

Behavioral Interview Prep Sheet with Sample Questions

Preparing to answer behavioral interview questions doesn't have to be difficult. This document will provide some "before" and "during" considerations as well as actual behavioral interview questions that will help you prepare.

Why is spending time preparing to answer behavioral interview questions important? Hiring managers understand that the best way to predict an applicant's future performance is to better understand how you have handled similar situations in previous circumstances. Candidates who prepare for behavioral interviews are better prepared for **all** types of interviews because you have real and relatable stories to tell.

The sample questions start on page 2, so skip on over if you want to start practicing. However, to properly prepare, consider the next couple of topics. Let's dig in.

Two Things to Do Before the Interview

Evaluate the Job Description

The job description will provide clues, so spend some time reviewing it. You will want to create two lists. The first list will be for the 'hard skills' the job description requires, such as how many years' experience you have in each competence. The second list will be for the 'soft skills' the company or position requires. For example, does the organization say they need team players? Someone with a strong attention to detail? Individuals who exhibit critical thinking and/or problem-solving skills? Someone who demonstrates superior customer service?

A traditional interview will primarily focus on your 'hard skills'. But I feel that focusing on the number of years someone has in a certain competence is flawed. Why? Because the number of years you have performed a task doesn't necessarily translate into **how good you are** at performing the task. Answering the traditional 'how many years' questions using the behavioral style will show your interviewer your experience and competency, thus making you more competitive.

Why? Because behavioral interviewing answers will focus on both your hard and soft skills. Your real and relatable stories will show that problems were solved, leadership was employed, conflicts were settled, and negotiation or motivation happened. Therefore, once you have a greater understanding of the hard and soft skills the company is looking for, you can begin to reflect upon experiences where you have proficiently displayed these skills.

As a side note: if you don't have a job description, think about the skills that might be necessary for the job or speak to a recruiter who is familiar with the company's culture.

Catalog some recent achievements.

The interview is a perfect time to discuss past achievements, so using the sample questions we have provided, sit down and write out some recent accomplishments. But be careful...this isn't about bragging. This exercise is about using past successes to demonstrate you have the skills the hiring team is looking for.

For example, if the job description states they are looking for a team player, describe where you volunteered to pick up extra SIVs in order to help the team meet a very aggressive project target. If they are

looking for someone with excellent problem-solving skills, be prepared to discuss how you handled a tough situation at a site. Perhaps you were recently promoted into a leadership role; use that accomplishment to highlight how you embraced the challenge of training/mentoring new team members, improved the company’s onboarding process, served on committees to enhance tracking and communicating project status, etc.

During the Interview: Don’t be afraid to share failures.

One of the two [simple rules of behavioral interviewing](#) is to keep things positive. But being positive doesn’t mean that you avoid real conversations. Do not make the mistake of thinking you should dodge discussing failures during an interview.

The reverse is true. You **should** be prepared to provide examples of when results didn’t turn out as you planned.

Why? Because every manager wants to work with professionals who self-assess and hold themselves accountable. When composing a response to these types of questions, think about your action or reaction to the situation. How did you handle it? Who did you communicate with? What did you learn? Did you change any of your personal processes to mitigate similar outcomes in the future?

Examples of Behavioral Interview Questions

This section includes both questions as well as some guidance regarding answers. As you assess each of these questions, don’t forget to consider potential follow-up questions the interviewer may have such as: What did you do next? Describe your thought process. What was the outcome? If you could change anything, what would you have done differently?

