

LESSON 10

SUCCESSING AT JOB INTERVIEWS

Goal:

Equip students with the basic techniques they need to be successful at job interviews.

OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to:

- Practise relaxation techniques to reduce nerves and tension
- List actions they can take to properly prepare for job interviews
- Demonstrate and describe correct ways to enter and exit job interviews
- Describe ways to prepare for interview questions
- List common interview questions and responses
- Accurately describe the fundamentals of the S.T.A.R. interviewing technique
- Give examples of appropriate questions to ask during job interviews

MATERIALS

Fail vs Nail video

Teaching notes on relaxation

Teaching notes on the S.T.A.R. technique

Teaching notes on common interview questions

Job Interview student worksheets

Student workbooks

Introduction: Students will be asked to watch the first half of the Fail vs Nail video. Direct them to take notes about Emily's entry, overall behaviour and management of props, such as her handbag and coffee. Remind students to reflect on some of the ideas they learned from Lesson 9 about positive interview presentation and personal branding. Pause the video ahead of the interview section.

Directed discussion: Lead a discussion based on students' notes about the video to include:

- Managing nervousness before interviews (mention relaxation and breathing)
- Leaving enough time to arrive
- How early is appropriate to arrive
- Planning the journey
- Comfortable, appropriate dress
- Correct ways to enter and exit a formal interview
- Information to bring along

Development: Guide students to practise a common calming technique through breathing (see teaching notes).

Talk about the importance of researching before an interview to reduce nerves and convey interest in an organisation. Discuss things that Emily could have done to improve her answers to interview questions.


List common interview questions on the board. Use the teaching notes as a guide.

These can include:

- Tell me about yourself?
- What do you know about our organisation?
- Why do you want to work for us?
- Why are you leaving your present job?
- What are your strengths/weaknesses?

Get the class to suggest other questions they may have encountered. Students should list the questions in their workbooks.

Introduce the S.T.A.R. interview technique. Explain that many interviewers are looking for this technique in answers to their questions. Using the S.T.A.R. structure is also a way of making



sure that answers meet all the elements of the questions being asked.

Talk about behaviour: Discuss the actions Emily takes during the interview process that should be avoided and why. Discuss appropriate ways to end a job interview.

Activity: Class breaks off into threes to practice common interview questions using the S.T.A.R. model, taking turns as interviewer, interviewee and note-taking observer. Note: participants can use the resumés they have built in the Skillsroad Resumé Builder to help complete this exercise.

Class comes together to discuss what they have learned from practising the process. Emphasise the importance of practice in preparing for a job interview and note that this includes research on the organisation.

Demonstration of understanding: Class to construct a step-by-step list of the things they have learned they should do in order to adequately prepare for success at a job interview.

Class members write an explanation of the S.T.A.R. technique in their notebooks.

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TEACHER'S NOTES FOR PRE-INTERVIEW RELAXATION TECHNIQUES

The 15 minutes or so before an interview can be extremely harrowing, therefore it's important to know a technique you can use to keep anxiety at bay.

Breathing has a powerful influence on the physical body. People who are feeling nervous or worried tend to breathe more quickly (or hyperventilate) and this disturbs the balance between how much oxygen and carbon dioxide they take in. This can lead to chemical changes in the body, causing symptoms such as dizziness, confusion, light-headedness and breathlessness. Combined with an increased heart rate this can in turn lead to tingling in the extremities and muscle stiffness.

When a person is relaxed they breathe through the nose in an even, gentle way. Deliberately copying a relaxed breathing pattern seems to calm the nervous system; this calming is known as the Relaxation Response.

Controlled breathing can cause physiological changes that include:

- lowered blood pressure and heart rate
- reduced levels of stress hormones in the blood
- reduced lactic acid build-up in muscle tissue
- balanced levels of oxygen and carbon dioxide in the blood
- improved immune system functioning
- increased physical energy
- increased feelings of calm and wellbeing

EXERCISE 1

The normal breathing rate is 10 to 12 breaths per minute. This rate gives your body the right balance between oxygen and carbon dioxide. Measure your current breathing rate. What is it?

EXERCISE 2

The Calming Technique

This simple exercise helps you to gain control over your breathing to induce a calm state of mind. It takes almost no time, requires no special equipment and can be done almost anywhere!

1. Breathe in through your nose for four seconds. Try to use your stomach to draw the air in, instead of your chest, so that the breath is nice and deep. You can check where your breath is "going" by placing one hand on your stomach and one on your chest. The hand on your stomach should rise as you inhale.
2. Hold the breath for two seconds
3. Release the breath, taking six seconds to fully exhale through the mouth.
4. Pause slightly then repeat the process

EXERCISE 3

Posture

Recent research on body language reveals we can change other people's perceptions – and our own body chemistry – simply by changing body positions. Sample power-pose to try:

1. Plant your feet widely and stretch your arms in a v-shape overhead – feeling more powerful?



COMMON INTERVIEW QUESTIONS TO PRACTICE

■ Why do you want this job?

