

# YOUR GUIDE TO UN COMPETENCY BASED INTERVIEWS

There are several different types of humanitarian interview questions that can be asked, and each require you to give slightly different types of answers.

## THREE EXAMPLES INCLUDE:

- Credential verification
- Experience verification
- Situational, behavioural, or competency-based questions

It's important to prepare for your interview – in doing so you will feel more in control, calm and collected, which will help you perform to your highest abilities.

## JOB INTERVIEW TIPS:



Research the company and the role



Practise interview-style questions beforehand



Prepare answers for different types of questions

Come up with examples of your skills and experience that align with the requirements of the job position.

## COMPETENCY INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:

A competency interview is a way to assess performance against the skills and knowledge required for the position. It's based on the understanding that past behaviour and experience is a good indicator of future performance and requires you to use real-life examples from your personal, academic or professional life.

## THE UN COMPETENCIES:



Communication



Teamwork



Planning & Organising



Accountability



Creativity



Client Orientation



Continuous Learning



Technological Awareness



Integrity



Cross-Cultural Sensitivity



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## Tips from the CTG Rapid Recruitment and Deployment (RRAD) Team

The CTG RRAD team drive the recruitment process, sourcing, vetting and rapid mobilisation of CTG-staffed projects in conflict-affected countries. They are a dedicated team with over 15 years' combined experience staffing humanitarian projects.

Our RRAD team have conducted thousands of interviews for humanitarian aid and development roles and are able to give insights and provide 'insider' tips for how to successfully prepare for a humanitarian interview.

### TIPS FROM THE CTG RRAD TEAM:



**AJIT KOSHY,**  
RRAD Team Lead

Ajit says to structure your answers using the STAR principle.



**FITSUM DEMEKE,**  
Talent Management Specialist

"The best ways to prepare for an interview are to research the role and the company you are interviewing for, and to also practise giving answers to interview questions."



**SAWSAN SHALABI,**  
Talent Management Specialist

"The first point of reference is the vacancy announcement. Always read the vacancy notice because CTG will always list the competencies that are most relevant for that position. You can find references on the [CTG jobs page](#)."

### THE STAR PRINCIPLE:

S

**SITUATION:**  
Describe the situation you were in.

T

**TASK:**  
Explain what the task was that needed to be completed.

A

**ACTION:**  
Explain what you did and how and why you did it.

R

**RESULT:**  
Describe the outcome of your actions.

# EXAMPLES OF COMPETENCY-BASED QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

## 1. TELL ME ABOUT A TIME WHEN YOU HAD TO CONVEY A MESSAGE TO PEOPLE OF ANOTHER CULTURE BUT DID NOT SPEAK THE LANGUAGE?

For this question, which is about Cross-Cultural Sensitivity, explain how you went about doing it in a way that they understood. What kind of challenges did you deal with and how did you get passed them?

*For example...*

*Working with beneficiaries when there is a language barrier is challenging. I was once part of a taskforce that needed to roll out an app that assisted beneficiaries with ordering food parcels. Because I was not native to that area, a lot of the beneficiaries did not speak the same language as me. I found a man within the area who could translate for me and it was a huge help. Since then I have made an effort to learn the dialect of the duty station I am tasked to.*

**S - Situation:** Working with beneficiaries when there is a language barrier is challenging.

**T - Task:** I was once part of a taskforce that needed to roll out an app that assisted beneficiaries with ordering food parcels. Because I was not native to that area, a lot of the beneficiaries did not speak the same language as me.

**A - Action:** found a man within the area who could translate for me and it was a huge help.

**R - Result:** Since then I have made an effort to learn the dialect of the duty station I am tasked to

## 2. TELL ME ABOUT A TIME WHEN YOU ADMITTED MAKING A MISTAKE AND ACCEPTED RESPONSIBILITY FOR IT.

This question is about **Accountability**, another important competency in the workplace. Explain what you did, what you learnt, and how you changed.

*For example...*

*I was once in charge of leading a team of staff on a project.*

*I was drowning in work, from the day-to-day operations, to making important decisions. I had to learn that the best leaders know how to delegate. Since then, I have become much better at assigning responsibility to my team members and in the process helping them grow.*

## 3. WERE YOU EVER IN A SITUATION WHERE A TEAM WAS NOT COOPERATING AND WORKING POSITIVELY TOWARD THE TEAM GOAL?

**Teamwork** is perhaps one of the most important skills you'll need to learn if you are going to be successful, and often the most challenging. To answer this question, talk about a specific experience working in a team and why you did it that way, as well as the outcome.

