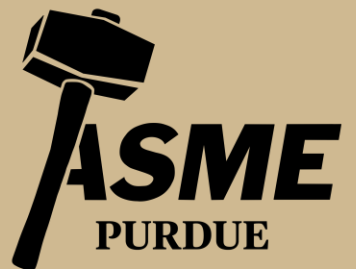


Behavioral Interviews: A Crash Course

ASME Purdue's Guide to Nailing Behavioral Interviews

March 10, 2026



About Me



Bryce Tucker

Junior in AAE

Professional Experience:

BLUE ORIGIN

Manufacturing Engineering Intern
New Glenn | Summer '25



Project Engineering Intern
Engine Control Systems | Summer '24

Campus Involvement:



External Vice President
Purdue ASME



Test Cell Lead Engineer
Purdue Space Program - Liquids



The Basics

What are behavioral interviews and why do companies use them?

Behavioral interviews are designed to evaluate:

1. Your ability to work on a team
2. Your past professional experiences
3. Your problem solving ability
4. Your interests and goals

Behavioral interviews are the most common form of interview, especially for internships. This is the “tell me about a time when...” interview format.

Companies will usually tell you when your interview will be technical rather than behavioral. If you want to learn more about technical interviews, check out the Resources folder!



Your Brand

Selling yourself to your interviewer

- Coincides with **your image**
 - Think of companies you recognize easily - everything is cohesive
- Your goal: **determine the key characteristics that define you**
 - **Then weave that into all of your interview responses**
- How do you want others to perceive you?
- What **sets you apart** from everyone else?
 - Culmination of skills, experiences, and personality
- What do you offer?
- What are your goals and interests?



If you remember one thing...

To win behavioral interviews:

Prepare stories and link them to how you would succeed at the company. **Show passion and interest** for what you're being interviewed for and represent what sets you apart.

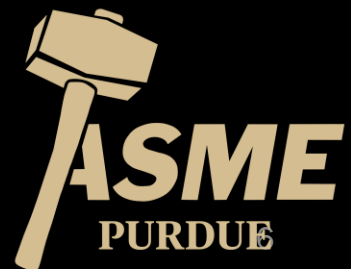
The worst thing you can do:

Think of stories on the fly and be vague about your interests. Give generic answers that any college engineer could provide.

What are they going to ask?

Typical interview contents

March 10, 2026



Tell me about a time when...

The classic behavioral interview question

- Behavioral interviews are **story-based**
- This is your chance to showcase how you handle **difficult situations decisively and effectively** while working with others
- Your goals:
 - Show your **competency** in professional settings
 - Reflect your **interest and passion** for the role you're being hired for
 - Display your **experiences** with poise and confidence
- **Prep for an interview** in the same way you'd prep for a big presentation
 - Practice, practice, practice
 - Research the company and role you're interviewing for – know what they're looking for

Typical Topics

The backbone of behavioral interview questions



Leadership



Teamwork



Project Experience



Conflict Resolution



Failure



Time Management

How to craft the perfect answer

Responding to behavioral interview questions

December 2, 2025



The STAR Method

Formatting stories to answer questions



- The STAR method offers a consistent format for structuring your responses to behavioral interview questions
- It helps you provide context and show why the story you're telling (and what you did) matters

S

Situation

- **Why the problem / situation existed**
- The project
- Technical details
- Relevant info

T

Task

- **Your scope of ownership**
- Did you identify the problem or were you given it?
- This often blends with Action

A

Action

- **What you did and why**
- Your thought processes to solve the problem
- Specific actions you took
- How you collaborated / used available resources

R

Result

- **The outcome of your action**
- Quantifiable metrics where possible
- Clear impact / improvement directly caused by your actions

Prepping STAR Stories

Getting ready for your interview

- **Brainstorm and reflect on your best moments** in past internships, project teams, classes, or research
- Going forward: **keep a running sheet of notes** where you can record stories during your internships/experiences
- Sometimes **the best stories don't have the biggest scope**
 - Short stories that **show your problem solving/leadership style** can occasionally be your best
- **Make notecards** – one per story
 - Consider the type of questions that each story could apply to
 - Often, one experience could be used to answer a **wide variety of questions** depending on how you spin it
- **More recent** experiences are generally better
- **Don't overexaggerate your scope** of ownership and impact
 - Interviewers can tell when you're taking credit for things you didn't do – it's not worth it



Outside of STAR: Research and Prep

It is to your advantage to know what they're looking for!

- **Read the job description!** What qualities do they care about?
- **Learn about the company**
 - Major product lines / projects
 - Sites and locations – where do you want to go? Where are you interviewing for?
- Practice, practice, practice!
 - It's easy to read your stories in your head and think you're good, **but practice them aloud**
 - **Talk to yourself or get a friend to practice interviews with!**

A Note on Expressing Interest

They want to hire someone who wants to work there!

