iSpring

TOP 14

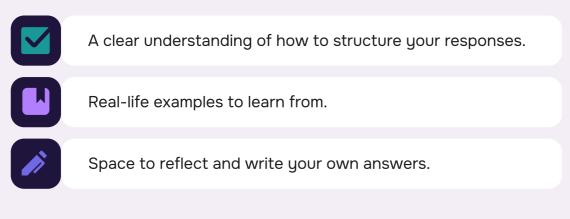## interview Questions answered with STAR

Introduction

Whether you're actively job hunting or just thinking about your next career move, preparing for interviews can feel overwhelming — especially when you're not sure what questions to expect or how to answer them effectively.

This guide is here to help you feel confident and prepared. Inside, you'll find the 14 interview questions that instructional designers are asked most often, along with a simple and powerful method for crafting your answers: the **STAR** technique.

By the end, you'll have:

A clear understanding of how to structure your responses.

Real-life examples to learn from.

Space to reflect and write your own answers.

Let's get you ready to shine in your next interview.

What is the STAR method — and why use it?

When you're asked a question like, "Tell me about a time when something went wrong" or "What are you most proud of?," it's easy to either freeze or ramble.

The **STAR method** helps you stay focused and clear. It gives structure to your story and shows your interviewer that you can reflect, analyze, and act with intention.

STAR stands for:

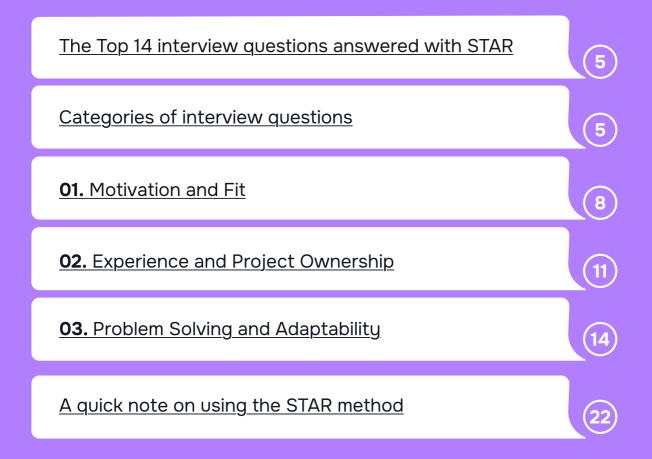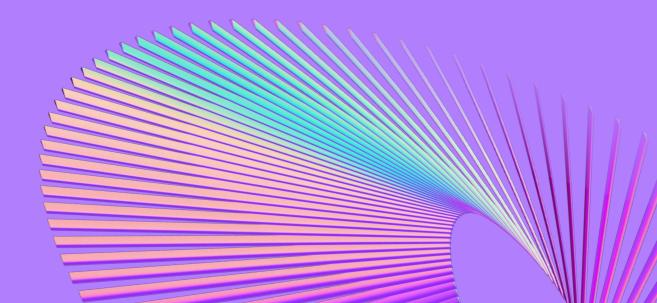|	
Situation	What was the context? When and where did it happen?
Task	What was your role or responsibility at that moment?
Action	What exactly did you do? What steps did you take?
Result	What was the outcome? What changed because of your actions?

Example:

Q **Tell me about a time you had to manage a tight deadline.**

S At my previous company, we were tasked with launching a compliance training course within two weeks — half the usual timeline.

T As the instructional designer, it was my job to structure the course, write scripts, and coordinate with the subject matter expert and the video team.

A I created a condensed workflow and introduced daily syncs with the SME and content producer. I also reused elements from a previous course to speed up scriptwriting.

R We delivered the course on time. It passed compliance review with zero revisions, and over 90% of the employees completed it within the first week of release.

When you use **STAR**, you move beyond buzzwords and generalities. You tell real, specific stories — the kinds that make interviewers remember you.

And here's the secret: you don't need dramatic success stories. Even a small project can become a strong answer when told using the STAR structure.