Topic and Sample Questions	
<p>Decision Making</p> <p>All jobs require some level of decision-making skills. While everyone expects managers to be highly efficient in this space, CRAs and other team members have to constantly make work-related decisions. Therefore, you need to exhibit a sound decision making process.</p> <p>These questions are intended to highlight your methodology for making decisions.</p>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell me about a difficult decision you have made in the last year. <i>[Tips: Explain what made it difficult for you. Be sure to describe your thought process. Be prepared to discuss if you should have (using hindsight) done something different.]</i> • What was the best decision you have made this past year? <i>[Tips: Along with describing the thought process you used to make the decision, be clear regarding why the decision was ‘best’ for you. Consider discussing the impact your decision has had on others. You can also consider describing your ‘best’ decision in contrast to the ‘worst’ decision.]</i> • Describe a situation where you had to make a decision even though information was limited. <i>[Tips: Speak to how you assessed if more information could be obtained.]</i>

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Outline any research or analysis you performed. Focus on being creative, following your gut instincts, and how you weighed your options.]

- Relate a circumstance when you made a decision based on your gut instinct. *[Tips: This question is intended to show the hiring manager if you can think on your feet and trust your instincts. Be careful though...you don't want the hiring manager to feel all of your decisions are made quickly so be clear on the data that helped you make the decision.]*

Attention to Detail

Having a strong attention to detail is important for clinical research professionals. Having an eye for details will enable you to catch and/or prevent errors. Team members with strength in this soft skill will also produce higher quality outputs. Show your attention to detail by providing...you guessed it...detailed answers.

- Tell me what you have learned about our company. *[Tips: this is an 'attention to detail' question because detail-focused people will research the company and role before the interview. Speak to specific concepts/products/projects that resonated with you.]*
- Describe a typical day in your current or past position. *[Tips: Point out small details. Consider providing a specific schedule on a typical day such as 'first thing in the morning, I spend 30 minutes in email', 'last 30 minutes of the day, map out tomorrow's schedule', etc.]*
- How much information do you need in order to start a new project? *[Tips: Speak to your methodology to confirm the project's scope, timeline, deliverables, and budget. Consider discussing how you remember these details by using notes, a tracker, etc.]*
- Describe a time when you didn't know the answer to a client's/team member's/supervisor's question. *[Tips: Have a real answer to this question. Show that you are confident in not always knowing the answer and asking clarification questions.]*

Adaptability/Flexibility

Being adaptable means you can adjust to new situations. And in the CRA Role, being flexible is extremely important.

When thinking about potential responses, keep in mind that future managers are looking for:

- Someone who will be helpful during times of change.
- Individuals who can adapt to different personalities in order to foster a collaborative work environment.
- Folks who will volunteer to help other team members or pick up additional responsibilities in an effort to support the team or project.

- We are thinking of changing our EDC (or CTMS or other) system. How would you help the team adjust to a new system? *[Tips: Speak to how you are open, or even*

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excited, to a new way of working. Explain how you will collaborate with your team as well as other departments to embrace the change. Highlight how you are willing to take on additional responsibilities to ensure a smooth transition.]

- What type of challenges do you feel you may experience if you join our team? *[Tips: If you have imagined yourself in this position, then you will have a great answer to this question. Consider things like understanding team or company culture, building effective relationships, and the basics of learning your responsibilities. List challenges and how you will address them.]*
- Tell me about a time when someone asked you to do something outside of your immediate role or expertise. *[Tips: Discuss how you embraced functions outside of your usual responsibilities. Outline where you sought guidance from others. Speak to what you did to ensure your success in the role, task or function.]*
- Describe an instance when you put your needs aside to help a co-worker understand a task. How did you assist him/her? *[Tips: Explain how you managed your priorities while assisting another team member. Consider discussing how you adapted your schedule, delegated tasks, or pulled in other team members. Provide details on what you did to assist, and the result.]*
- Provide examples of how you adjusted to changes you had no control over. *[Tips: The interviewer wants to see how you handle unexpected challenges and reprioritize on the fly. Outline steps you took to adjust, including relevant communications to obtain clarity on priorities, to ask for help, etc.]*

Analytical Skills/Problem-Solving

Without a doubt, great CRAs possess critical thinking skills. After all, terrific CRAs solve problems on a daily basis, so being able to exhibit how you analyze and address challenges is super important.

When you are composing responses to these sample questions, remember that:

- Your interviewer will be assessing your overall thought processes so be sure to share the logic behind the solution - **your** logic.
- She also wants to understand how you make decisions.
- Very importantly, your interviewer will be assessing how you communicate during these tough situations.