- For internships, it's important to consider that **everyone is relatively unqualified**
 - Even if you've had 3 internships, that's still only 9 months of work experience
 - An internship interview will operate differently than an interview for a position where the candidate has 10 years of experience
- If you're a freshman or a sophomore looking for a role, you probably won't get the job because you are the most qualified person in the world
 - You'll get the job because you **click with your interviewer** and are **passionate about what you do**
 - You'll get the job because you have **a few good examples that show you know how to solve problems and deal with conflict in professional settings**
- So... **know what you're looking for, and tell your interviewer that!**
- In all of your responses, **be excited** about the work you've done and your past experiences

I Can't Think of Anything!

It happens!

- If you can't remember any of the stories you prepped or you don't think any apply:
time to think on your feet!
- **Take your time** – it's better that you sit there and brainstorm for 30-45 seconds and give a good answer than give a very fast, bad answer
- My approach:
 1. Think of your orgs/experiences
 2. Start with the first one that comes to mind
 3. Think of what you did that week or your major projects
 4. Brainstorm and focus on your actions/results

Question Examples and Some Comments

Always show your leadership and problem solving style in detail – why did you do what you did?

1. Tell me about a time when you had to solve a difficult problem.
 - Talk through what was going through your head and what you did in detail
2. Describe a situation where you had to work with a difficult team member.
 - Focus on how you kept progress moving and resolved conflicts
3. Tell me about a time when you failed and how you handled it.
 - Focus on how you minimized negative consequences and learned/improved
4. Tell me about a time when you had to learn something quickly.
 - Emphasize how you used available resources
5. Tell me about a time when you led a team through a complex situation.
 - Show your thinking and how you translated goals/vision for the team into execution
6. Tell me about a time when you received constructive feedback.
 - Show that you took it in stride and implemented it!
7. Tell me about a time where you had to juggle a lot of competing priorities. How did you handle it?
 - Explain how you choose where to spend your time
8. Tell me about a time when you had to mediate or resolve a conflict.
 - Keep it fair and equitable



“Do you have any questions for me?”

The typical closer

- Typically, companies will ask you at the end of your interview **if you have any questions for them!**
- **Prep these in advance** and have them ready, or ask follow-ups from earlier in your interview
- This is a great opportunity to learn more about the role and what you would be doing
 - After all, you want a job that you are going to enjoy
- **Good things** to ask about:
 - Day-to-day life on the team
 - Past intern projects
 - Your interviewer’s experiences (!!)
 - Exciting things happening at the company
- **Generally avoid** asking about:
 - Pay
 - Information you know is proprietary
 - Personal info about your interviewer



The Day of the Interview

How to seal the deal

December 2, 2025



Attire and What to Bring

Putting your best foot forward

- It's better to be **overdressed than underdressed!**
 - Business formal: blouse and pants / suit and tie / formal dress
- Come prepared with a **notepad** to jot down anything that may come up
- **Bring a bottle of water**
 - You'll be talking a lot
 - Taking a sip of water before answering gives you time to think and formulate your response
- Many interviews are virtual: **still dress up!**



Delivery

Deliver your response like a presentation for a class / design review

- Keep it concise: each response should be **under 2 minutes**
 - This gives them time to get through all of their questions!
- Don't talk too fast – **speak slower than you think you should**
- **Be excited** about what you're talking about!
- Remain professional, but don't be afraid to be a bit conversational and **make a connection with your interviewer**
- As mentioned initially, identify the **3 key values you want to show**, then weave them into all of your responses

Post-Interview

Following up!

- You can send a **follow-up email** thanking your interviewer for their time
 - Generally, I tend to think this won't impact the outcome that much
- Connect with your interviewer on LinkedIn – form a network. Maybe you can reach out again in the future!
- **Wait!**
- **If you haven't heard from the company in ~2 weeks**, send an email to the recruiter who offered you the interview to see if there are updates

Good afternoon [recruiter name],

I had my second round interview with [company] on [date] and I wanted to reach out to see if you had any updates regarding my status in the interview process. I interviewed for [title] in [location].

I'm thrilled to be considered for this position - thank you for the opportunity to interview! Let me know if there's anything you need from my end.

All the best,
[name]



Resources

Where to go to study and prep

March 10, 2026



Valuable Resources

How to practice!

- AI is pretty good at generating practice interview questions, and can cater to your resume
 - Ex. “Generate a list of behavioral interview questions given the below job posting and my resume, attached below”
- University of Virginia Sample Questions Doc
- **ASME office hours and prep events!**
- Get a friend to grill you
- Reach out to leadership or older members in your clubs who have experience interviewing



Thank You!

Questions?

Bryce Tucker | tucke193@purdue.edu

