

Lesson 7.4: How to Talk About Yourself in an Interview

Unit: Unit 7, Launch: Career Readiness and FACS Shark Tank (capstone; draws on Individual Growth and Life Readiness) **Topic:** 7.1 Present Yourself **Grade:** 6 to 8 (written at grade 7; see Differentiation for the grade 6 support and grade 8 stretch) **Days:** 1 class period of 40 minutes **Room:** Classroom

Standards

- NYS module line: NYS IGLR 3. Employability c) Demonstrate effective communication skills
- NYS module line: NYS IGLR 3. Employability a) Explore employability skills
- NYS module line: NYS IGLR 3. Employability d) Explore and implement strategies for career readiness
- CTE theme line: CTE CCO 3. Employability Skills a) Identify personal characteristics such as abilities, interests, and values and examine how they might impact career choices
- CTE theme line: CTE CIR 3. Workplace Communication a) List the similarities and differences between personal and workplace communication and the uses of technology in each
- NYS FACS Learning Standard 3 (Intermediate), Key Idea: Students will understand and be able to manage personal resources of talent, time, energy, and money and make effective decisions in order to balance their obligations to work, family, and self.; Performance Indicator: Students identify their own abilities and interests as possible guides to career choice.
- CDOS Standard 3a Universal Foundation Skills: Basic Skills. Students listen to and read the ideas of others and analyze what they hear and read; acquire and use information from a variety of sources; and apply a combination of mathematical operations to solve problems in oral or written form.
- National FCS 3.0: 13.3.2 Show the spoken and unspoken behaviors and attitudes that make communication work.
- National FCS 3.0: 1.2.2 Show the skills used to find a job and to keep one.

Enduring understanding and essential question

Big idea: The way you talk about yourself is a skill, not a personality trait. It has a structure, the structure can be learned, and the people who sound confident are the people who practiced. **Essential question:** Why can I not just wing it when somebody says “tell me about yourself”?

Objectives

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. (Low) Name the three parts of a “tell me about yourself” answer (who you are, what you are good at, why you fit) and state what each letter of STAR stands for.
2. (Mid) Given a pretend job, write a three-part “tell me about yourself” answer that has all three parts and connects at least one skill directly to that job.
3. (High) Evaluate two classmates’ answers against the three-part frame, name which part is missing or weakest in each, then outline one STAR story from this school year with all four parts filled.

Vocabulary

Tier 2 (general academic): structure, impression, confidence, specific, revise Tier 3 (FACS): interview, candidate, employer, STAR, situation, task, action, result. See Vocabulary 07.md.

Materials and setup

- Handout 07.04 - Three-Part Answer and STAR Planner.md, one per student
- Chart paper or a cleared board section headed “What a Boss Is Looking For,” and a marker. This becomes the class anchor chart and it stays up through Lesson 7.11.
- Student FACS folders on desks: the year’s lab rubrics and project rubrics are the raw material for the STAR story
- Lesson 7.2 resume drafts, returned at the door with the teacher’s marks
- Slides: Slides 07.04 - How to Talk About Yourself in an Interview
- Two pretend job descriptions printed large and posted on the wall on opposite sides of the room: a pizza shop counter and prep job, and an animal shelter weekend volunteer job. Add a third if the room needs it: a summer camp helper. Students choose which one they are applying to by which wall they face.
- Slides: Slides 07.03 self-score sheets from yesterday, in the folders
- Setup notes: write the anchor chart heading before class but leave it blank. It gets filled in Step 1 and it has to be in the students’ words, not yours. Allergy check: none.

Pre-assessment

Four questions asked out loud in the first 90 seconds, taken from Sal’s own version of this lesson: if you owned a million-dollar company, what would you look for in the person you hire; what makes someone a strong candidate; what makes one candidate stand out from another; what do you personally have right now that would make somebody want to hire you. The fourth question is the diagnostic. Count how many students can name one thing about themselves without hedging. That number is the gap this lesson closes.