Overview

The Top 14 interview questions answered with STAR

In this section, you'll find 14 of the most common questions instructional designers are asked in job interviews. For each question, you'll see:
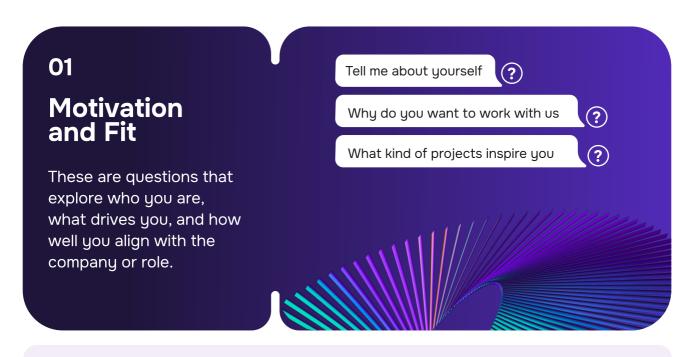
A space to reflect and outline your STAR response.

A full sample answer using the STAR method.

Occasional tips to help you strengthen your storytelling.

Categories of interview questions

01

Motivation and Fit

These are questions that explore who you are, what drives you, and how well you align with the company or role.

Tell me about yourself ?

Why do you want to work with us ?

What kind of projects inspire you ?

The purpose is to help employers understand your values, long-term vision, and how you see yourself within their culture.

02

Experience and Project Ownership

These are questions that assess your background, autonomy, and ability to handle typical tasks in the role.

Tell me about a project you're proud of ?

What is a course you developed from scratch? Walk us through your process ?

How do you handle subject matter experts who don't deliver on time ?

The purpose is to help employers understand your values, long-term vision, and how you see yourself within their culture.

03

Problem Solving and Adaptability

These are situational questions that test your judgment, resilience, and ability to think under pressure.

Tell me about a time that something went wrong in a course launch. What did you do ?

Describe a time you had to solve a conflict in a team or with a stakeholder ?

Have you ever had to change your approach halfway through a project? Why? ?

The purpose is to help employers understand your values, long-term vision, and how you see yourself within their culture.

04

Collaboration and Communication

These are questions about how you work with others — SMEs, teammates, clients, and managers.

Describe your process for collecting feedback and iterating on a course ?

How do you build trust with subject matter experts ?

The purpose here is to see emotional intelligence, transparency, and proactive communication.

05

Self-Awareness and Growth

These are reflective questions about your development and areas for improvement.

What is something you would do differently on a past project ?

What skill are you currently working on ?

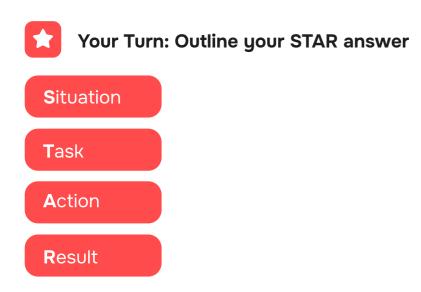What feedback have you received that changed how you work ?

The purpose here is to highlight your openness to feedback, willingness to grow, and ability to self-reflect.

Now that you've seen the five core categories of interview questions, it's time to dive into each one and reflect on your own experiences. Let's begin.

01. Motivation and Fit

Question 1: Tell me about yourself

This question might seem simple, but it's often the hardest to answer well. It's not about repeating your CV. It's about framing your story in a way that shows who you are and what value you bring.

⭐ **Your Turn: Outline your STAR answer**

Situation

Task

Action

Result

💎 **Sample STAR answer:**

I started as an ESL teacher, which gave me a strong foundation in lesson planning and learner engagement. Over time, I became increasingly interested in digital education.

I decided to shift into instructional design to help create scalable learning experiences for adult learners. My goal was to combine pedagogy with modern tech tools.

I enrolled in a course on learning experience design, completed several freelance projects, and then joined a team where I led the design of a 10-module onboarding program for a tech company.
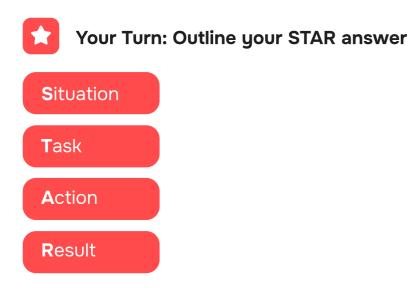
The course helped reduce time-to-productivity by 30%, and I received recognition from our L&D director for clarity and interactivity in the materials. Today, I specialize in designing learner-centered, data-informed content that balances business goals with user needs.

💬 **Tip #1: Use action verbs.**
Words like "led," "created," "analyzed," "launched," and "collaborated" bring your story to life. Avoid passive phrasing — you want your role to be clear and active.

Question 2: Why do you want to work with us?

