

Sample Interview Questions and Responses – Communication Skills



Here are examples of behavioral questions that you (the interviewee) might be asked in an interview. These questions are designed to assess how you **communicate** with others. 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 communication skills:



SET #1	Sample question	 Appropriate response	 Inappropriate response
Level 1	<i>"Did you ever change your mind about something? What made you change your mind?"</i>	<p><i>"I didn't think that I would ever like sports, but my teacher encouraged me to join the cross country team. I didn't want to go because I didn't think that I would be good at it, and because I didn't know anyone on the team. But, I went anyway and actually had fun. Now I am a runner."</i></p> <p>Why appropriate? This shows that the interviewee was willing to try something challenging and outside of his "comfort zone." It made him socialize and exercise in a way he had not done before. His answer shows that he can be flexible, and will sometimes listen to the suggestions of others. Importantly, the interviewee also gave a positive example of changing his mind. It is better to use a positive example than a negative example where something did not work out.</p>	<p><i>"I was planning to go to college. However, I changed my mind because I thought it would be too difficult for me. I wasn't up for the work load and challenge so I decided not to go."</i></p> <p>Why inappropriate? This response is somewhat negative. While it shows that the interviewee changed his mind about something, it was not a positive outcome. While it is perfectly acceptable to not attend college, this interviewee made his decision sound as if he were scared of the challenge. Instead, he should have a more positive response.</p>

SET #1	Sample question	 Appropriate response	 Inappropriate response
Level 2	<i>"Did you ever have to change someone's mind about something? How did you do that?"</i>	<p><i>"I changed my friend's mind about quitting her job one time. She was overwhelmed by the hours, but after listening to her concerns and talking with her, I convinced her to go down to part-time. I explained to her that if working part-time, she would still be able to earn money and get work experience, but still manage the other responsibilities of her daily life. In the end, I think she was very happy with this decision."</i></p> <p>Why appropriate? This response shows that the interviewee changed someone else's mind about a work-related issue. He also described that he both listened and talked with the other employee to do this. Finally, the interviewee provided a positive example of how he changed someone's mind rather than a negative example.</p>	<p><i>"I once changed my younger brother's mind about buying a Wii. He really wanted it, but, I really felt that he would get more use out of a Playstation II. I convinced him to get the Playstation II by telling him about all the cool games that go with it."</i></p> <p>Why inappropriate? This response is inappropriate because it is most likely irrelevant to the job position. Try to relate your response to work-related topics or issues.</p>
Level 3	<i>"Tell me about a situation in which you were able to use persuasion to successfully convince someone to see things your way."</i>	<p><i>"When working on a group project in college, my other group members wanted to conduct a research study using a single-subject design. I convinced my group members that collecting a larger sample may be more work, but in the end, it is much more powerful. We ended up collecting data from 50 participants and obtained really powerful results- and an A on the project!"</i></p> <p>Why appropriate? This response shows how the interviewee motivated his group members to do a project in a way that would improve their project and result in a better outcome - A very positive response. Additionally, this response is relevant to most jobs because it shows that the person can work well in groups and complete a difficult task.</p>	<p><i>"One time in high school, I persuaded my friend to go to a music festival with me even though his parents said he wasn't allowed. I pointed out to him that this music festival was a once in a lifetime opportunity that he didn't want to miss, and his parents would forgive him eventually. He saw my point and went with me and it was such a great festival."</i></p> <p>Why inappropriate? In this example, the interviewee talks about a situation where he was essentially getting his friend in trouble. You should stay away from negative examples, but instead give answers that present you in a positive light. In this example, he was a negative influence, not positive. Secondly, this example is irrelevant to work, another downside to his answer.</p>

SET #2	Sample question	 Appropriate response	 Inappropriate response
Level 1	<i>"Some people are not so easy to get along with. Tell me about a time where you had to work with someone in school or on the job who you did not particularly like."</i>	<p><i>"I had to do a health project with a partner in school. My partner wanted to take charge of the entire project but I had some pretty good ideas on how to complete our project. I had to speak up to get my ideas heard, and after that, my partner started taking me more seriously. We came up with a great project and won 2nd place in the fitness fair."</i></p> <p>Why appropriate? This response is appropriate because he presents himself positively. Although he had to work with someone controlling, he explained how he overcame this, resulting in a positive outcome. An academic project is also an appropriate topic for an interview.</p>	<p><i>"I had to do a health project with a partner in school. My partner wanted to take charge of the entire project. However, I disagreed on a lot of issues. So, I created my own separate project. That way, I did not have to work with my partner and could create a project that was much stronger and better."</i></p> <p>Why inappropriate? This response is inappropriate because the interviewee did not end up working with his partner. Instead of overcoming or dealing with the issue, he avoided the issue and worked alone. This is not working collaboratively, which is something many employers are looking for.</p>
Level 2	<i>"Were you ever confused by someone else's behavior - by what they said or did? What did you do in this situation?"</i>	<p><i>"At my previous volunteer position, another one of the volunteers that I worked with would leave at exactly 2:45 each day, even if we were not finished with a task. I was confused as to why she did not always finish up her tasks and responsibilities, but would then leave. One day, I asked her why she left at 2:45 each day. She explained that she needed to pick her son up from school each day at 3 and could not be late. This made sense to me, and I knew she had a good reason for not finishing up her tasks."</i></p> <p>Why appropriate? The interviewee explains his confusion, and then explains how he handled his confusion. He handled his confusion by asking his fellow volunteer politely, which is an appropriate course of action.</p>	<p><i>"While volunteering at the hospital, I was confused by my mentor. She was from a foreign country and had a strong accent, which was difficult for me to understand. I didn't want to hurt her feelings so I just did the best I could. "</i></p> <p>Why inappropriate? In this example, the interviewee misunderstood the question. This answer is too literal or concrete. The interviewee literally could not understand their mentor because of their accent, but the interviewer was really asking if there was a time they did not understand someone's behavior, actions, or thought processes - not their accent.</p>

