

BARL Interview Prep Sheet

From *It's Not About You* by Barry Simpson | Chapter 7: Interviewing

Most interview frameworks stop at the result. BARL goes further. The Learning component shows self-awareness and growth, and that's exactly what sets you apart.

The BARL Framework

B	Background	Set the scene. What was happening? Keep it brief, just enough context.
A	Action	What did YOU do? Be specific. Use "I," not "we."
R	Result	What happened? Quantify it. Numbers stick.
L	Learning	What did you take away? What would you do differently? This is what makes you stand out.

Prepare Five Stories

Each one should demonstrate a different skill. Most behavioral questions can be answered with one of these, adjusted slightly.

Story 1: Problem Solving

A complex problem you solved

Background:

Set the scene briefly. What was the situation?

Action:

What did YOU specifically do? Use "I," not "we."

Result:

What happened? Include numbers if you can.

Learning:

What did you take away? What would you do differently?

Story 2: Leadership / Influence

A time you led or influenced others

Background:

Set the scene briefly. What was the situation?

Action:

What did YOU specifically do? Use "I," not "we."

Result:

What happened? Include numbers if you can.

Learning:

What did you take away? What would you do differently?

Story 3: Conflict / Difficult Person

How you handled conflict or a difficult stakeholder

Background:

Set the scene briefly. What was the situation?

Action:

What did YOU specifically do? Use "I," not "we."

Result:

What happened? Include numbers if you can.

Learning:

What did you take away? What would you do differently?

Story 4: Failure / Recovery

A mistake you made and how you recovered

Background:

Set the scene briefly. What was the situation?

Action:

What did YOU specifically do? Use "I," not "we."

Result:

What happened? Include numbers if you can.

Learning:

What did you take away? What would you do differently?

Story 5: Results Under Pressure

Delivering results when the heat was on

Background:

Set the scene briefly. What was the situation?

Action:

What did YOU specifically do? Use "I," not "we."

Result:

What happened? Include numbers if you can.

Learning:

What did you take away? What would you do differently?

Common Behavioral Questions

Map each to one of your five stories. Write the story number next to each question.

Question	Story #
Tell me about a time you had to deal with a difficult stakeholder.	
Give me an example of when you failed at something.	
Describe a situation where you had to influence someone without authority.	
Tell me about a time you had to make a decision with incomplete information.	
Give me an example of a time you went above and beyond.	
Describe a conflict with a colleague and how you resolved it.	
Tell me about a time you had to adapt to a major change.	
Give me an example of when you had to meet a tight deadline.	
Tell me about a time you improved a process or system.	
Describe a situation where you had to deliver bad news.	
Tell me about your biggest professional accomplishment.	
Give me an example of when you had to learn something quickly.	

Before You Walk In

- Practice your stories out loud. You don't want to memorize scripts, you want them accessible enough to adapt.
- Every answer should be 60-90 seconds. Longer than that and you're waffling.
- Use "I," not "we." They want to know what YOU did.
- It's fine to take a moment. "Good question, let me think about that" is miles better than verbal diarrhea.
- Don't try to blag it when you don't know something. Say so, then explain how you'd get up to speed.