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# InterviewMentor

## The Narrative Advantage

• Tell me through how you would approach an ambiguous problem • How do you break down a complex issue into manageable parts • Tell me about a time you used data to make a recommendation • How do you decide which metrics matter • Describe a time when the data didn't tell a clear story • What tools do you use for analysis, and why • Explain a project where you cleaned or transformed messy data • How do you validate the accuracy of your data • What's a model or analysis you built that you're proud of • **Ace Your Next Interview** • How do you communicate technical findings to non-technical stakeholders • Tell me about a time you identified a trend or risk before others saw it • How do you balance speed vs. accuracy in your work • Describe a recommendation you made that influenced a decision • What business question were you trying to answer in that project • How do you prioritize when everything feels important • Explain something complex to me as if I'm not familiar with the topic • How do you handle conflicting stakeholder expectations • Describe a time you had to push back



**Strategies to make your answers stand out**

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## FOREWORD


*“The only real mistake is the one from which we learn nothing.”*

*- Henry Ford*

Starting a new career in analytics can feel overwhelming. You’re suddenly expected to think clearly, work with data, understand the business, communicate like a pro, and collaborate with people who seem to already know the playbook. What most early-career candidates (and even you career changers) don’t realize is that these skills aren’t natural instincts. They can be learned! And the learning curve can be steep, especially when you’re trying to prove yourself in interviews before you’ve even had the chance to practice on the job.

I created this booklet because I’ve lived every side of that journey. I’ve been an actuary, an analyst, a consultant, and a hiring manager. I’ve coached students, trained new analysts, and reviewed more interview answers and work samples than I can count. And I’ll be honest: I’ve made many of the mistakes I now teach people to avoid. I’ve over-explained, under-explained, rushed through problems, missed the business angle, communicated too late, and learned the hard way how much clarity and structure matter. This guide is my attempt to give you the shortcuts I wish I had.

Interviews for analytical roles aren’t just about what you know; **they’re about how you think**. Employers want to see how you break down a messy problem, how you use data without





getting lost in it, how you make judgment calls, how you communicate your reasoning, and how you work with others under pressure. Those five themes show up again and again, whether you're interviewing for an actuarial internship, a risk analyst role, a consulting position, or a rotational program. They're also the same skills you'll rely on every day once you're hired.

That's why this booklet brings together the core areas that matter most: analytical thinking, technical comfort, business judgment, communication, problem-solving, and teamwork. Not as separate academic topics, but as the real mix of skills you'll be expected to demonstrate. **Interviews are simply a preview of the job**, and the more you understand how these skills connect, the more confident and prepared you'll feel.

My goal is to make these ideas practical and accessible. You won't find jargon for the sake of sounding smart. You won't find long theories or complicated frameworks. Instead, you'll find simple ways to structure your thinking, examples of what strong answers sound like, and honest explanations of what interviewers are actually looking for. I've been in those decision rooms so I know how those conversations go.

You'll also see "extra insight" tips throughout—small lessons that come from years of watching candidates succeed, struggle, and grow. These are the things people rarely teach you in school but matter enormously in the workplace: how to reset expectations early, how to communicate uncertainty, how to make your work easy for others to build on, and how to show judgment even when you don't have all the information.





If you're reading this, you're already doing something most candidates never do: preparing with intention. That alone puts you ahead. But more importantly, it **shows that you care** about showing up well. That mindset is exactly what separates good analysts from great ones.

I hope this booklet gives you clarity, confidence, and a sense of direction. I hope it helps you understand not just how to answer interview questions, but how to think like an analyst. And I hope it reminds you that these skills are learnable, repeatable, and absolutely within your reach.

Let's get hired!



## Section 1

# Core Analytical Thinking

*“If you can't explain it simply, you don't understand it well enough.”*

*- Albert Einstein*

These interview questions test how you think when the path isn't obvious. Interviewers want to see whether you can structure ambiguity, break down complexity, form hypotheses, and identify what really matters

They're not looking for the “right” answer. They're evaluating your **process**, your **ability to reason** under uncertainty, and your **comfort** with incomplete information.

In this section, the examples and explanations are geared to help you focus on providing high-level, yet on-point answers to help your analytical thinking skills come across as clear and masterful.