Do now and hook (Time: 5 min)

On the board, slide 1: **“You are the CEO of a million-dollar company. You are hiring one person. What qualities, skills, or traits must that person have?”** Write for two minutes.

Debrief: cold call eight students fast and write every repeated word on the anchor chart. Expect confidence, communication, responsibility, reliability, professionalism, on time, honest, works with others. Circle the ones that came up more than once.

Then the hook, slide 3: put “Tell me about yourself.” on the screen and say nothing for five seconds. Then: “Knowing what a boss wants is not the same as being able to say it out loud. Write how you would answer that question right now. One minute.” Do not collect it. It is the before picture and students will compare it to their own answer at the end of the period.

Procedure

Step	Teacher will	Students will	Time
1. Modeling: unstructured versus structured	Answer “tell me about yourself” twice, out loud, as yourself. First the bad way: rambling, starting with where you were born, ending on a hobby, about 40 seconds of nothing. Then ask: “What did you learn about whether to hire me?” Then answer it the good way in 30 seconds using the three parts, out loud. Ask: “What changed?” Write the three parts on the board: who you are now. what you are good at. why you fit this job.	Listen to both. Say what changed. Copy the three parts onto the handout and write the one sentence the teacher used for each part.	7 min
2. Learning activity: write your own	Point at the two posted job descriptions. Give the task: pick one, write your three-part answer for that job, three to five sentences total, and the middle part has	Choose a job. Write the three-part answer on the handout. Underline the skill in part two and write next to it where they can prove it (a rubric, a project, a lab).	8 min

	to name a skill you can prove. Circulate. Push with one question: “Would that sentence be true for anybody in this room, or is it only true for you?”		
3. Class analysis of two answers	Take two volunteer answers, or two anonymous answers read by the teacher from the handout with permission. Put each on the board or read it twice. Ask the class the same three questions for each: which part is who you are, which part is what you are good at, which part is why you fit, and which one is missing or weakest. Do not fix it from the front; ask the class for the fix.	Analyze both answers against the three parts. Name the missing or weakest part and one specific fix. Revise their own answer in response to what they heard.	7 min
4. Direct instruction and modeling: STAR	Name the second kind of question: “tell me about a time when.” Put STAR on the board: Situation. Task. Action. Result. Model one story from this course, out loud, with the four parts named as you go: the day a lab went wrong. “In our Feed the Class cook day (Situation) my station had to get a pasta dish plated for	Identify the four parts in the modeled story out loud. Open the FACS folder, find one moment from this year where something went wrong or something got done under a deadline, and fill the four STAR boxes on the handout. Four to six words per box is enough at outline stage.	9 min

	30 people by minute 29 (Task). The water was not boiling at minute 12, so I moved the sauce step ahead of the pasta step and asked the Prep Cook to start the plates early (Action). We served at minute 30, one minute late, and nothing was cold (Result).” Then ask the class to point at each part. Give the task: outline one STAR story from this year.		
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Do now 5 plus 7 plus 8 plus 7 plus 9 is 36; the closure below is 4 minutes. Total 40.

Questions to ask

Monitor understanding:

- What qualities did we put on the anchor chart? Which one came up most?
- What are the three parts of a strong “tell me about yourself” answer?
- In this answer, which part is missing: who you are, what you are good at, or why you fit?
- Why does part two have to name something you can prove?
- What does each letter of STAR stand for? In my story, where was the Action? Where was the Result?

Deepen learning:

- Why might two people with exactly the same experience get different results from the same interview?
- Why do employers want a structured answer instead of a yes or a no?
- Your STAR story is about something that went wrong. Why would an employer rather hear that than a story where everything worked?
- Which of the four things from yesterday (composure, communication, problem solving, adaptability) does a STAR story prove? Can it prove more than one?
- How does practicing this change what you can earn later? Say the connection in one sentence.