This question helps interviewers understand how much you've researched the company and whether your personal goals align with their mission and culture. Avoid vague answers like "I like your values" — be specific and tie your response to your experience, aspirations, or preferred ways of working.
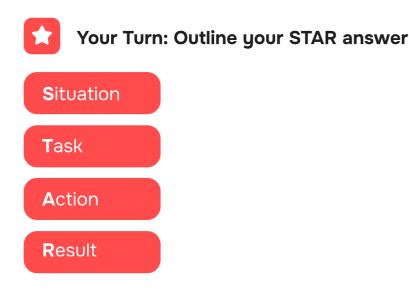
⭐ **Your Turn: Outline your STAR answer**

Situation

Task

Action

Result

💎 **Sample STAR answer:**

S — In my last role, I focused on creating onboarding programs for new managers in fast-paced tech environments.

T — I realized that what motivates me most is building courses that not only teach but also inspire real behavioral change — especially in companies that value autonomy and feedback-driven culture.

A — When I discovered your company, I saw a strong match. Your focus on scalable, human-centered design and your open-source learning philosophy resonate deeply with how I approach instructional design.

R — I'm excited about the opportunity to contribute to a team where learning is treated as a product and where I can keep growing both as a designer and a strategist.

Question 3: What kind of projects inspire you?

This question gives you space to express your values and passion. Avoid buzzwords or generic phrases like "creative" or "impactful" — instead, describe the type of work you thrive on and why. Ideally, choose something that aligns with the company's mission or typical projects.
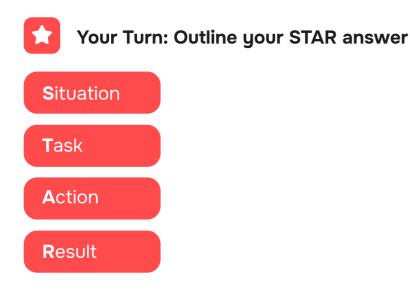
⭐ **Your Turn: Outline your STAR answer**

Situation

Task

Action

Result

💎 **Sample STAR answer:**

S At one point, I joined a project where we needed to create a blended learning experience for a client with zero internal L&D infrastructure.

T My job was to design a modular course that could be scaled and adapted over time, even by people with no instructional background.

A I developed a plug-and-play framework using microlearning units, embedded templates, and custom facilitator guides. I also introduced a feedback loop to improve based on learner data continuously.

R The client not only adopted the program, but began using it as a blueprint for future internal training. Projects like this inspire me — where learning design solves real problems and gives people tools they can keep using.

02. Experience and Project Ownership

Question 4: Tell me about a project you're proud of.

This is your chance to shine. Choose a project where your role was clear and your contribution made a measurable difference. Focus on what made the project meaningful, what challenges you overcame, and what you learned.

⭐ **Your Turn: Outline your STAR answer**

Situation

Task

Action

Result

💎 **Sample STAR answer:**

S At my previous job, we partnered with a government agency to build a public-facing course on digital security for small business owners. The topic was highly regulated and time-sensitive.
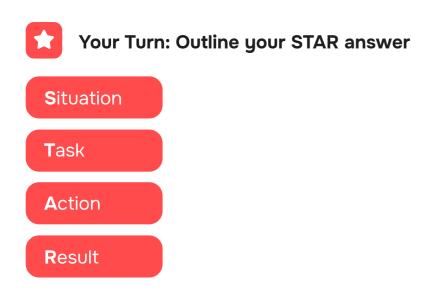
T I was responsible for the entire instructional design process — from audience research to scripting and prototyping — while collaborating with legal and policy teams.

A I ran a short discovery sprint and then proposed a scrollable course format with decision-based scenarios and built-in toolkits. I also coordinated with translators and accessibility experts to ensure inclusivity.

R The course reached over 40,000 learners in its first quarter, with a completion rate above 85%. The agency later used the format as a benchmark for other initiatives. It was one of the first projects where I saw design, impact, and purpose come together.

Question 5: What's a course you developed from scratch? Walk us through your process.

This question is designed to reveal how you think, plan, and collaborate. Interviewers want to hear not just what you did, but how you approached each step. Be sure to highlight how you handled ambiguity, balanced business needs with learner needs, and made key decisions.
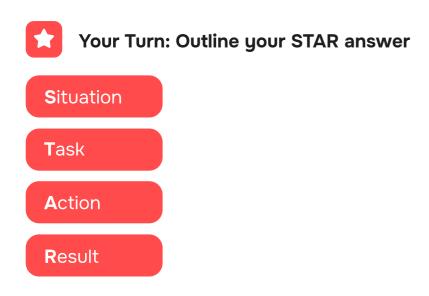
⭐ Your Turn: Outline your STAR answer

Situation

Task

Action

Result

💎 Sample STAR answer:

S — A mid-sized IT company approached us to create a training course for their new customer success team. They had no existing learning materials or internal trainers.