### Suggested **Insight Method** videos:

- Pillar 3 – Simplify Your Message: Why Simplicity Isn't Dumbing Down
- Pillar 5 – Give Direction: Give Straight Answers

## Core Analytical Thinking: Question 1

**“Walk me through how you approach an unclear problem.”**

### Purpose of the question

- Test your problem-solving skills
- See how/if you'd include others

### Bad Examples

- **“I'd start digging into the data and just see what comes up.”**
  - Too vague; doesn't show collaboration or clarification
- **“I'd wait for more direction so I don't go down the wrong path.”**
  - Doesn't show initiative or problem-solving skills

### Good Example

**“I'd start by clarifying the outcome we're trying to achieve. Even if the problem is unclear, there's usually a reason we're doing it. I'd break the problem into a few pieces, identify what data would help where and then run quick checks for each option to see which one makes the most sense. The entire time I'd stay engaged with my team to make sure they agree that the picture is getting clearer.”**

### Why It's Good

Shows structure, ownership, collaboration, and comfort with uncertainty.

## Core Analytical Thinking: Question 2

“How do you break down a complex issue into easier parts?”

### Purpose of the question

- See if you can prioritize components
- How you avoid being overwhelmed

### Bad Examples

- **“I just take it step by step until it makes sense.”**
  - Sounds reasonable but shows lack of command or foresight
- **“I try to solve the whole thing at once so I don’t miss anything.”**
  - Shows an inability to prioritize or manage workload

### Good Example

**“I break complexity into categories. For example, if I’m analyzing a drop in revenue, I’d break it into price, volume, mix, and other factors. Then I prioritize based on impact and data availability. This lets me focus on the important areas first.”**

### Why It’s Good

Demonstrates structured thinking and prioritization.

## Core Analytical Thinking: Question 3

“Tell me about a time you used data to make a recommendation.”

### Purpose of the question

- See if you understand the STAR approach
  - Situation, Task, Action, Result
- Test how much you comprehended your prior work

### Bad Examples

- **“I used Excel to analyze some numbers and told the team what I found.”**
  - No details; shows no mastery of any situation
- **“I made a recommendation but I don’t remember the details.”**
  - No clear recommendation; lack of memory indicates you might not have understood it at the time

### Good Example

**“In my last project, customer support times were rising. I pulled three months of ticket data, segmented by issue type, and found that 40% of delays came from one workflow. I recommended automating the intake step, which reduced response time by 18%.”**

### Why It’s Good

Shows clear situation → task → action → result



**Extra Insight:** Have this situation on your resume!

## Core Analytical Thinking: Question 4

“How do you decide which metrics matter most?”

### Purpose of the question

- Test if you can identify significance
- Inspect your internal algorithm approach

### Bad Examples

- **“I track everything so I don’t miss anything.”**
  - Doesn’t support having a structured, learning approach
- **“I use whatever metrics are easiest to pull.”**
  - Shows lack of work ethic; comes across as lazy

### Good Example

**“I start with the business objective and talk with the team. We identify leading indicators that influence that outcome. We then prioritize metrics that are actionable and tied to the outcome. During this process, the metrics can be sensitivity-tested to see how significant they are. Once the significant metrics are identified, the project is better defined.”**

### Why It’s Good

Shows strategic thinking, a willingness to collaborate and good business alignment.

## Core Analytical Thinking: Question 5

**“Describe a time when the data didn’t tell a clear story.  
What did you do?”**

### Purpose of the question

- Learn how you adjust and adapt
- See if you’re comfortable with communicating fuzzy results

### Bad Examples

- **“I just reported that the data was unclear.”**
  - This is evidence that your work might be untrustworthy; shows lack of effort
- **“I ignored the data and went with my gut.”**
  - Ruins your credibility and reliability; never say this!

### Good Example

**“In this one class project, the data didn’t line up. There were lots of gaps and weird numbers that didn’t fit. I checked for simple errors first, then asked the people who collected it how it was supposed to look. When some parts were still unclear, I explained that to the team and shared a couple of options based only on what we *did* trust.”**

### Why It’s Good

Shows resourcefulness and transparency



**Extra Insight:** Early on in your career you feel like you have to prove that you know everything. It’s okay to not know, as long as you work to find a solution.

## Section 2

### Data & Technical Skills

*“Data is like garbage. You’d better know what you are going to do with it before you collect it.”*

*- Mark Twain*

These questions assess your fluency with tools, your ability to clean and transform data, your understanding of data quality, and your ability to translate technical work into business value.