*For example...*

*I was once in a position where we were coming up to a big deadline and I could see that we were not going to meet it. One of my team members was not communicating about their progress and when they would miss a deadline, it had a ripple effect on the rest of us. Instead of assuming failure, we reached out to her and offered our assistance. Together we found solutions to the obstacles she was facing and, in the end, our willingness to help encouraged her to be more communicative and engaged, thereby improving team morale and productivity.*

## 4. TELL ME ABOUT A TIME WHEN YOU SAW AN EMPLOYEE OR STAKEHOLDER DOING SOMETHING THAT YOU THOUGHT WAS UNETHICAL.

This question is about **Integrity**. Remember to note down the situation as well as what you did, and why you did it this way.

*For example...*

*Very early on in my career as a driver I noticed my colleague behaving erratically. The first incident involved him speeding and driving irresponsibly. I tried to provide guidance to help him improve, but the problem persisted, so I notified our Convoy Leader. We discovered he was driving while intoxicated, putting our work and lives at risk, and this led to his contract being terminated.*

# EXAMPLES OF COMPETENCY-BASED QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

5.

## TELL ME ABOUT YOUR AREAS OF PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND WHAT ACTIONS YOU'RE TAKING TO ADDRESS THEM?

This question is based around your **Commitment to Continuous Learning**, growing and developing both personally and professionally. Explain the courses, lessons, sessions you take on the side about various topics. Why are you taking these and what do you want to achieve with it?

*For example...*

*I am constantly on a mission to better myself both personally and professionally. I make it my duty to participate in regular free courses to build myself and credibility resulting in more confidence and increasing working opportunities. I am always up for a challenge and enjoy learning new things.*

6.

## HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR COMMUNICATION SKILLS?

This question is about **Communication** and how clearly and effectively you speak and write. How you listen, interpret messages and how you respond appropriately. What could you do to become better at communicating with others?

*For example...*

*Through various work experience and working in different teams, I have developed strong communication skills. I am able to attentively listen to others' opinions and clearly convey an appropriate response. I am able to express myself in a clear and positive way both orally and written. Being transparent and honest often makes it easier for me to communicate knowing I have good intentions.*

7.

## DESCRIBE AN OCCASION WHEN YOU HAD TO PREPARE IN ADVANCE FOR MEETING OR PROJECT.

This question is to establish your **Planning & Organising** methods. Can you use your time efficiently? What did you have to prepare

and did you complete it? What could you have done better?

*For example...*

*My manager had to go on early maternity leave due to complications and she tasked me with presenting a quarterly report to the board of directors. I was given a very short deadline so I worked overtime to prepare for it and used all the resources I had at my disposal to pull it together. In the end, the board were impressed with my presentation but I definitely could have used more time to perfect it. In the future I would make sure to manage expectations properly so not as to give myself such a tight deadline.*

8.

## TELL ME ABOUT A TIME WHEN YOU INSPIRED CREATIVITY IN A TEAM?

This question asks about your **Creativity** and how creative you get when it comes to change. What are the risks involved in pursuing a new idea or approach? What was the progress on your new idea/approach?

*For example...*

*I love challenging and engaging with my teammates and leaving them feeling inspired. Previously, I've followed 2 easy steps to encourage creativity and innovation: 1. Change of scenery to spark new ideas and perspectives; 2. Brainstorming sessions. Pursing new approaches is always a challenge as it can take some time for new processes to become habit, and there will always be kinks to iron out, but innovation is essential to progress.*

NOW THAT YOU'VE BEEN THROUGH A FEW COMPETENCY INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS, YOU'RE BETTER PREPARED FOR A UN JOB INTERVIEW. VISIT OUR JOBS PAGE, UNDER THE WORK WITH US SECTION ON OUR WEBSITE:  
<https://ctg.org/work-with-us/jobs/>

FOR MORE TIPS AND INSIGHTS FROM OUR TEAM, VISIT OUR NEWS & INSIGHTS PAGE ON OUR WEBSITE:  
<https://ctg.org/engage/news-insights/>