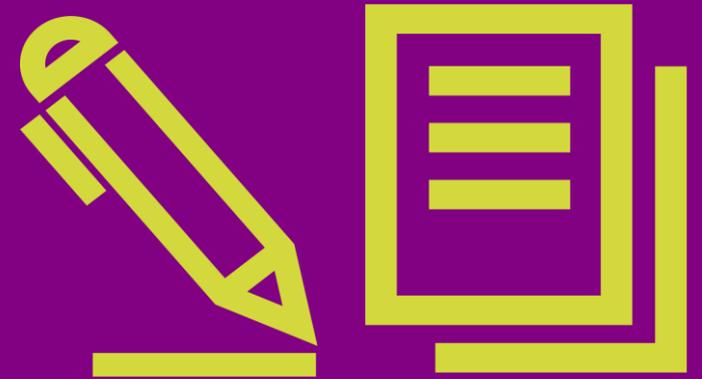


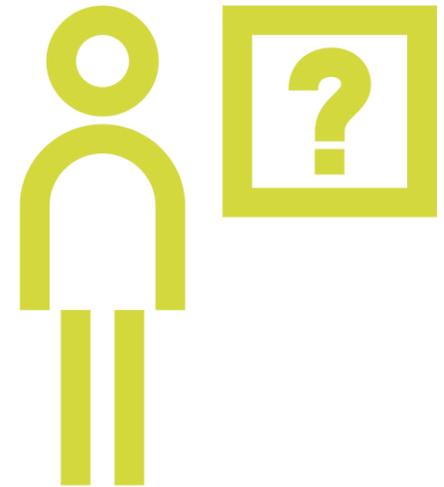
How to Write Behaviours

Examples



How to Write Civil Service Behaviours Examples

1. [Introduction](#)
2. [Preparing your examples](#)
3. [Writing your behaviours examples](#)
4. [How your behaviours statements will be assessed](#)
5. [Hints and tips](#)
6. [Checking your behaviours statement](#)
7. [A-Z of active verbs](#)



With thanks to our colleagues at the Marine Management Organisation who produced the original helpful guidance upon which this document is based.



1. Introduction

This guide can help you to write your behaviours statements when applying for jobs within Acas with behaviours based applications.

Behaviours are the actions and activities that people do which result in effective performance in a job. The Civil Service has a defined set of behaviours that, when demonstrated, are associated with job success. [The Civil Service Behaviours](#) are specific to the grade level of the job role.

Getting your behaviours statements right is essential as sift and interview panels will use them to assess your suitability for the job and to compare you against the other applicants.

Your examples should be:

- truthful and based on fact
- grammatically correct
- spelled correctly
- within the set word limit
- about a specific event or project, rather than a general outline of a task or a role



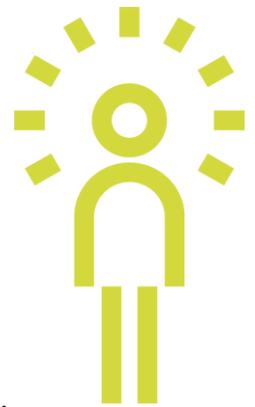
2. Preparing your examples

The specific behaviours you need to write about will be detailed in the job advert. Before you start to write your examples you should read all of the information in the job advert and any supporting documents, paying particular attention to the behaviours required. Make sure you have a full copy of the [Civil Service Behaviours Framework](#).

You may wish to use examples from your career, education or voluntary work. Your evidence must be truthful and describe real examples of what happened and how your actions led to or contributed to the outcome.

Think of examples that:

- clearly demonstrate the relevant behaviours at the grade to which you are applying
- will allow you to explain in depth what you personally did and how you did it
- had a positive outcome
- impacted on more than a few people, as these are likely to be more powerful
- allow you to demonstrate other key skills relevant to the role for which you are applying.



2. Preparing your examples

Stronger examples tend to:	Weaker examples tend to:
Fully demonstrate the behaviours being asked for	Only partly demonstrate the behaviours being asked for
Use an example that is at, or above the level or grade of the role for which you are applying	Use an example that is below the standard of the role for which you are applying
Focus on a challenging or complex task or problem	Focus on the usual day-to-day routine or role responsibilities
Impact on a customer base, groups of people, or the organisation as a whole	Impact on only a few people, a small team or an individual
Support key organisational objectives and priorities such as the organisation's vision, business strategy etc.	Have little or no direct link to anything at a strategic or organisational level
Show evidence of quantifiable improvement backed up by some data	Contain little firm evidence or data demonstrating positive outcomes and impact
Explain what was done, with evidence to demonstrate how it was done	Explain what was done with no evidence of how it was done to support the statement made

3. Writing your behaviours examples

When completing your application form you are asked to describe a particular situation from the past where you displayed all or most of the activities making up a particular behaviour. You can use up to a maximum of 250 words to describe what you did, how you did it, why you did it and the effect this had. This shows the assessors who will be marking the form that you understand what is required and that you are capable of doing it.