They’re not testing whether you know every single function for every single program. Interviewers are poking and prodding into the skills you’ve listed on your resume. This is your opportunity to prove (through examples and specifics) of what tools you’ve used, how well you understand them, and how you’ve applied them to prior work.

#### Suggested **Insight Method** videos:

- Pillar 2 – Narrow Your Focus: The One-Sentence Anchor
- Pillar 6 – Humanize It: Speak Like a Person

## Data & Technical Skills: Question 1

“What tools do you use for analysis, and why?”

### Purpose of the question

- See what you’ve had experience with
- Gauge your understanding of the tools
- Test if you know how to apply the outcomes

### Bad Examples

- **“I use Excel because everyone uses it.”**
  - No details; no outcome
- **“I know SQL but I don’t really use it.”**
  - It’s ok if you haven’t used a tool much, instead talk about how you have used it - or mention tools you’re more familiar with.

### Good Example

**“I’ve used SQL for extracting data because on this one project we had too much information for a standard analysis to run easily. It was very efficient for that large dataset. I’ve used Python for automation and modeling, especially pandas for transformation. And I use Excel when I need a quick analysis and for it be easier to visualize to a teacher.”**

### Why It’s Good

Shows experience, understanding, and application skills

## Data & Technical Skills: Question 2

“Explain a project where you cleaned or changed messy data.”

### Purpose of the question

- See how you describe the mess
- See how you managed the correction steps
- Test your understanding of why it was necessary

### Bad Examples

- **“I cleaned the data by removing duplicates.”**
  - Sounds good, but there’s no understanding of why duplicates needed to be cleaned.
- **“The data was messy but I figured it out.”**
  - No details; sounds like there was guesswork

### Good Example

**“I worked with some customer data where names, emails, and IDs were inconsistent. I standardized the formatting so everything lined up. And I removed the duplicates by using fuzzy matching. This improved match rates by 22% and led to a more accurate analysis.”**

### Why It’s Good

Shows real technical skill and measurable impact

## Data & Technical Skills: Question 3

“How do you validate the accuracy of your data?”

### Purpose of the question

- To dig into your experience with checking
- Test your ability to have skepticism

### Bad Examples

- **“I assume the data is correct unless told otherwise.”**
  - Data should always be checked, even it turns out to be flawless
- **“I only check for duplicates.”**
  - There are more issues that can go wrong than just duplicates.

### Good Example

**“I always validate the data because you never know. I usually check ranges, distributions, and consistency across all sources. I also compare against historical patterns. If something looks off, I trace it back to the source.”**

### Why It's Good

Shows prudence and a careful approach to trusting information.



**Extra Insight:** Interviewers aren't just checking if you validate data. They're checking to see if you *notice when data shouldn't be trusted in the first place*

## Data & Technical Skills: Question 4

“What’s a model or analysis you built that you’re proud of?”

### Purpose of the question

- See your emotional connection to analytics
- To see how you appreciate your work, not just the math

### Bad Examples

- **“I built a regression model but I don’t remember the outcome.”**
  - It’s ok to not remember the outcome; instead focus on what a regression model does and speak in general terms.
- **“I made a dashboard once about classroom birthdays.”**
  - No emotional tie; this doesn’t show any love or appreciation

### Good Example

**“I built a customer satisfaction model using logistic regression. The key wasn’t the model; it was identifying that greeting a customer at the door was the strongest predictor. That insight led to a redesign of the store’s flow and increased satisfaction by 10%.”**

### Why It’s Good

Shows technical skill + personal drive + business impact

## Data & Technical Skills: Question 5

**“How do you communicate technical results to nontechnical people?”**

### Purpose of the question

- Test translation
- Test simplification
- Test storytelling

### Bad Examples

- **“I show them the SQL so they understand the logic.”**
  - This is missing a translation and a simplification. Going deeper doesn't make something less technical
- **“I keep everything high-level and avoid details.”**
  - The opposite doesn't work either. Details are necessary, but they need to be simplified and turned into “normal” words

### Good Example

**“I translate technical results into business language. For example, instead of saying ‘the model’s AUC improved,’ I’d say ‘the model is now 20% better at identifying at-risk customers.’ I use visuals and focus on what the insight means for decisions.”**

### Why It’s Good

Shows flexibility and the skillset to communicate on a more “human” level

## Section 3

# Business Judgment & Insight

*“The better you understand something, the more simply you can express it.”*

*- James Pierce*

These questions test whether you understand the business context behind the data. As we shift to a world where AI is poised to start managing more and more of the technical work, it's going to be the analysts who can connect numbers to decisions that will be far more valuable than analysts who only crunch numbers.