- Describe a situation where you had to solve a difficult problem. *[Tips: Explain your 'information gathering' process. Then highlight the thought process you used to solve the problem. And don't forget to discuss the outcome.]*
- When you have identified two or three options for a solution, how do you go about selecting one? *[Tips: Outline how you can assess the pros and cons of each solution. Articulate how you considered the overall well-being of the team or company when deciding which solution to implement. Communicate the result and be prepared to discuss whether you should have (using hindsight) selected a different solution.]*
- Describe a situation where you thought you 'solved' a problem, but it turned out to be incorrect. *[Tips: Show what steps you took to originally 'solve' the problem.]*

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Express accountability in accepting the mistake that the problem wasn't actually solved. Then address how you reassessed the problem and retackled it in order to come up with a successful solution. If you asked someone for help, describe who, why, and how. If not, describe why not. Discuss the end result.]

Communication

Showing strong communication skills goes well beyond exhibiting great language skills. I should note that every interview question will highlight your communication skills. Just remember that communication skills include more than just your verbal capabilities.

- Did you maintain eye contact during the interview?
- Was your body language open or closed?
- Did you express nervous habits such as touching your face, waving your hands or fidgeting?
- Was your tone and demeanor positive or negative?

How you engage with others will impact team morale and productivity. Therefore, when answering questions related to communications, be sure to assess the other party's role as well as the desired outcome.

- Describe a situation where you had a miscommunication with someone. *[Tips: Communication requires both a sender and receiver of information. Both parties are responsible for miscommunications or misunderstandings. Therefore, show accountability. Then speak to how you corrected or resolved the situation.]*
- Describe a time when you were able to successfully communicate with another person who didn't like you (or vice versa). *[Tips: Effective communication means being able to adapt to different or challenging personalities. Be positive in this response. Share facts, actions and your solution but be careful not to gossip or sound judgmental.]*
- Why do you believe you are a good fit for this team (or company or position)? *[Tips: The answer to this question will highlight your verbal and nonverbal communication skills. Be aware of your body language. Include details. Show enthusiasm. Express how the role aligns with your career goals. Outline what you feel you will contribute.]*

Creativity

I love hiring creative thinkers. While creative people are typically strong problem solvers, they also create situations and solutions from nothing. They are tremendous assets in a dynamic culture because creative people generate new ideas and approaches.

When you are preparing for these behavioral interview questions, consider where you have driven continual improvement initiatives in the past. For example, assess where you have helped restructure a process or a team in order to make things more fun, efficient, or effective.

- Tell me about a time when a coworker or manager had a 'this is how we have always done it' attitude when a new solution was proposed. *[Tips: Outline your approach to*

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persuade the coworker or manager to try something new. Explain how you used facts such as evidence of the effectiveness of the new method. Share the result.]

- Provide the details of a problem that you've solved uniquely or unusually. *[Tips: Your creative solution doesn't need to be grand. Just unique. Describe the problem, your thought process, the ultimate solution, and how you measured success.]*
- Explain a situation where you took an existing idea (or process) and improved upon it. *[Tips: Be sure to discuss how you assessed the original solution as well as show how much you loved creating a new solution. Discuss the impact the improvement had on the team/project.]*

Goal Setting

People do not face-plant into success. Successful individuals set goals and work towards obtaining those goals. You hear me talk about trying to understand candidates' career objectives all the time. Why? Because there is a methodology for successful goal setting and how good you are at this methodology directly impacts the level of success you will obtain.

This is an important interview topic because hiring managers want to assess the strategy **you** employ when setting goals or achieving objectives.

Your interviewer will also be evaluating your ability to set actionable plans in order to obtain the objectives you have either personally set or have been given by the project team.