By quoting examples of why and how you demonstrated the relevant skills, knowledge and behaviours in the past, you show that you have the potential to apply them in a new job in the future.

It is not sufficient to say that you have had relevant experience; you must show evidence of making a success of that experience by describing how you acted in a particular situation and the impact your actions had.

Use an example that is at, or above, the level of the job you are applying for.

There is little point demonstrating you can do EO work if you are applying for a HEO job.

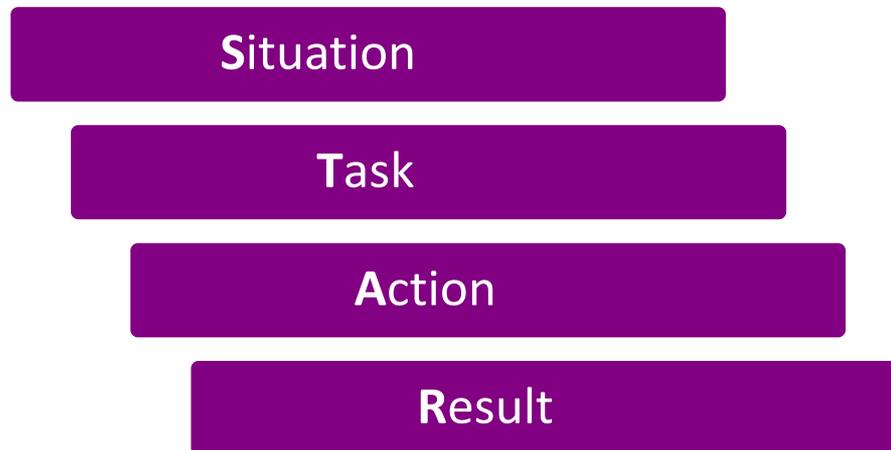
A good behaviours example requires more than just an outline of what you did in a given scenario, it requires you to explain what you did, how you did it, and why.

3. Writing your behaviours examples

Using the STAR method

Within the Civil Service the most common approach to writing behaviours examples is the **STAR** method. This approach will help you to structure your statements and to break down the writing of a 250 word example into four manageable chunks.

The star method suggests that examples are broken down as follows:



3. Writing your behaviours examples

Situation

Briefly describe the situation you were in. This sets your example up for the sifter and provides the context for the actions you are going to describe.

You should describe a specific event or situation, and not a general overview of your role responsibilities or of what you have done in the past.

It needs to be fairly short (a sentence or two), as the information given here is not as important to your score as the actions that were taken to address the problem and achieve a successful outcome.

Example:

My organisation offers advice to teenagers via email. Monthly stats highlighted ongoing problems with average handling times and quality scores.

3. Writing your behaviours examples

Task

This is where you describe your role or what you were trying to achieve within the situation described.

If your example relates to a team task or project then say so, but focus on your own role and your own contribution, as this is what you are being assessed on.

Again, this should be fairly short – ideally a sentence or two, in order to allow you to focus the majority of your word allowance on your actions and the results you achieved.

Example:

As deputy-manager I volunteered to write template responses for common queries, to reduce response times and ensure quality and consistency.

3. Writing your behaviours examples

Action

This is where you will describe what you actually did in response to the situation and task, how you did it, and why. Use “**I**” rather than “**we**” when outlining the actions taken, as the sifter is assessing **your** actions, not those of the team. This is the most important part of your example, as it is where most of the sift points are awarded – the majority of your word count should be used here.

Example:

I referred to call-data reports to identify common email enquiries so I knew which areas to focus on to have the most impact. I discussed plans with advisers at team meetings, sought their input and invited them to contribute their own high-scoring examples, which they did. I highlighted the benefits of the templates to get their buy-in; service users receiving accurate, consistent responses in a timely way, and advisers being assured of good call-scores.

I used the email quality monitoring criteria to determine the structure and prerequisites to include, as advisers are assessed against these criteria. I examined call-scoring records to identify high-scoring examples and incorporated excerpts from these into the templates. I used plain-English, avoiding jargon and unexplained acronyms to ensure advice was easily understandable. I kept the drafts in a shared-drive so managers and advisers could track progress and give feedback. Once live I implemented monthly reviews to update out-of-date information and identify new subject areas, involving advisers as a development opportunity and to encourage feelings of ownership in the content.

3. Writing your behaviours examples

Result

At the end of your example you will need to briefly explain what the outcome of your actions was.

How was success measured?

