

## Sample Interview Questions and Responses – Teamwork Skills



Here are examples of behavioral questions that you (the interviewee) might be asked in an interview. These questions are designed to assess how well you can **work 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 teamwork skills:



SET #1	Sample question	 <b>Appropriate response</b>	 <b>Inappropriate response</b>
<b>Level 1</b>	<i>"Do you enjoy working with others?"</i>	<p><i>"Working with others can be hard for me sometimes and I would say that I usually prefer to work alone. But I think that it can make certain projects and tasks much easier to complete. Sometimes it takes a lot of people to get the job done."</i></p> <p><b>Why appropriate?</b> Even though this interviewee admits that it can be hard to work with others, he also shows that he is willing to work with others when he has to. He shows that he understands that teamwork is sometimes necessary in order to get the job done.</p>	<p><i>"No, not really."</i></p> <p><b>Why inappropriate?</b> Even though the interviewee is honestly answering the question, he needs to frame his answer in a more positive way (see above response as an example). In every job, there will be times where it is necessary to work with other people.</p>
<b>Level 2</b>	<i>"Did you ever do a project or assignment with other people that would have been really difficult to do on your own? How did it go?"</i>	<p><i>"Yes, actually. In Earth Science, we had to do experiments in lab groups. These experiments were tough, so having several people there to come up with ideas and answers was really helpful. The labs went well when we all worked together."</i></p> <p><b>Why appropriate?</b> This response is appropriate because the interviewee states an example of when he worked better in a group than alone. The example is positive and shows that he can be a "team player." He provides enough information, but not too much detail that he is boring the interviewer.</p>	<p><i>"Yes, actually. In Earth Science, we had to do experiments in lab groups. Earth Science is one of my favorite subjects, so I led my lab group during these projects. I was able to enjoy doing all the experiments on my own, and my lab group got all the right answers. The experiments were great."</i></p> <p><b>Why inappropriate?</b> While the interviewee seems excited and pleased that he was able to do the projects on his own, he really wasn't working as a team. He was doing all the work and giving his lab group the answers. Not only is this unfair, but it is not working collaboratively.</p>



SET #1	Sample question	 <b>Appropriate response</b>	 <b>Inappropriate response</b>
<b>Level 3</b>	"Tell me about a time when you had to complete a project with someone who had a different work style from you."	<p><i>"In school, I had to complete a Civics project with a partner who liked to socialize a lot while she worked. She did do the work, but I felt like we could have worked more quickly with less chit chat. But, I realized that some people just need to do that more than others. We got the project done, and it was great."</i></p> <p><b>Why appropriate?</b> This response is appropriate because the interviewee explains how he cooperated with someone who worked differently than he did. He showed that he can tolerate different personalities and can work with someone, even when their behavior is frustrating.</p>	<p><i>"In school, I had to complete a Civics project with a partner who liked to socialize a lot while she worked. It was extremely annoying and I have to say I hated every second of it."</i></p> <p><b>Why inappropriate?</b> This response is inappropriate because it is very negative. It might show that the interviewee cannot work well with other people who have a different personality or work style.</p>

SET #2	Sample question	 <b>Appropriate response</b>	 <b>Inappropriate response</b>
<b>Level 1</b>	<i>“What is the best part of working or playing on a team? What is the worst part?”</i>	<p><i>“The best part of working on team is being able to finish something that you may not be able to on your own. I worked as an intern one summer on a construction site, and without the other construction workers, I would not have been as safe, and we could not have gotten the job done. The worst part about working on a team is when you have to work with someone who you just do not care for. In that situation, you have to find a way to be respectful and get along with them.”</i></p> <p><b>Why appropriate?</b> This response is appropriate because the interviewee gives a positive reason for working on a team, as well as a descriptive example of his success on a team. He also answered the worst part about being on a team honestly, but then described how to deal with that negative aspect appropriately.</p>	<p><i>“I don’t really know, because I have not ever been on a team. I hate sports.”</i></p> <p><b>Why inappropriate?</b> First of all, the interviewee misunderstood the question. The question did not just apply to team sports, but also to working with groups or teams in school (on projects, class work, clubs, social activities, video game participation, etc.). Secondly, the interviewee’s response sounded really negative. It is okay to not like sports, but there is a more polite way to say this.</p>

SET #2	Sample question	 <b>Appropriate response</b>	 <b>Inappropriate response</b>
<b>Level 2</b>	<i>“Did you ever have to play on a team or work with someone who you did not get along with? What did you do?”</i>	<p><i>“I swim on a recreational swim team. One of my teammates is very competitive with me and always tries to beat me during our practices. At first, her attitude upset me, but then I realized that she was pushing me to swim faster. My overall time on the freestyle 500 meter improved by several seconds. Now I know that her attitude really helped!”</i></p> <p><b>Why appropriate?</b> The interviewee gives an example where a negative situation is positive by just changing his perspective on the situation.</p>	<p><i>“Yes, that did happen once recently. I swim on a recreational swim team on Tuesday and Thursday evenings. We have meets every other weekend. One of my team mates, Cassandra, is very competitive with me. She’s a pretty decent swimmer, especially at freestyle and back stroke. My backstroke needs some work - I always seem to end up hitting the lane next to me. Anyways, Cassandra always tried to beat me during our practices. At first, her attitude upset me. I almost didn’t want to go to practices anymore just to avoid Cassandra. But then, I realized that she was pushing me to swim faster. My overall time on the freestyle 500 meter improved by 3 seconds during one meet, 2 seconds during a Tuesday evening practice, and then by 2.5 seconds another time. Changing my outlook on her attitude really helped!”</i></p> <p><b>Why inappropriate?</b> While the main content of what she said was great, she added too many details that are irrelevant to the story. She needs to stick to the point.</p>