Interviewers want to see if you are able to take the formulas and equations that you've learned in school and apply them to real world scenarios.

### Suggested **Insight Method** videos:

- Pillar 5 – Give Direction: State the Path Forward
- Pillar 7 – Target the Takeaway: Make it Actionable

## Business Judgment & Insight: Question 1

“Tell me about a time you identified a trend or risk before others saw it.”

### Purpose of the question

- See how proactive you are
- Test your ability to say something

### Bad Examples

- **“I noticed something but didn’t say anything.”**
  - Demonstrates bad communication; if something gets noticed it should always be brought up
- **“I saw a trend but it turned out to be nothing.”**
  - No explanation; who judged that it was nothing?

### Good Example

**“I noticed a drop in engagement among new users. I flagged it early, separated the data, and found that a recent user-interface change increased pain points. Management rolled back the change, preventing a larger issue.”**

### Why It’s Good

Shows foresight and influence



**Extra Insight:** Interviewers are not only testing how good you are at solving puzzles, but also your willingness to escalate any findings to management.

## Business Judgment & Insight: Question 2

“How do you balance speed vs. accuracy in your work?”

### Purpose of the question

- This is a sneaky personality question rolled into a workday situation
- See how well you balance two things

### Bad Examples

- **“I always prioritize speed. I’d rather have it done on time then be late”**
  - Shows lack of care to accuracy; not business-ready
- **“I always prioritize accuracy. Even if that means it’s delayed”**
  - This sounds good, but deadlines are important too. In reality, this timeline should be communicated with internal teammates.

### Good Example

**“You have to balance speed and accuracy. If it’s a light task, I can move a little more quickly and do basic checks. If it’s something deeper, I slow down and verify the work. I also communicate the timeline early so we all know what to expect. That way I stay fast without cutting corners.”**

### Why It’s Good

Shows maturity and situational awareness

## Business Judgment & Insight: Question 3

“Describe a recommendation you made that helped a decision.”

### Purpose of the question

- Test your insight and ability to persuade
- See if you understood your impact

### Bad Examples

- **“I made a recommendation but they didn’t use it.”**
  - No details about the situation
  - include what the recommendation was and why it wasn’t used.
- **“I don’t usually make recommendations.”**
  - This shows a lack of communication; you should show that you can bring ideas to the table.

### Good Example

**“I analyzed support ticket volume and found that 30% came from one feature. I recommended redesigning the workflow, which management adopted. It reduced ticket volume by 25%.”**

### Why It’s Good

Shows influence and business value

## Business Judgment & Insight: Question 4

**“What business question were you trying to answer in your last project?”**

### Purpose of the question

- Analyze your business awareness
- See if you know how to connect your work to a purpose

### Bad Examples

- **“I was just pulling data because someone asked.”**
  - Doesn't show an understanding of the situation or the project.
- **“I didn't know the business question.”**
  - Shows an inability to ask questions at work and figure out the “why”

### Good Example

**“The core question was: ‘Why are trial users not converting into purchasing the project?’ My analysis focused on identifying certain points in the marketing or call-to-action funnel.”**

### Why It's Good

Shows that you connect the dots between a project and why it was done

## Business Judgment & Insight: Question 5

“How do you prioritize when everything feels important?”

### Purpose of the question

- Gets right at the heart of time management
- Tests your ability to juggle multiple projects

### Bad Examples

- **“I do tasks in the order they were assigned.”**
  - This mindset ignores the fact that sometimes quick-turnaround projects to pop up.
- **“I try to multitask everything at once.”**
  - This shows a distracted philosophy; it’s ok to prioritize work and put some things to the side.

### Good Example

**“I use a list that I keep on my screen where I prioritize based on impact and urgency. I clarify expectations with management and communicate tradeoffs so we stay aligned.”**

### Why It’s Good

Shows ownership and prioritization skills



**Extra Insight:** Not only is keeping a project list a good answer for this question, it’s a vital practice in real life to help you manage a busy workload.