Where possible show measurable benefits or improvements. Showing in your example that you have understood how your actions contributed to Business or Organisational objectives or targets adds impact. This could make your statement stronger than someone else's and help you to be more successful in the sift.

Example:

My intervention helped reduce average handling time from 16 to 11 minutes - within KPI of 12 minutes. Average quality scores increased from 'acceptable' to 'strength' within 2 months and service users were getting consistent, accurate responses.

3. Writing your behaviours examples

Using active verbs and sentences

Read through your example, and try to replace any passive verbs or sentences with active ones. Active verbs provide additional impact to your example and will strengthen it. You must be honest about what you did and never include anything that is untrue.

Don't say	Say this instead
A spreadsheet was set up to show where delays were occurring.	I devised a spreadsheet and compiled data so I could identify where delays were occurring.
The spreadsheet showed that delays were occurring at the same times each week, so we discussed this during a problem solve.	After collecting and analysing the data, I identified a pattern of delays. I carefully considered who was affected and invited representatives from across the processing areas to a Problem Solve.

4. How your behaviours statements will be assessed

Assessors will compare the statements in your example against the descriptors for the relevant behaviour, to see if and how well they show evidence of these. The rating scale for the Behaviours element of Success Profiles is 1-7. Benchmarks will be set by the vacancy holder at the start of each process, with a minimum score of 4 (Acceptable Demonstration) usually required for each behaviour to achieve a pass.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not Demonstrated	Minimal Demonstration	Moderate Demonstration	Acceptable Demonstration	Good Demonstration	Strong Demonstration	Outstanding Demonstration

The description of what you did and how you did it, and the quality of the evidence given will determine your score. The assessor will award their score based on how well the actions described demonstrate the broad descriptors of each behaviour at the relevant level, taking into account the strength and impact of the activities. The assessor will also take into account any negative evidence described when assigning their score. Avoid describing activities that are not relevant to the behaviour criteria as these will not count towards your score.

Each behaviour will be assessed individually against the relevant descriptors for that behaviour, so you should therefore avoid 'cross referencing' between your examples.

You should use your own words: simply copying and pasting or re-wording elements of the behaviour descriptors without supporting evidence will not score you points.

5. Hints and tips

Tips for making the most of your word count

In many cases, you may find that you have too many words in your statement. You will probably be reluctant to remove anything, as you don't feel you can reduce it without losing something important. However, you will need to edit it, as the maximum word count is strictly enforced.

You can often remove the word "that" without altering the meaning of the sentence. Keeping sentences short and to the point can also be of benefit.

If you only have a few words to lose, this shouldn't be too much of a problem and you can read through your example, identifying where you have used more words than are actually needed.

For example:

Don't say	Say this instead
According to the records	Records showed
A large number of	Many or most
As a consequence of	Because or due to

5. Hints and tips

Avoiding common mistakes

Assessors often come up against common issues or mistakes that impact sift scores. Avoiding the following common mistakes should increase your chances of meeting the standard at sift.

Dedicating too much of the word-count to background explanation or scene-setting, and not enough to individual actions.

Whilst some context is important, the majority of your sift score will be determined by the actions you have described within your example. Limiting the words you have available to describe your actions because you have focussed too many words on describing the situation will limit the score the sifters can award.

Not making full use of the word count, or going significantly over the word-count.

Demonstrating the behaviours to the required standard within 250 words is challenging, so if you have used significantly fewer words you are unlikely to be showing enough of the skills and behaviours asked for within your response to progress to the next stage.

Similarly, if you have gone significantly over the word-count, any actions or results described beyond the word limit will not be given consideration in the assessment of your example. Often, any words over the maximum word-count will be deleted prior to sift and will not be seen at all by the sifters.

5. Hints and tips

Avoiding common mistakes - continued

Using examples that aren't suited to the behaviour being described.

It may sound obvious, but if your example for 'Making Effective Decisions' does not involve making a decision, or your example for 'Changing and Improving' does not demonstrate identifying and implementing any changes or improvements, then to give yourself the best chance of success you may wish to consider whether you have a different example you can use that would be better suited.

Using examples that are not of the relevant standard for the role/grade applied for.

Sifters will be looking for evidence that you have demonstrated the behaviours at or above the grade for which you are applying. There is little point demonstrating you can do EO work if you are applying for a HEO job – being good at your current job/grade is commendable, but if applying for promotion it is not what you are being assessed on. If you do not have any suitable work related examples, think about examples you may have from outside the workplace that you could use that demonstrate having operated at a higher level.

Saying what you have done, but not how you have done it.

E.g. *"I analysed and evaluated the information"* will score minimally, whereas expanding on this by explaining how the analysis and evaluation was carried out and what that involved will have more impact.

5. Hints and tips

Avoiding common mistakes - continued

Describing a role or responsibilities in general terms rather than using a specific example.