Check for understanding

Clipboard checklist during Steps 2 and 4, one line per student, three columns: “three parts present,” “part two names a provable skill,” “STAR outline has all four boxes filled.” Two yeses out of three is ready for the mock interview tomorrow. A blank Result box is the most common gap; that student gets the first interview slot tomorrow with a teacher observer.

Closure (Time: 4 min)

3-2-1 exit card, which is Sal’s own closure for this lesson and it stays: **3** qualities you have that make you a strong candidate; **2** interview questions you could answer right now; **1** question you still have, or one interview situation you want to practice tomorrow. Pull three or four volunteers to read one line off the card standing up.

Then the closing line, in Sal’s voice, said the same way every year: “I have sat on both sides of the interview table. I have been the one sweating in the chair and I have been the one doing the hiring. What makes somebody sound confident in an interview is not the right words. It is that they practiced. The way you talk about yourself is a skill, not a personality trait. Anyone can learn it, and the best part is that it is yours. Same as everything else in this room. You work at it, it gets better.”

Sort the cards into “got it” and “needs more.” The “needs more” pile decides who gets a teacher observer in tomorrow’s triads.

Differentiation and supports

- ELL: the three parts and the four STAR letters are on the handout with Turkish, Portuguese, and Spanish sentence starters from Vocabulary 07.md (“My name is ___ and I am in grade .” / ***I am good at*** . I showed that when .” / ***I would be good at this job because*** .” and for STAR, “The situation was . ***My job was*** . What I did was . ***What happened was*** .”). Sal’s original vocabulary cards for this lesson were translated into Turkish, Portuguese, and Spanish and those words are in Vocabulary 07.md. A student may write the answer in the home language first, then translate with a partner. The spoken version may be delivered in English at a slower pace with the written card in hand.
- IEP and 504 (general): printed copies of the three-part frame and the STAR frame to keep at the desk permanently, not just today; extended time on Step 2 with the option to finish during Step 3; seating up front for students who need the anchor chart in view and away from the door for students who need fewer distractions; standing or a fidget tool allowed during Steps 1 and 4; the option to submit the answer typed, handwritten, or spoken to the teacher; a partial STAR planner with the Situation box pre-filled from a lab the teacher knows that student did well.
- Grade 6 support: the three-part answer only. The STAR story is optional for grade 6 and may be reduced to two boxes, Situation and Action, with the Result given as “what happened at the end.” Grade 6 students choose the pizza shop job, which is the most concrete of the three.

- Grade 8 stretch: two STAR stories instead of one, and they have to come from two different units so the range shows. Grade 8 students also rewrite their three-part answer a second time for a different job and name the two sentences they had to change, which is the beginning of tailoring an answer to an audience.
- UDL checkpoints used: multiple means of representation (the teacher models the same question badly and then well, so the difference is heard and not described) and multiple means of action and expression (written, typed, or spoken; and the choice of which job and which story).
- No-presentation accommodation: the two answers analyzed in Step 3 may be read by the teacher with the name withheld. Nobody is required to read their own answer aloud today. The closure reading is volunteers only.

Assessment

Objective	Standards met	Learning task	Assessment (formative or summative; tool)
1. Name the three parts and the four STAR letters	IGLR 3. a); CCO 3. a); CDOS 3a Basic Skills	Step 1 and Step 4 board work; the copied frames on the handout	Formative; clipboard check that both frames are on the handout, and a verbal check at Step 4
2. Write a three-part answer for a pretend job with a provable skill	IGLR 3. c); IGLR 3. d); CIR 3. a); Std 3 PI E; National FCS 1.2.2	Step 2 written answer, revised in Step 3	Formative today; the same answer is delivered and scored on Rubric 07 criterion 2 in Lesson 7.5 and goes in the Career Readiness portfolio in Lesson 7.12
3. Evaluate two classmates' answers and outline one STAR story	IGLR 3. c); CIR 3. a); National FCS 13.3.2	Step 3 class analysis; Step 4 STAR planner	Formative; the clipboard column on all four STAR boxes filled. The STAR story is delivered in Lesson 7.5 and filed in the portfolio in Lesson 7.12

Both products, the three-part answer and the STAR story, are part of the Topic 7.1 formal check, which runs in the last 15 minutes of Lesson 7.5 on Rubric 07 criteria 1 and 2.

