

STAR Format

Write your reflection following this template, which uses the STAR format (Situation or Task/ My Actions/ Result), a format that job interviewers use when they ask you questions that start with “Tell me about a time in which you ...” [used actions that demonstrate a professional skill to resolve a situation or complete a task]; for example, “Tell me about a time when you solved a complex problem quickly.”

Situation/ Task (75-125 words; 3 sentences)

Sentence 1: Describe a coursework situation you experienced or task you worked on.

E.g., *As part of my persona document assignment, I have been working on user interviews for an Instagram campaign, which will help to develop a user persona to direct the design process for the campaign.*

Note: the best reflections choose a situation/task that was challenging to you in some way.

Sentence 2: Identify the professional skill you used in the situation (see Tables of Professional Skills and Behaviours), and *when* you used it.

E.g., *Over the past week, I demonstrated **my critical thinking skills** when I helped to conduct user interviews.*

Sentence 3: Identify ONE accompanying professional behaviour (see examples in Tables of Professional Skills and Behaviours) and zero in on an *even more specific moment* during the situation or task.

E.g., *Specifically, before I did my interviews in class, I used **my critical thinking skills by approaching the challenge of preparing for, and executing, the interviews in a systematic way.***

This statement also sets up the next section (My Actions) by outlining specifically the ‘who’ was involved [‘I’], ‘what’ [what skills and behaviours], and ‘when’ it happened. It ‘sets the scene.’ It also provides a logical connection between sections.

Note 1. Boldface* the professional skill you’ve chosen from the [Tables of Professional Skills and Behaviours](#) (e.g., “**critical thinking skills**”).

Note 2. Boldface* the accompanying behaviour (see examples in [Tables of Professional Skills and Behaviours](#), e.g., “**by approaching the challenge of preparing for, and executing, the interviews in a systematic way**”).

Note 3. Consider using these sentence starters to help write this section:

- On [specific date], at [specific place], I worked on _____.
- As part of [project name], it was my responsibility to _____.
- As a member of [team description], I was involved with the _____.
- I demonstrated my _____ skill when I _____ [insert accompanying behaviour].



My Actions (350-450 words; 10-12 sentences)

Before you begin writing the My Actions section, make a list of *all* the actions that you took to resolve the situation or complete the task. Double check that these actions clearly provide evidence of, or demonstrate, the skill and behaviour that you identified in the previous section. Now use this list to write out exactly the steps *you* (and not your group or partner) took to resolve the specific situation or to complete the specific task. Tell it as a story.

E.g., To successfully conduct the user interviews in class, **I critically reflected on** what I needed to do to prepare for the interviews. **I decided** that I needed to practice the interview questions beforehand. So at home, **I developed** cue cards for each main question. Then I **practiced** both the primary and secondary questions until I only needed to glance down at the cue card to know what I had to say. At that point, **I knew** I could focus more of my attention on the content of the interviewee responses instead of solely focusing on what I would ask next. To successfully handle my turn as primary interviewer on the interview day, **I paid close attention** to the words chosen by interviewees when they answered my questions. Specifically, **I ensured** that I got all the required information **by asking** clarifying questions when any of their responses were vague or unclear. For example, **I had to handle** one interviewee who responded to my question, “How does the thought of attending university make you feel?” by saying that he felt excited and nervous. However, he did not elaborate much further and it was clear that both of these terms were quite ambiguous without elaboration. **I quickly recognized** that this short response would not provide enough insightful information because it did not highlight why he might be feeling that way. After tactfully **telling the interviewee** that the brevity of his answer was an issue for me, **I asked** a brief probing question to get the interviewee to clarify and elaborate on what specifically made them feel excited and nervous.

Note 1. Boldface* each action that you took (e.g., “I critically reflected on,” “I decided,” “I developed,” “I practiced,” “I knew,” “I paid close attention to,” “I ensured, by asking,” “I had to handle,” “I quickly recognized,” “by telling, I asked”).

Note 2. Make sure you use ‘I’ not ‘we’ when you describe your actions.

Note 3. Consider using these sentence starters to help you write this section:

- To successfully **complete** this task, I [verb] _____.
- To successfully **handle** this situation, I [verb] _____.
- Specifically, I [verb] _____.
- For example, I [verb] _____.



Result (75-125 words; 6 sentences)

Part 1: State what happened as a result of your actions.

E.g., After **I asked** these clarifying questions, the interviewees began to realize that they weren't providing enough detail and **my team-mates said they noticed participants were** providing more detail for questions that followed. When I asked clarifying questions, **I also signalled** my interest in their answers which made them excited to share more.

Part 2: State what new self-knowledge, learning, take-away thinking, or transfer to other situations you now have.

E.g., As well, because I was very familiar with the interview questions, **I spent more time thinking** about how to frame my probing questions to ensure that they were not leading. By taking the time to avoid any question pitfalls, **I helped ensure** that the answers I received were accurate reflections of my interviewees' lives, opinions and feelings. Ultimately, my team and I develop a more representative user persona and thus a more engaging Instagram campaign because of the accurate information I got. I believe that this situation clearly demonstrates my ability to **critically think through preparing for, and executing, thoughtful user interviews.**

Note 1. Boldface* the professional skill.

Note 2. Boldface* the actions you took to ensure a successful result.

Note 3: Use these sentence starters (or design your own) to help your writing:

- After I had done this, _____.
- My ability to _____, _____, and _____ caused _____.
- Because I was able to _____ and _____, the team/project/group/task _____.
- Ultimately, I _____.