T — I was asked to develop a course from scratch that would help new hires master product knowledge and soft skills within their first 30 days.

A — I started with a needs assessment — interviewing managers and shadowing onboarding sessions. Then I built a course framework using a blended model: asynchronous video lessons, interactive practice, and live Q&A. I wrote the scripts, prototyped the eLearning modules, and facilitated the pilot run.

R — The course reduced time-to-proficiency by 40%. New hires reported greater confidence in their first customer interactions, and managers requested that we scale the course to other regions.

Question 6: How do you handle subject matter experts who don't deliver on time?

This question tests your ability to manage relationships and keep projects moving under pressure. Employers want to know that you can handle delays diplomatically — without damaging collaboration. Focus on your communication style, planning habits, and ability to de-escalate tension.

⭐ **Your Turn: Outline your STAR answer**

Situation

Task
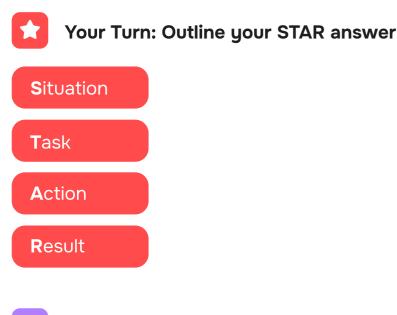
Action

Result

💎 **Sample STAR answer:**

S — On a tight-turnaround internal training project, the SME I was working with went silent for more than a week. Our script and storyboard were blocked, and deadlines were approaching.

T — As the lead instructional designer, I needed to move the project forward without harming the relationship or compromising quality.

A — I sent a check-in email with a summary of where we were stuck and offered two options: a brief call to unblock key points or for me to move forward with a draft based on existing materials. I also looped the project manager in so timelines could be adjusted if needed.

R — The SME appreciated the flexibility and opted for the call. We realigned quickly, and the draft moved forward. That experience led me to include early checkpoints and "Plan B" buffers for SME delays in future projects.

03. Problem Solving and Adaptability

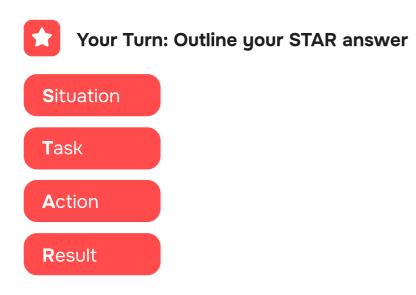## Question 7: Tell me about a time something went wrong in a course launch. What did you do?

This question is all about how you handle real-world pressure. Interviewers aren't looking for perfection — they're looking for ownership, problem-solving, and grace under fire. Be honest, but focus on what you learned and how you turned the situation around.

⭐ **Your Turn: Outline your STAR answer**

Situation

Task

Action

Result

💎 **Sample STAR answer:**

S A compliance course I designed for a client in the finance sector was scheduled to go live on the first day of the fiscal quarter. On launch day, several users couldn't access the course — the LMS had a configuration issue that blocked logins.

T I was responsible for managing the rollout and ensuring user access, so I had to troubleshoot quickly while maintaining client trust.

A I contacted the LMS support team immediately and created a parallel version of the course using a simpler delivery method (PDF + embedded quiz) that we shared with users manually. I also set up a temporary tracking spreadsheet so we could monitor completions and pass rates in real time.

R Within 24 hours, access was restored in the LMS, but 70% of users had already completed the temporary version. The client appreciated our responsiveness, and we later turned the workaround into a fallback protocol for future launches.

Question 8: Describe a time you had to solve a conflict in a team or with a stakeholder.

Conflict is inevitable in collaborative work — what matters is how you handle it. This question helps interviewers see whether you can stay professional, listen actively, and find win-win solutions.
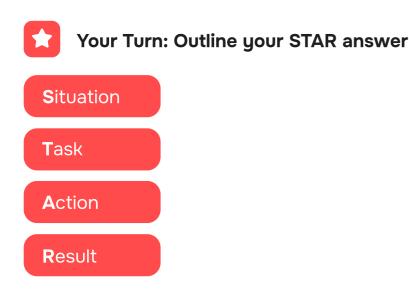
⭐ Your Turn: Outline your STAR answer

Situation

Task

Action

Result

💎 Sample STAR answer:

S While working on a blended course with a subject matter expert, we disagreed on the format. They wanted dense lecture-style videos; I advocated for scenario-based learning with interactivity.

