

# The STAR Interview Template

With the argument layer most guides skip — and how the approach shifts across Korean corporate, international, and startup contexts

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The STAR method is the most widely taught behavioural interview framework in the world. It works — structure prevents rambling. **But the standard STAR framework stops at the Result, which is the least interesting part of the answer for most interviewers.** This template adds two things most guides skip: the argument beneath the story, and how the approach shifts when interviewing across Korean corporate, international company, and startup contexts.

**Before the story:** What is the argument this story makes about you? Write it in one sentence. Every STAR answer is evidence for a claim. A story without an argument is a narrative. A story with an argument is a pitch.

**After the story:** Could a thousand other candidates tell this exact story? If yes, it is not doing enough work. A story only you can tell is worth ten generic ones.

## THE FOUR ELEMENTS — AND HOW THEY SHIFT BY CONTEXT

### S Situation — set the scene briefly, two sentences maximum

The context. Enough for the interviewer to orient themselves. You are setting the scene for your decision, not narrating the full history of the project.

#### KOREAN CORPORATE (공채)

Include the organisational context: team size, hierarchy level, and the stakes for the group. Korean interviewers read situation through the lens of the team and the structure. Establish both before moving to task.

#### INTERNATIONAL COMPANY

Keep it tight. Name the context, the stakes, and the scale. Skip background unless it is directly relevant to the decision you made. The panel will ask if they want more.

#### STARTUP CONTEXT

Include the resource constraint. Startups are interested in what you did with less. The situation should establish that this was genuinely difficult — limited time, limited team, limited budget — before you describe what happened.

### T Task — your specific responsibility, stated clearly in the first person

Not the team's goal — your role within it. Most candidates either overclaim ownership of team outcomes or underclaim their own contribution. State your role specifically.

#### KOREAN CORPORATE (공채)

Lead with your role in service of the team: "My responsibility within the team was to..." Korean hiring panels weight team orientation heavily at the Task stage. Individual ownership comes through in Action, not Task.

#### INTERNATIONAL COMPANY

State your individual ownership clearly: "I was responsible for..." International panels expect directness. Excessive hedging toward team language at this stage reads as unclear self-awareness, not modesty.

#### STARTUP CONTEXT

Own the full scope: "I owned this from brief to delivery." Startups are evaluating whether you can carry end-to-end responsibility without direction. Narrow role descriptions reduce your appeal in this context.

## A Action — what you did, specifically. This is the longest part.

Active verbs. Specific decisions. The reasoning behind them. This should feel like watching someone work through a real problem — not reading a job description. Three deliberate actions minimum.

### KOREAN CORPORATE (공채)

Include how you navigated team dynamics and hierarchy — not just the technical steps. Korean panels evaluate your 논치, your ability to read and respond to the situation. Actions taken in consultation with senior colleagues read well here.

### INTERNATIONAL COMPANY

Focus on the decision logic. What did you evaluate, what did you rule out, and why? International panels at most companies specifically assess structured thinking. Walk them through the reasoning, not just the steps.

### STARTUP CONTEXT

Include the pivot. Startups want evidence that you adapt fast under uncertainty. If your first action did not work and you changed course, say so. That adjustment is not a weakness — it is exactly what they are looking for.

## R Result — quantified where possible. Connect it to the argument.

What happened, measured where you can measure it. Connect the result to something the organisation cared about. Then connect it to the argument you stated before the story. The result should land the claim, not just close the narrative.

### KOREAN CORPORATE (공채)

Include the impact on the team and on relationships, not just the output metric. A result that strengthened team capability or improved collaboration carries real weight. End with what you learned about working inside a team under pressure.

### INTERNATIONAL COMPANY

Quantify. Even rough numbers — percentage improvement, time saved, revenue protected — are significantly more compelling than qualitative descriptions. If you cannot quantify, be specific about speed, quality, or relationship outcomes.

### STARTUP CONTEXT

Show the business impact even if you were not the only cause. If the result was partial or mixed, say so honestly and say what you would do differently. Founders respect that more than a polished success story.

## STORY PREPARATION WORKSHEET — ONE PER STORY

THE ARGUMENT THIS STORY MAKES ABOUT ME — WRITE THIS BEFORE ANYTHING ELSE

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S — SITUATION (2 SENTENCES MAX)

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T — MY SPECIFIC ROLE

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TEAM VERSION — HOW I SERVED THE TEAM FIRST

A — SPECIFIC ACTIONS AND THE REASONING BEHIND THEM

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R — RESULT, QUANTIFIED WHERE POSSIBLE

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DOES THE RESULT LAND THE ARGUMENT FROM THE TOP?

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**STORY BANK — SIX STORIES ACROSS COMPETENCY AREAS**

COMPETENCY	YOUR STORY TITLE	ARGUMENT IT MAKES	READY?
Problem solving under pressure			
Leadership or initiative			
Collaboration and team dynamics			
Handling failure or a real setback			
Communication under scrutiny			
Learning and adaptation			

**PRE-INTERVIEW QUALITY CHECK**

- Every story has a clear argument stated before the narrative begins
- No story could be told by a thousand other candidates in identical terms
- At least three stories have quantified results
- Every story has a team version and an individual version prepared
- Each story can be delivered in under 90 seconds without notes
- The failure story shows genuine self-awareness — not a strength dressed as a weakness
- Stories come from at least three different contexts: academic, professional, extracurricular

***The interviewer is not scoring your answer against a rubric. They are asking one question: does this person know who they are and why they are here? A strong STAR answer answers both.***