- Explain your goal setting methodology. *[Tips: Be specific. Share your thought process, what measurement you used to label the result a success, how you stayed focused on the goal, and how you addressed failures.]*
- Describe where you have taken a risk in order to achieve a goal. *[Tips: Showing that you are willing to take risks when working towards a goal means that you believe the end results were worth it. It also shows you have tenacity, are flexible, and creative. Be specific in describing the goal, the risk, and the steps taken.]*
- What do you consider to be your greatest achievement so far and why? *[Tips: This doesn't have to be a grand example. But it needs to be something that meant a lot to you. Describe the achievement, why it mattered to you, and what you did to accomplish it. Explain any impact the achievement had on others.]*
- Tell me about a goal that you set but did not reach. *[Tips: A great answer will show that you self-assess. Explain what you learned and what you would do differently now. If you have achieved the goal since, explain how.]*

Teamwork

While the Clinical Research Associate role is very independent, teamwork skills are still extremely important.

When answering behavioral interview questions like those below, think of when you have collaborated with others to solve a problem, pitched in to help other team members, or contributed so a project could meet its deadline.

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- Describe a situation where you asked for help. *[Tips: Showing you are comfortable asking for help exhibits strong collaboration skills. Be sure to highlight your communications.]*
- Have you helped to onboard a new team member before? What was your role? What were the challenges? *[Tips: Ideally everyone helps onboard new team members. Did you mentor? Help with training? Describe your role, how you communicated, how you measured the new team member's success, and how you provided feedback to both the team member and leadership.]*
- Tell me about a recent situation in which you had to deal with a team member who wasn't performing. How did you address it? *[Tips: Express how you worked to understand the root cause, and where appropriate, where you worked with the team member to come up with an improvement plan. Stick to the facts. Avoid being gossipy or coming across as judgmental.]*
- Describe a situation where you have had to work as part of a team to achieve a result. What was your role and what was the outcome? *[Tips: Describe your role. Not your title, but the role you took. Focus on the collaborative aspects of your role. Where possible, describe how you mentored, motivated and encouraged the team to achieve a successful outcome.]*

Initiative

Team members who show initiative do things without being told. I love folks who take initiative because even though I have been in management for over three decades, I despise having to give basic work direction to others. Individuals with initiative figure out what they need to know, and what needs to be done. And then - they just go do it.

Also, folks with this soft skill don't give up when things get tough. They take advantage of opportunities, and they seem to always go 'above and beyond'. Can you tell this is one of my favorite soft skills? I am not alone, so be sure to show your interviewer that you are proactive, not reactive, by preparing for these questions.

- Describe how you stay motivated when working independently. *[Tips: Speak to why performing well in the role is important to you (work ethics, position aligns with career goals, etc.). Be prepared to discuss that you understand how your actions impact others.]*
- Tell me about a circumstance when you took on extra responsibility without being asked to do so. *[Tips: This doesn't have to be a grand example. But it should show that you were focused on helping others rather than having selfish motivations.]*
- Describe a situation where you showed persistence. *[Tips: You will want to highlight your determination. A great answer to this question will show how you stay committed to your goals, the team, or the company despite challenges. Share the result.]*

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- How will you work towards promotion in this role? *[Tips: Show that you understand where you need to shore up your skills in order to obtain a promotion. This will show you are forward thinking and proactive.]*

Integrity/Honesty

Warren Buffet nailed this topic when he quoted:

Somebody once said that in looking for people to hire, you look for three qualities: integrity, intelligence, and energy. And if you don't have the first, the other two will kill you. Think about it; it's true. If you hire somebody without integrity, you really want them to be dumb and lazy.

Our industry is overrun with fraudulent candidates, so showing you are an honest person is extremely important. And attention to honest candidates – you can do silly things to look dishonest! Consider these questions when demonstrating this soft skill.