SET #2	Sample question	 Appropriate response	 Inappropriate response
Level 3	<i>"Have you ever had a difficult time understanding someone else's perspective? Is yes, tell me how you dealt with this and what happened as a result. If no, tell me what you would do in a situation like this."</i>	<p><i>"That's a great question. In college, one of my professors gave open-book quizzes. I did not understand his perspective as to why that would be a beneficial learning strategy. I went to this professor during office hours to ask him his reasoning for open-book quizzes. He explained that in the real world, reference materials are often available for use. Being able to look something up within a given time period is a useful skill to have. I understand this reasoning now."</i></p> <p>Why appropriate? This response is appropriate because the interviewee explains an example of when he did not understand his professor's perspective and handled the situation appropriately. Rather than refusing to take the quizzes, calling his professor stupid, or just doing nothing, the interviewee had a discussion about his question. He then learned from this discussion and was able to take someone else's perspective.</p>	<p><i>"Actually, that happened to me at my last job. I couldn't understand why my co-worker wanted to vote Republican in the upcoming election. The Democratic candidate was just so much stronger. Because we couldn't convince each other to change our votes, we decided to agree to disagree."</i></p> <p>Why inappropriate? This response is inappropriate because it is not okay to discuss your political views during an interview. Politics can be a sensitive topic, and it is best not to mention your political affiliation or say anything negative about other political views- You could offend the interviewer.</p>

SET #3	Sample question	 Appropriate response	 Inappropriate response
Level 1	<i>“Sometimes people hurt each other’s feelings without meaning to. Did that ever happen to you? What did you do about it?”</i>	<p><i>“I sometimes joke around with this guy in school. But this one time, I said something about his clothes that actually hurt his feelings. He did not talk to me for a while. So, I went to him and told him that I did not mean to take the joke too far, and that I was sorry. Things were cool between us after that.”</i></p> <p>Why appropriate? The interviewee explains a situation where he unintentionally hurt someone else’s feelings, but he does not go into too much detail about exactly what happened. That is a good thing in this case, because it is not appropriate to tell really personal or potentially offensive information in an interview. He also explains how he tried to fix the situation by talking to his friend and apologizing. This shows that he is able to take responsibility for his actions.</p>	<p><i>“I was talking to my friends in school about my teacher. I was saying how she was kind of fat. I think she overheard me, and I could tell that she was mad. After that, I made sure not to ever say that kind of thing again in her classroom.”</i></p> <p>Why inappropriate? This response is inappropriate because while everyone makes jokes sometimes, this joke was intentional and was directed towards an authority figure (the teacher). This response makes the interviewee seem disrespectful. This response is also not appropriate because he does not even try to apologize to his teacher, and it shows that he does not take responsibility for his actions.</p>

SET #3	Sample question	 Appropriate response	 Inappropriate response
Level 2	<i>"We don't always agree with other people. Tell me about a time where you had a disagreement with someone. How did you handle it?"</i>	<p><i>"Last year, I received a grade on an English paper that I did not agree with. I felt that I had worked really hard, and did not deserve the grade that I received. I went to my professor and calmly explained my confusion. We talked for a long time, and she showed me the grading rubric that she used to score every paper. Even though I was still really disappointed, I understood a little better why I did not get an 'A'.</i></p> <p>Why appropriate? This response shows that the interviewee can calmly and politely handle a disagreement. He showed respect for his professor by accepting her decision, even if he still felt disappointed. This shows the interviewer that he can probably handle receiving constructive criticism from a supervisor or authority figure without losing his cool.</p>	<p><i>"My friend and I had a big disagreement about whether the video game "Left for Dead" or "Call of Duty: World at War - Zombies" is better. I kept telling him that "Call of Duty" is way better because weapon outlines are all around the map that give the player weapons in exchange for some of the player's points. The zombies enter the map by destroying barricades or through holes in the walls. The player can fix destroyed barricades. Rooms in the map can be accessed for 1000 points, 750 points or 1250 points. .."</i></p> <p>Why inappropriate? The interviewee goes on and on about a video game, instead of really answering the question. This is not a good example to use, because it is not at all related to jobs, academics, or another topic that the interviewer would view as important and relevant to the job.</p>

SET #3	Sample question	 Appropriate response	 Inappropriate response
Level 3	"Tell me about a time you were tolerant of an opinion that was different than your own."	<p><i>"I attended school with many people who came from different political, cultural, and social backgrounds. In class discussions, we did not always agree on a number of topics. However, I tried to at least listen to their ideas, and I did learn a lot by considering their opinions. Those discussions taught me a lot about myself and other people."</i></p> <p>Why appropriate? This response is appropriate because the interviewee describes a situation where he did not necessarily agree with others' political or social views, but he DOES NOT actually say what his own views are (which is a good thing). His response shows that he is able to listen to and consider other people's opinions. This will make the interviewer think that he can get along with other people who are different from him.</p>	<p><i>"I used to work with someone who had very strong opinions about how certain work projects should be done."</i></p> <p>Why inappropriate? This response starts off fine, but the interviewee does not give enough information. His response is too short. He should have explained how he handled this difference in opinion.</p>