## Section 4

# Communication & Stakeholder Management

*“The way we communicate with others and with ourselves ultimately determines the quality of our lives.”*

*- Tony Robbins*

These types of questions test whether you can work with humans — not just data.

Companies hire people, not machines (for now).

This section will help you improve your perception of your character while still showcasing the technical skills you bring to the table.

It will be the analysts who can influence, clarify, and manage expectations that will be the most valuable.

### Suggested **Insight Method** videos:

- Pillar 1 – Identify Your Audience: How to Read the Room
- Pillar 5 – Give Direction: Anticipate Audience Questions
- Pillar 6 – Humanize It: Use Emotions Thoughtfully

## Communication & Stakeholder Management: Question 1

“Explain something complex to me as if I’m not familiar with it.”

### Purpose of the question

- See if you can simplify for a nontechnical audience
- Test your ability to communicate

### Bad Examples

- **“A neural network is a multi-layered architecture with backpropagation...”**
  - This is classic overdoing it. More complex details do not make an explanation simpler.
- **“It’s complicated — you probably wouldn’t get it.”**
  - Assumes your audience doesn’t know, which is a bad trait to exhibit. This example is assuming the listener is already unfamiliar.

### Good Example

**“A neural network is like teaching a child to recognize animals. You show examples, it guesses, you correct it, and over time it learns patterns.”**

### Why It’s Good

Shows the ability to break something complex down into understandable pieces.

## Communication & Stakeholder Management: Question 2

### “How do you handle conflicting stakeholder expectations?”

#### Purpose of the question

- See if you are able to bring people together
- Analyze your ability to manage competing demands

#### Bad Examples

- **“I just do whatever the loudest stakeholder wants.”**
  - Loud doesn't mean correct; instead include something about talking with the whole team
- **“I avoid conflict and hope it resolves itself.”**
  - Conflict is sometimes necessary and can't always avoid it. The challenge here is showing how you navigate it.

#### Good Example

**“I clarify each stakeholder's goals, identify where they disagree, and propose a path that meets everyone's needs. If needed, I create a list with a clear summary of tradeoffs.”**

#### Why It's Good

Shows maturity and diplomacy



**Extra Insight:** It's okay to include a scenario from a college or intern-level project. Perhaps the other team members had differing ideas on approaches. Use that!

## Communication & Stakeholder Management: Question 3

**“Describe a time you had to push back or challenge assumptions.”**

### Purpose of the question

- Tests your ability to stand by something you believe in
- Shows courage
- Identifies how you'd handle conflict

### Bad Examples

- **“I didn't push back because I didn't want conflict.”**
  - Avoids the heart of the question; doesn't show an ability to question something
- **“I told them they were wrong.”**
  - This creates too much conflict. If you think someone might be wrong, approach it with tact and collaboration

### Good Example

**“A leader assumed profit declining was due to pricing. I analyzed usage data and showed that customer volume was the real driver. I presented the evidence respectfully, and we shifted focus to improving our approach.”**

### Why It's Good

Shows analytical acumen while demonstrating influence and professionalism

## Communication & Stakeholder Management: Question 4

### “How do you prepare for presenting to leadership?”

#### Purpose of the question

- Understand your personal approach to presenting
- See if you know how to anticipation questions

#### Bad Examples

- **“I just read the slides.”**
  - Limits your ability to pivot; no inclusion of working with the audience.
- **“I don’t prepare — I just wing it.”**
  - This one’s obvious! Always emphasize preparation as winging it shows a lack of readiness.

#### Good Example

**“I start by identifying who’s going to be in the room. The audience is the most important part. Then I build a story to support the data that that leads to my outcome. I keep my visuals simple, and prepare answers for likely questions.”**

#### Why It’s Good

Shows executive-ready communication

## Communication & Stakeholder Management: Question 5

“What’s your process for anticipating audience questions?”

### Purpose of the question

- Understand your capacity for empathy
- Show preparation

### Bad Examples

- **“I don’t anticipate questions.”**
  - Shows a lack of preparation, indicates no understanding of what analytics are used for
- **“I assume they’ll ask whatever’s on the slide.”**
  - Doesn’t prove that you can think outside your own world.

### Good Example

**“I think about what the audience cares about, what risks they might see, and what assumptions they might challenge. I prepare backup slides for those areas.”**

### Why It’s Good

Shows foresight and audience awareness



**Extra Insight:** “Identifying the Audience” is the first pillar of *The Insight Method* for a reason. Understanding who you are communicating with is the most crucial building block for a successful presentation.