- Tell me about a time when you were forced to make an unpopular decision. *[Tips: Your Interviewer wants to see if you are able to make decisions based on facts and what is right for the team/project/company, regardless of whether your team agrees with you.]*
- When was the last time you broke the rules? *[Tips: Your interviewer wants to assess your understanding of boundaries, your willingness to step up if you disagree with a current policy or rule, and your willingness to be held accountable if you do go outside of the norm.]*
- Describe a situation where you witnessed another team member do something you thought was inappropriate. *[Tips: Your interviewer wants to understand what types of situations you would address directly, and which ones you would escalate. Make sure you share the facts. Avoid providing an emotional response or sounding gossipy.]*
- Give a specific example of a policy you did not agree with but conformed to anyway. *[Tips: Did you respectfully express your concerns? Provide alternative solutions? Understand your limitations? Maintain your respect for authority? What was the outcome?]*

Leadership

Every hiring manager will assess leadership skills during an interview...regardless of the role. Why? Because companies want to onboard team members who can motivate others.

Managers are not necessarily leaders and leaders are not necessarily managers. And let's be honest, we can usually do without managers who aren't leaders. But an effective organization can never do without true leadership. Effective leaders have vision, and they guide change. They have a servant's heart and offer support while also offering structure, direction, mentorship, and guidance.

No matter what role you are interviewing for, be prepared to highlight your leadership skills.

- Give me an example of a time when you had to deliver bad news to a team member. *[Tips: Show how you relayed empathy without being too emotional. Express how you stayed focused and stuck to facts. Did you provide constructive feedback or*

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offer coaching to guide the team member in future situations? Share your communication approach and describe the end result.]

- Relate a situation when you delegated a project effectively. *[Tips: The interviewer wants to know how you manage your time and priorities. Show that you are confident in asking for help. Show you understand that although delegated, you were still accountable for the work, so show how you clearly communicated what needed to be done and within what timeframe. Then show how you managed to ensure the delegated tasks were completed properly.]*
- Tell me about a time when you had a team member not carrying their full workload or not meeting their commitments. *[Tips: Show how you addressed the situation directly. Use facts and express your desire to do the right thing for the overall team and company. Express how you worked to understand the root cause, and where appropriate, where you worked with the team member to come up with an improvement plan. If you weren't the supervisor, describe how you escalated as appropriate.]*
- Describe a situation where you handled conflict on a team. *[Tips: Focusing on your communication skills is a great approach to this question. Show how you were able to remain calm. You want to explain how you considered all sides of the disagreement and then worked with the team to reach a solution or compromise.]*
- Tell me about a team project that you noticed was falling behind. What did you do? *[Tips: Speak to how you jumped in to help. Be sure to show that you collaborated instead of steamrolled. But...if leadership or coaching was needed, express those details too.]*

Planning and Organization/Time Management

Every company wants to hire folks who have strong time management and organizational skills because every manager wants to know if you can effectively prioritize your workload and meet your deliverables. Likewise, your future manager wants to know how you approach large projects. How do you break down large projects into bite-sized chunks? What is your approach to scheduling tasks in order to meet deadlines and milestones?

But just because time management skills are likely to be the most sought-after, don't pretend that you have never missed a deadline or had to ask for an extension. The exhibition of time management and organizational skills also includes prioritization (as well as reprioritization) of tasks. And, this will include how you communicate when things may be off track.

- Tell me about a time when you missed a deadline. *[Tips: Do not answer this with 'I have never missed a deadline'. Have a real example. Be sure to discuss how you addressed it, who you communicated with, and what you put into place to not repeat the error.]*
- What tools and/or technology do you use to keep your tasks and/or projects organized? *[Tips: It matters less what tools and/or technology that you use. It matters more that you have a structured method for tracking and prioritizing the*

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details of each task and project. Be detailed and include examples of how your methodology works.]

- Describe a time when you had several projects, tasks, or assignments due at the same time. How did you prioritize them? ***[Tips: This is a great question to show your decision-making capabilities as well. Describe how you determined what tasks needed to be completed first. Did you seek guidance from management? Did you ask for help? Did you delegate?]***

Preparing for Behavioral Interview Questions isn't Difficult...

...but it does take time. Invest in yourself by spending time to properly prepare. And if you have questions, [contact us](#).