T I needed to resolve the disagreement without damaging the working relationship while still delivering a product that met the learning goals and engaged the audience.

A I suggested we pilot both formats with a small learner group. I also prepared a short comparison of instructional outcomes between passive and active formats, supported by learner feedback from past projects.

R The pilot clearly showed higher engagement and retention in the interactive module. The SME was convinced, and we ended up reworking the entire course based on the pilot. The relationship remained positive, and we've collaborated on two more projects since then.

Question 9: Have you ever had to change your approach halfway through a project? Why?

This question explores adaptability. Employers want to know if you can let go of a plan when it's no longer working — and whether you can pivot without chaos. Emphasize your reasoning and how you kept things on track.
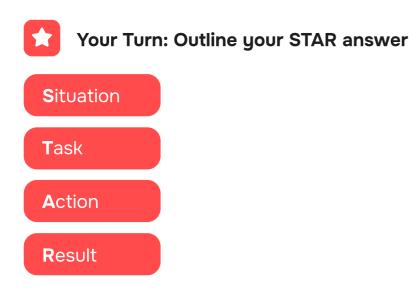
⭐ **Your Turn: Outline your STAR answer**

Situation

Task

Action

Result

💎 **Sample STAR answer:**

S Midway through building a course for field technicians, we learned that the client was switching their training delivery from laptops to mobile devices. Our current format — heavy slides and simulations — was no longer a good fit.

T I had to redesign the course structure and assets for mobile-first learning without pushing the launch date back.

A I created a lightweight, scroll-based version of the course using microlearning blocks and mobile-friendly interactions. I also collaborated with the dev team to optimize performance and speed.

R The redesign was completed on time. Post-launch feedback showed increased course completion and satisfaction, especially among technicians in the field who appreciated the flexibility.

Question 10: Describe your process for collecting feedback and iterating on a course.

This question reveals how you measure success, stay open to improvement, and treat learning design as an evolving product. Be sure to cover both how you collect feedback and what you do with it — from small fixes to strategic changes.
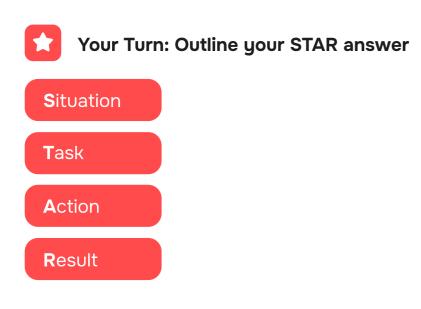
⭐ **Your Turn: Outline your STAR answer**

Situation

Task

Action

Result

💎 **Sample STAR answer:**

S   I was leading the development of a customer service training course for a large retail brand. After the initial rollout, some learners completed it quickly, while others dropped off before finishing.

T   I needed to understand why engagement was uneven and make informed improvements to both content and pacing.

A   I reviewed platform analytics to track completion and click-through patterns. I also sent out a short post-course survey and conducted interviews with five pilot learners. Based on the feedback, I shortened each module, added interactive moments earlier in the course, and clarified two confusing tasks.

R   After the updates, the course completion rate rose by 22%, and the learner satisfaction score jumped from 3.6 to 4.4 out of 5. I now build structured feedback cycles into every course I design.

Question 11: How do you build trust with subject matter experts?

Instructional designers often act as bridges between content experts and learning goals. This question helps employers assess your collaboration style. Show that you're empathetic, clear in your communication, and respectful of the SME's time and expertise.
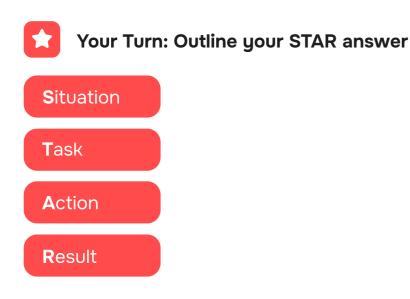
⭐ **Your Turn: Outline your STAR answer**

Situation

Task

Action

Result

💎 **Sample STAR answer:**

S I once joined a project partway through where the SME felt the learning team was "slowing things down" and didn't fully understand the product. They were hesitant to engage in content discussions.

T I needed to build rapport and reset the relationship to ensure a smooth collaboration and accurate course materials.

