology as a field where diverse perspectives and experiences are both valued and needed.