

Sample Interview Questions and Responses – Analytical Thinking Skills



Here are examples of behavioral questions that you (the interviewee) might be asked in an interview. These questions are designed to assess your ability to **analyze** a situation and **solve** problems. The interviewer might not ask you these questions in exactly the same way, and you will not be asked all of these questions. In fact, you might only be asked one of these kinds of questions, or you might be asked none at all. But it is still good to practice responding to these kinds of questions.



You will also see examples of appropriate and inappropriate responses to these questions. These examples will help you create your *own* answers to these questions. For each question set, we have provided three levels of the question. These three levels are different in terms of complexity of the question, and complexity of the response.



- **Level 1:** Basic
- **Level 2:** Intermediate
- **Level 3:** Advanced



We recommend that you read and practice responding to the level that you are most comfortable with. If needed, ask someone (a teacher, parent, coach, therapist) to help you decide what level you should practice.

Questions that interviewers might ask to assess your analytical thinking skills:

SET #1	Sample question	 Appropriate response	 Inappropriate response
Level 1	<i>"Let's say you are given a new work task or project, but you do not understand what to do. What would you do first?"</i>	<p><i>"I would try to figure it out on my own if I could, but then I would also ask for help from a supervisor or co-worker. Once I understood what to do, I would be able to do it."</i></p> <p>Why appropriate? This response is appropriate because it shows that the interviewee is willing to try difficult tasks, but that he is also willing to seek help and clarification when he needs it. The interviewee also sounds confident, which is a good thing.</p>	<p><i>"I would probably ask to do something else instead...something that is easier for me."</i></p> <p>Why inappropriate? This response makes it sound like the interviewee is unwilling to try new or more challenging tasks. This response makes it sound like the interviewee will just give up without trying or without getting any help.</p>
Level 2	<i>"Let's say you are facing a problem at school or work. You basically have two choices on what to do. How might you make the decision?"</i>	<p><i>"I would probably think about the positives and negatives of each choice. I would make a list of the pros, and a list of the cons. I might also get some advice from someone I trust. Hopefully, I could then make the best decision."</i></p> <p>Why appropriate? The interviewee uses a good strategy (comparing the pros and cons) to help him make a decision. It is also okay to get advice from someone you trust. This shows that he thinks about the issue before he acts.</p>	<p><i>"I could not figure out how to answer a question on a Geometry test. There really is only one correct way to solve it, I just needed to remember what my teacher had said about that kind of problem."</i></p> <p>Why inappropriate? The interviewee misunderstood this question – he took the question very literally. This question was not asking about math problems, but about bigger problems at school or work that involve comparing and choosing between different options. This question is really asking about problems in which there is more than one right answer, and more than one right way to resolve the problem.</p>

SET #1	Sample question	 Appropriate response	 Inappropriate response
Level 3	<i>"Let's say you are facing a really difficult decision. What steps might you take to make the decision?"</i>	<p><i>"With really difficult decisions, I usually talk with someone I trust, such as a supervisor, my parents, or my school counselor. Talking it through and hearing their perspective often helps clarify things for me. It also helps to think about the pros and cons of the situation. I would want to write these down so I can see them on paper. If there is a long list of pros and just a few cons, it can make my decision that much easier. After I have made my decision and acted on it, I try to consider how things went so I know what I would do differently next time."</i></p> <p>Why appropriate? This response is on topic, and provides appropriate ways to make a tough decision.</p>	<p><i>"If I'm facing a decision, I just try to do what is easiest and fastest. In most cases, this turns out to be the best solution."</i></p> <p>Why inappropriate? This response is not good because it shows that this person is not willing to pause and carefully consider different options before making a decision. This will make the interviewer think that this person might make mistakes on the job because he acts without thinking.</p>

SET #2	Sample question	 Appropriate response	 Inappropriate response
Level 1	<i>“How do you stay organized and keep track of your work duties or school assignments?”</i>	<p><i>“I write things down. I have a good memory, but having a list and checking off items as I complete them helps me feel a sense of accomplishment.”</i></p> <p>Why appropriate? This response is appropriate because he answers the question directly and describes a good strategy that he uses.</p>	<p><i>“Well, at school the teacher writes our assignments down on the board, so really, she keeps track for me. She also reminds us each morning to put our homework in the homework basket.”</i></p> <p>Why inappropriate? This response is inappropriate because the interviewee is not taking responsibility himself. Instead, he is relying on his teacher to organize him.</p>
Level 2	<i>“Tell me about a time you had trouble getting started on a task or assignment. What happened?”</i>	<p><i>“I sometimes have trouble getting started on writing papers, mostly when the topic is really big. So, I first try to brainstorm ideas in writing. After I have an idea of what I want to write about, I make an outline.”</i></p> <p>Why appropriate? This response is appropriate because the interviewee gives a relevant example of when he has difficulty getting started. Additionally, he handles the situation appropriately by using effective strategies. His answer is on topic, and to the point.</p>	<p><i>“This happens to me all the time. I get overwhelmed, don’t know where to start, and end up getting distracted. Sometimes, I don’t get started until someone steps in and helps me.”</i></p> <p>Why inappropriate? This response is too honest. Even if you have trouble getting started on things, try to frame it positively. An interviewer is not going to want to hire this person because they can’t get started on tasks. Instead, the person could have said, <i>“This has happened to me in the past, but if given clear instruction from the start, I can then carry on the task and complete it.”</i> This is not lying, but rather framing the answer more positively.</p>

SET #2	Sample question	 Appropriate response	 Inappropriate response
Level 3	"With school, work, and home commitments, there can be a lot going on at once. How do you prioritize?"	<p><i>"That's a good question. First, I keep myself organized using a daily and monthly calendar to keep track of all my appointments, assignments, and responsibilities. By using my calendars, I make sure to give myself enough time to complete my tasks before their deadlines. School and work come before other things, but when I am really struggling to prioritize I ask my supervisor, teacher, or father for help."</i></p> <p>Why appropriate? This response is appropriate because the interviewee is using appropriate time-management strategies to handle the situation. And it's okay to say you ask for help when needed!</p>	<p><i>"It is hard to prioritize with school, work, and home commitments. Working after school can be tough because it takes away from time you could be doing homework, or other activities. But it's important to work to get work experience so that you can get a good job when you're finished with school. At times, it can be a really tough balance."</i></p> <p>Why inappropriate? This person talks about the question, but never really answers it. He never mentions <i>how</i> he prioritizes, just that it's tough to prioritize.</p>