A I scheduled a 30-minute call to simply listen. I asked about their vision for the training and what had been frustrating so far. Then I clarified my role: not to "filter" their content, but to translate it into learning experiences. I also offered to draft the first outline based on previous materials — so they could respond, not start from scratch.

R That shift in tone helped. The SME became more responsive and even started suggesting quiz ideas. We wrapped the project on time, and they later requested to work with me on two new courses.

Question 12: What's something you would do differently on a past project?

This question isn't about failure — it's about growth. Choose a moment where you learned something valuable. Be honest, but avoid dwelling on blame. Show reflection and how you've applied that learning since.
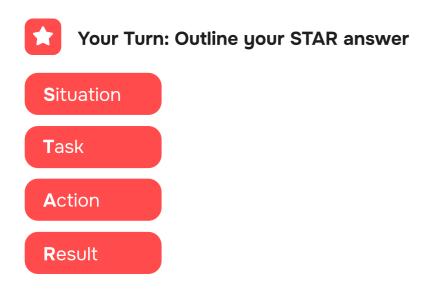
⭐ **Your Turn: Outline your STAR answer**

Situation

Task

Action

Result

💎 **Sample STAR answer:**

S Early in my instructional design career, I worked on a fast-paced project for a client in the healthcare industry. We had tight deadlines and limited SME access.

T I was responsible for structuring the content and developing quizzes with minimal oversight.

A I made several assumptions based on generic best practices instead of pushing for SME input. As a result, some critical content areas were too shallow, and one assessment item was flagged as misleading during pilot testing.

R We corrected the issues, but I learned to ask for at least some kind of expert validation — even a quick Slack review or voice note — before finalizing materials. Now I always include a lightweight SME touchpoint, even when under pressure.

Question 13: What skill are you currently working on?

This question shows that you're self-aware and invested in your development. Choose something relevant to the role and be specific about what you're doing to improve.
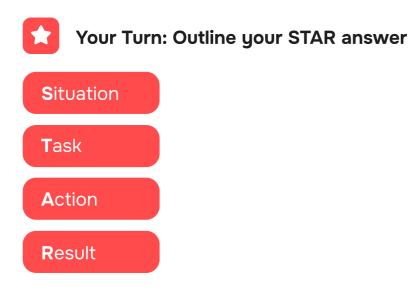
⭐ **Your Turn: Outline your STAR answer**

Situation

Task

Action

Result

💎 **Sample STAR answer:**

S   I've realized that data storytelling is becoming more central in my work — whether it's reporting on course performance or influencing stakeholders.

T   I wanted to improve how I visualize results and make insights easier to act on.

A   I enrolled in a short data design course and started using tools like Google Data Studio and Flourish. I've also begun experimenting with before/after slides to illustrate the impact clearly.

R   In a recent client meeting, I used one of these dashboards to explain learner drop-off patterns — and it helped us make a fast decision to restructure two modules. I'm now applying the same approach to internal reporting as well.

Question 14: What feedback have you received that changed how you work?

This question highlights your openness to feedback and your ability to reflect. Choose a piece of feedback that shifted your perspective or habits — especially one that helped you grow into a more strategic or collaborative professional.

⭐ **Your Turn: Outline your STAR answer**

Situation

Task

Action

Result

💎 **Sample STAR answer:**

S — A few years ago, I received feedback from a creative lead I worked with. They said my lesson scripts were solid, but my visuals lacked an emotional tone and didn't support the storytelling as strongly as they could.

T — I wanted to raise the overall quality of my courses by making the visual layer more intentional and connected to the learning message.

A — I started studying visual hierarchy and emotional design principles. I began using mood boards and metaphor-based planning before jumping into slide content. I also collaborated more closely with illustrators and video editors.

R — The next project we launched had noticeably higher engagement and was described as "surprisingly immersive" in learner feedback. Since then, I have treated visual planning as part of the instructional design process, not just decoration.

A quick note on using the STAR method

Of course, not every question in an interview needs to be answered using the STAR method — and using it for every response can sometimes make your speech sound overly structured or repetitive.

01

Think of STAR not as a strict formula, but as a flexible framework. It's especially helpful when you're caught off guard by a question or when you're trying to explain the impact you've had clearly under pressure.

02

You don't have to include every single part (Situation, Task, Action, Result) every time. In some cases, you might skip the Situation if the context is obvious or keep the Result short when the outcome speaks for itself.

03

What matters most is that your story has a clear beginning, a purposeful middle, and an outcome that shows how you contributed effectively.

04