

# TARGETcareers lesson plan – transferable skills and competency questions



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## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### Competency questions in brief

<p><b>What are competency questions?</b></p>	<p>Competency questions are often used on online application forms for jobs and in job interviews. Competency questions focus on skills – ‘competency’ is effectively another word for ‘skills’.</p> <p>Competency questions ask you to give examples of times when you have used skills that the employer is looking for. For example, if an employer is looking for candidates with teamwork skills, you might be asked to give an example of a time when you’ve worked successfully in a team.</p> <p>Questions tend to be in the format ‘Give me an example of a time when you’ve shown X skill’ or ‘Tell me about a time when you’ve shown X skill.’</p> <p>Application forms and job interviews often contain a mixture of competency questions and other types of question.</p>
<p><b>Example competency questions</b></p>	<p>Example competency questions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Give me an example of a time when you showed good communication skills.</li> <li>• Tell me about a time when you had to use your problem-solving skills.</li> </ul> <p>Sometimes questions can be slightly harder, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Give me an example of a time when you had to use good communication skills to deal with a difficult person.</li> <li>• Tell me about a time when you had to use your problem-solving skills to achieve an important goal.</li> </ul>
<p><b>How to answer competency questions</b></p>	<p>You can use the STAR approach to help you answer competency questions. This involves mentioning the following in your answer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Situation:</b> give the interviewer some context by describing the situation.</li> <li>• <b>Task:</b> what was your goal?</li> <li>• <b>Action:</b> tell the interviewer what your specific actions were.</li> <li>• <b>Result:</b> the end result – make sure it shows you in a good light, even if the overall project was not a success.</li> </ul> <p>It’s good to have different examples to use for different questions, rather than using the same example for each question.</p> <p>It’s OK to use one or two examples from your studies but employers are usually more interested in examples from outside your studies. Most candidates will have similar qualifications, so things you’ve done outside the classroom will be more helpful in setting you apart.</p>

### Sample competency question and answer

<p><b>Q:</b> Give me an example of a time when you worked as part of a team.</p>	<p><b>A:</b> When I was in my drama club’s production of <i>Romeo and Juliet</i>, the actor playing Tybalt forgot to come on stage for one of the scenes I was in during a live performance. We had to carry on without him, so everyone who was on stage had to work together to get through the scene. I could remember some of his lines so I said them in the right places, as I was playing the only character on stage who could realistically say them instead of Tybalt. We found out afterwards that the audience hadn’t realised anything was wrong and had really enjoyed the scene.</p>
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