Homework

None required. Optional: say your three-part answer out loud to one person at home and ask them one question: “Did that sound like me?” Write down what they said in one sentence.

Connections

Inside the building: the ELA teacher. NYS Next Generation ELA speaking and listening work at grade 8 asks students to present claims with relevant evidence and to adapt speech to context, which is exactly the three-part answer and the STAR story. FACS gives ELA a real audience and a real reason; ELA gives FACS the revision and evidence language students already have. Also the school counselor, who does mock interviews for high school applications and can reuse this frame. Community: any adult who hires, invited for Lesson 7.5 or for the Lesson 7.11 panel. *[Sal: this lesson is yours and was taught at Brentwood to grade 8. If your school wants to see one lesson of this course, this is a strong candidate.]*

Sources

- NYS Middle Level CTE FACS Content Module 01, Individual Growth and Life Readiness, lines 3. a), 3. c), and 3. d).
- NYS Middle Level CTE Theme Module 01, Career and Community Opportunities, line 3. a); Theme Module 02, Communication and Interpersonal Relationships, line 3. a).
- NYS Learning Standards for FACS (1996), Standard 3, Intermediate. NYS CDOS Standard 3a, Basic Skills. Wording per 02 Standards/STANDARDS SOURCES - web research.md. *[Sal: confirm against the NYSED PDFs.]*
- National Standards for FCS Education 3.0 (LEAD FCS Education, 2018), competencies 13.3.2 and 1.2.2.
- Sal’s own materials: his lesson “How to Talk About Yourself in a Job Interview: Answering ‘Tell Me About Yourself’ with Confidence,” taught at Brentwood South to grade 8 and submitted at Queens College in April 2026 (FNES 538). The CEO hook, the anchor chart, the unstructured versus structured modeling, the three-part frame, the pizza shop and animal shelter scenarios, the STAR introduction, the 3-2-1 exit card, and the closing lines are his. Re-leveled here for grades 6 to 8 and rewritten for a real room; the original was demonstrated over video, which is why the original says students respond in the chat.
- The Career and Community Opportunities illustrative activity in the state’s Individual Growth and Life Readiness module names “preparing for a job interview” as an intended use of the personal-traits work, which is this lesson.

Teacher notes

- The two-answer model in Step 1 is the moment the lesson turns. Do the bad answer badly and commit to it. Ramble. Look at the ceiling. Talk about where you were born. Students laugh, and then they hear the good one and the difference is obvious without a word of explanation.

- Sal's original design note holds: the three-part frame is the floor and every student walks out with it; STAR is the ceiling for the students who are ready. Do not stop the class to accommodate either end, and do not make STAR feel like the real version and the three-part frame feel like the easy version.
- The anchor chart has to be in students' words. If a student says "not lazy," write "not lazy." You can add "reliable" next to it.
- Common mistake: part two becomes a list of adjectives. Fix it by asking for the proof, every time: "Where can I see that?" The FACS folder is on the desk for exactly this reason.
- Second common mistake: the STAR Result box says "it was good." Push once: "What actually happened? A number, a time, or what somebody said."
- Sal's closing lines are the emotional end of the lesson and they are the reason students come back willing to be interviewed the next day. Say them. Do not read them.
- The pretend jobs work best when they are places students have actually been. *[Sal: swap the pizza shop and the animal shelter for two real businesses within walking distance of your school. Use their real names only if you have permission; otherwise describe them.]*
- Keep the handouts. The three-part answer and the STAR outline are both scored tomorrow and both go in the portfolio on the last day.