This is your opportunity to show off how much you know about the position because of your research and interest. You should also demonstrate why you'd be suitable for the job.

■ Tell me a bit about yourself...

Talk about your skills and strengths and how they relate to the role. For example, qualifications you may have attained, experience you've had and personal attributes that you can bring to the role. It's also a good opportunity to talk about any extra-curricular activities you've been involved in that demonstrate positive attributes that would be an asset to any organisation.

■ What do you know about our business/ company/organisation?

Make sure you know what the company does. Give examples of the type of work they do or services they provide. It is good to show awareness of any recent projects that the organisation is working on – you can usually access information about these matters on the organisation's website or social media pages if they have them. Use Google to find out more!

■ Why do you want to work for us?

It's a good idea to highlight any positive information you have found out about the business when you answer this question and to explain why you think this would be a great organisation to work for. Demonstrate your motivation for taking the role e.g. "I want to work here because I have a qualification in

Business Administration and I know this position will give me the opportunity to practice the new skills I have learned.

■ Why are you leaving your present job?

Under no circumstances should you use this question to speak negatively about your previous employer. Use your answer to emphasise ways in which the new role offers opportunities for your career and development. You may also mention why the previous role no longer suits your abilities if that is the case.


■ What work experience do you have?

This one is easy. Here you can list all the experiences you have under your belt. Remember, if you haven't had any formal experience, it is ok to talk about other activities you've been involved in and which have given you the skills to contribute to the job. Don't forget the value of mentioning work experience and volunteer work, as these activities play a vital role in developing teamwork, leadership, listening, communication, and relationship-building skills.

■ What are your strengths?

Everyone should know three of their strengths and how they benefit any business. Make sure you have yours ready in advance.





■ What do you think you will find challenging in this job?

It's ok to admit if you feel daunted by some of the tasks ahead, but remember to confirm that you are up for the challenge and excited about learning new skills along the way. Be honest, yet hopeful about being able to overcome the obstacles that inevitably play a role in any new job.

■ Where did you find out about this position?

Most positions are advertised through personal networks, but it's important to demonstrate your motivation for seeking out the work. Don't just pass over this question – it's an important chance to show your initiative in looking for employment.

■ Where do you live? How would you travel to and from work?

Use this question to demonstrate that you have an understanding of the location of the role, along with a plan to ensure you will be able to reach work on time.

THE S.T.A.R. TECHNIQUE FOR ANSWERING INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The S.T.A.R. technique is regarded as an objective, professional way to evaluate whether the skills, qualities and experiences candidates have are a fit for the position on offer. It is therefore a common interviewing technique used by many Australian employers.

Preparing your students to respond to interview questions following the S.T.A.R. structure will ensure their answers showcase their abilities in the context of the job they are applying for – placing them ahead of the competition.

The S.T.A.R. technique is a structured method of responding to interview questions using these three steps:

1. **Describing a Situation and/or Task**
2. **Describing the Action taken**
3. **Describing Results achieved**

Situation or Task

Describe the situation you were in and/ or the tasks you needed to accomplish. You must describe a specific event or situation. Give enough details to make sure the interviewer understands. The situation can be taken from a previous job, from volunteer experience, or any other event that addresses the question.

Action you took

Describe the action you took. 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.

Results you achieved

Describe the positive outcome you achieved. What happened? How did the event end? What did you accomplish? What did you learn? Demonstrate your motivation for taking the role.

SAMPLE QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS USING THE S.T.A.R. TECHNIQUE

Question:

Describe a time when you had to work in a team?

Answer following the S.T.A.R. technique:

■ **Situation/Task:** (Describe the situation you were involved in or the task you had to achieve)

When I worked in the hardware store we were often understaffed when people were on leave. One week three people were away, and the remaining team members were responsible for packing away two pallets of paint before midday, while still performing customer service and other duties.

■ **Action:** (Describe specifically what you had to do)

I nominated to clean the floor first thing, before things got busy, and started unpacking the pallets straight after that. I managed to get nearly all of the pallets unloaded before the 10:00am crowds, so I was able to help on the registers knowing we had plenty of time to finish with the pallets. The last few paint tins were unpacked by 11:00am, well before people started going for their lunch breaks.

■ **Result:** (Share the positive impact and outcome of your actions).

I managed to get the floor cleaned and to pack away most of the paint tins, leaving the rest of the team to deal with walk-in customers. The manager was really happy because everything got done, despite us being several team members down.



Question:

Describe a time when you've had to overcome a challenge?

Answer following the S.T.A.R. technique:

■ **Situation/Task:**

A customer asked me for a type of paint sample I couldn't find on the shelves.

■ **Action:**

I made sure that I was clear about what the customer wanted by asking her more questions. Once I realised that she couldn't help me any further I looked on our computer for more information and was able to discover the samples were of a type we'd never stocked before, but that we had some on a trial order that was due to arrive the next day. I was able to inform the customer of this, and was also able to add her order to our requisition.

■ **Result:**

The customer was pleased she could receive her paint the next day and the manager was glad to get the extra order for the new stock.

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