Rather than describing what you *would* do on an average day, describe what you *did* do on a specific day. If the behaviours asked for are behaviours you exhibit regularly within your work, think of a day where you encountered particular difficulties, or a problem that was especially complex, and describe the actions you took on that day, in relation to that specific event.

Cross referencing between examples.

Each individual behaviour is assessed as a standalone example against the relevant criteria as set out in the Civil Service Behaviours dictionary for that particular behaviour. For example, assessors will not be able to use evidence from an example you have given for 'Delivering at Pace' when assessing your example for 'Managing a Quality Service', so make sure each specific area is written to demonstrate the criteria for that area.

Using examples that demonstrate negative behaviours.

Assessors will take into account evidence of any negative actions or behaviours when allocating their scores, as well as the positive evidence.

5. Hints and tips

Avoiding common mistakes - continued

Writing passively, instead of actively.

When writing your examples try not to describe events in such a way that it reads as though they happened without your input or involvement. E.g. *“a meeting was arranged for key stakeholders to update them on plans and seek feedback”* will score minimally, if at all. Instead, demonstrate that these things happened because you made them happen, e.g. *“I arranged a meeting to which I invited key stakeholders. I updated them on plans and sought their input”*.

Using the same application for different roles and expecting the same scores.

Candidates should ensure that their applications are up to date and use their strongest examples rather than relying on an application that they have used previously. Whilst a number of advertised roles may use the same behaviours, the specific elements of the individual behaviours descriptor that are most essential to particular roles may vary. Some applications will be sifted against behaviours, others may be sifted against essential criteria, and others may be sifted against both – check the vacancy advert carefully to ensure you have a thorough understanding of what you are being asked for.

It is also important to remember that sifting relies on the judgement of the assessors. It is therefore possible for scores to be slightly different between assessors, and for different roles at the same grade. What one assessor judges to be just over the pass threshold, a different assessor may judge to be just under it. Taking advice from an experienced assessor and asking them to give feedback on how your application can be strengthened is therefore recommended.

6. Checking your behaviours statement

Check your example against the following and don't be afraid to ask a friend or colleague/manager for some feedback on the content, grammar and spelling.

Are your examples relevant to the behaviours asked for?	✓
Are your examples of the relevant standard for the grade to which you are applying?	✓
Have you used your strongest and most relevant examples?	✓
Have you used specific examples for each behaviour?	✓
Have you written your statements using the STAR model?	✓
Have you explained what you did, not what someone else did?	✓
Have you replaced passive words and sentences with active ones?	✓
Have you linked to something strategic if possible?	✓
Have you adhered to the maximum word count?	✓
Have you checked your spelling, punctuation and grammar?	✓

7. A-Z of active verbs

A	Boosted	Convinced	E	Fixed	Heightened	Interacted
Accomplished	Briefed	Co-ordinated	Evaluated	Focussed	Helped	Interviewed
Achieved	Budgeted	Contributed	Explained	Formulated	Hosted	Introduced
Administered	Built	Created	Examined	Found	I	Involved
Advocated	C	Customised	Edited	G	Identified	Instilled
Analysed	Calculated	D	Eliminated	Gained	Improved	J
Answered	Classified	Designed	Emphasised	Gathered	Incorporated	Joined
Applied	Coached	Developed	Encouraged	Generated	Increased	Judged
Arranged	Communicated	Diagnosed	Established	Governed	Influenced	Justified
Assessed	Completed	Distributed	Explored	Guided	Informed	K
Authorised	Condensed	Delivered	F	H	Inspected	Kept
B	Conducted	Documented	Familiarised	Handled	Inspired	L
Balanced	Controlled	Drafted	Finalised	Headed	Integrated	Lifted

7. A-Z of active verbs - continued

Liaised	Measured	Outsourced	Piloted	Q	Reviewed	Transformed
Launched	Motivated	Overcame	Placed	Qualified	S	U
Learned	Mentored	Overhauled	Predicted	Questioned	Searched	Undertook
Led	Merged	Oversaw	Prepared	R	Selected	Updated
Listened	Modified	Obtained	Prescribed	Realigned	Shared	Utilised
Logged	Monitored	Operated	Prevented	Realised	Solved	V
Located	N	P	Produced	Recognised	Streamlined	Validated
M	Negotiated	Planned	Projected	Recorded	Summarised	Verified
Managed	Navigated	Promoted	Proofread	Reconciled	T	Volunteered
Moderated	O	Presented	Proposed	Referred	Targeted	W
Maintained	Opened	Persuaded	Provided	Reported	Taught	Weighted
Mapped	Organised	Participated	Publicised	Researched	Tracked	Worked
Maximised	Outlined	Performed	Purchased	Responded	Trained	Wrote