SET #2	Sample question	 <b>Appropriate response</b>	 <b>Inappropriate response</b>
<b>Level 3</b>	<i>“Tell me about a time when you worked with a peer at school who was not doing his / her share of the work. How did you handle this?”</i>	<p><i>“This happened to me in high school. I was in a business club and we were assigned a project to market a pretend new product. Because it was an extracurricular club, and not a class for a grade, my partner was not motivated to work on the project. I talked to him about it, and we ended up dividing the project into smaller sections. I ended up completing the more time-consuming sections, but he did contribute something to the project by completing his sections.”</i></p> <p><b>Why appropriate?</b> This is an honest and realistic example of when someone is not doing their share of the work <i>and</i> how to handle it. Talking to his partner about the project and dividing it into sections seemed to be an effective strategy to get him to contribute.</p>	<p><i>“To be honest, I see myself as more of a lone-wolf or a maverick. I prefer working on projects independently. While I see the benefit of teamwork, it is not something I am interested in. I’d rather work alone anyway.”</i></p> <p><b>Why inappropriate?</b> This response is inappropriate for two reasons. First, this person did not answer the question directly. He was not asked if he enjoyed teamwork, he was asked about how he responds when someone else does not do their share of the work. Secondly, even though his answer was honest, his answer will make the interviewer think that he is not willing to cooperate with others.</p>

SET #3	Sample question	 <b>Appropriate response</b>	 <b>Inappropriate response</b>
<b>Level 1</b>	<i>"If you and a friend want to do two different activities, how do you decide what to do?"</i>	<p><i>"One day we could do what I wanted to do, and the next time we could do what my friend wanted to do. That way, we both get to do what we want. Or, we could come up with a different option that we both agree on, such as going out to dinner - Everyone likes to eat, right?"</i></p> <p><b>Why appropriate?</b> This answer shows that the interviewee is willing to work with his friend to come up with a solution that makes them both happy. It shows he is flexible, open to ideas, and willing to compromise.</p>	<p><i>"For me, it's not worth paying money to see a movie or do an activity that I'm not interested in. So, if we can't agree, I would probably just do the activity I was most interested in on my own."</i></p> <p><b>Why inappropriate?</b> This response suggests that the interviewee is rigid and not willing to compromise. Employers are often looking for people who can be flexible and come to an agreement with others.</p>
<b>Level 2</b>	<i>"Did you ever have an argument with a friend? Did it get worked out? Would you do things differently if it happened again?"</i>	<p><i>"Hum, let me think about that for a moment. .. I have had disagreements on how certain things should be handled. I always try to work things out with friends, because I don't want to lose their friendship. When I get in an argument with a friend, I sometimes need to take a break and just think about it. Then, I can talk with them later about the problem. That works best for me."</i></p> <p><b>Why appropriate?</b> It is okay to take a little time (up to 20-30 seconds) to think about an answer. This response is appropriate because the interviewee does not go into personal detail about specific arguments that he has had. Instead, he says that he takes a short break and then is ready to communicate with his friend so that they can work out the problem. This shows that the interviewee can handle disagreement without exploding.</p>	<p><i>"No, I don't think that's ever happened to me."</i></p> <p><b>Why inappropriate?</b> Most people have gotten into an argument with a friend at one point or another. But if you are one of the very rare few that truly hasn't, you should say what you <i>would</i> do if that happened to you. Or, you could talk about a time when you had an argument with someone else, such as a family member or classmate.</p>

SET #3	Sample question	 <b>Appropriate response</b>	 <b>Inappropriate response</b>
<b>Level 3</b>	"Give me an example of a time where you had a conflict with a peer. How did you handle the situation? Would you handle it differently if you could? If so, how?"	<p><i>"I had a conflict with a friend of mine a few months ago. She kept cancelling our plans every time we were supposed to get together. This bothered me, so the next time she asked me to hang out, I said I would love to, but if she knew that it was not going to work for her, could she please let me know a little sooner so that I didn't wait around too long. She got my point and apologized. But, after that, she stopped asking me to do things with her and I haven't seen her since. It's tough to know if I would do things differently because it was frustrating always having her cancel on me, but at the same time, I certainly did not want to end the friendship. I probably could have initiated getting together with her a little more after that, to let her know that I still was interested in our friendship."</i></p> <p><b>Why appropriate?</b> This response answers all the questions asked of her. She also manages to present herself in a good light, even when talking about conflict with a friend - that's not easy to do! She was able to describe a conflict with a friend, describe how she handled it appropriately, and then even say how she could have improved.</p>	<p><i>"I had a conflict with a friend of mine a few months ago. She kept cancelling or re-scheduling every time we were planning to hang out. It really started to bother me because I would count on hanging out with her and then at the last minute she would cancel."</i></p> <p><b>Why inappropriate?</b> This answer is incomplete because person did not answer the rest of the questions. The interviewee should also have explained how she handled the situation, and if she would have handled it differently if she could.</p>