## Section 5

# Hypothetical Problem-Solving Scenarios

*“The essence of the independent mind lies not in what it thinks, but in how it thinks.”*

*- Christopher Hitchens*

These questions test structured thinking, hypothesis formation, and your ability to reason through business problems without perfect information.

Most candidates hear these questions and freeze because they are naturally inclined to find an answer. But that’s not why these questions are asked. Interviewers don’t want an actual answer. In fact, they probably don’t even know the answer themselves to check against.

What’s going to separate you from the other candidates is that this section will teach you how to verbalize your thought-process. Because these questions test “how” you think, not “what” you think!

### Suggested **Insight Method** videos:

- Pillar 3 – Simplify Your Message: Language That Lands
- Pillar 5 – Give Direction: Give Straight Answers (in this case explanations)

## Hypothetical Problem-Solving Scenarios: Question 1

**“A client’s revenue dropped 15% last quarter. What would you look at first?”**

### Purpose of the question

- See how you approach problems
- Test your investigative skills

### Bad Examples

- **“I’d ask the client what happened.”**
  - This undermines your independence. Clients don’t want to do the thinking. They hire analysts to figure it out.
- **“I’d look at all the data at once.”**
  - Doesn’t show any foresight to breaking a problem down into smaller pieces.

### Good Example

**“I’d break the revenue down into price and quantity because the drop is coming from one (or both). I’d identify where the biggest difference occurred compared to prior periods and drill down from there.”**

### Why It’s Good

Shows a structured, problem-solving approach without needing to give an actual answer

## Hypothetical Problem-Solving Scenarios: Question 2

**“If you had to improve our onboarding process, where would you start?”**

### Purpose of the question

- See how well you can create ideas
- Identify your ability to map a strategy

### Bad Examples

- **“I’d redesign the whole thing.”**
  - Sounds okay, but what if the problem isn’t widespread? This answer fails to analyze the onboarding problem first.
- **“I’d probably add more tutorials.”**
  - We don’t know if tutorials need to be improved. The answer to this question needs to start with a question of the current process

### Good Example

**“I’d look at the current onboarding process, identify where users drop off, and run checks to understand why. Then I’d suggest fixes based on where the biggest impact would happen.”**

### Why It’s Good

Shows that you have a measured approach to solving a problem. You should always know the “why” before the “how”.

## Hypothetical Problem-Solving Scenarios: Question 3

“How many potatoes does McDonalds sell annually in the United States?”

### Purpose of the question

- See how you can break down a complex problem
- Test your knowledge of a “bottom-up” approach

### Bad Examples

- **“A lot!”**
  - Probably not wrong 😊 But it doesn’t show how you think
- **“I’d have to guess around 6 million pounds?”**
  - This is 1) a guess and 2) has no data or rationale behind it.

### Good Example

**“I’d start by looking at a single McDonald’s and getting their potato counts since one store is easier to calculate. Then we can multiply daily sales to estimate an annual number. Finally, we can multiply that by the number of stores in the United States.”**

### Why It’s Good

Shows logical estimation



**Extra Insight:** I worked at a Fortune 500 company where we would ask this *exact* question to incoming interns and entry-level candidates. Most people tried giving an exact amount so don’t fall into that trap!

## Hypothetical Problem-Solving Scenarios: Question 4

“What would you do if your analysis contradicted leadership’s expectations?”

### Purpose of the question

- See how you might handle a difficult situation
- Quiz your ability to collaborate

### Bad Examples

- **“I’d change the analysis to match expectations.”**
  - This shows a blind-faith approach and undermines your confidence. Leadership might be wrong but you can figure that out together.
- **“I’d prove leadership is wrong.”**
  - This doesn’t show well for collaboration. You might be wrong and that’s okay. But you need to get there collectively.

### Good Example

**“First, I’d ask leadership what they were expecting. Then I’d double-check the analysis to see if everything was done correctly. The entire time I’d focus on what the insight means for decisions, not on who’s right.”**

### Why It’s Good

Shows integrity and professionalism

## Section 6

### Teamwork & Work Style

*“Talent wins games, but teamwork and intelligence wins championships.”*

*- Michael Jordan*

These questions test how you operate as a teammate — your reliability, humility, communication style, and growth mindset.

This section helps candidates show how they work with others and what it’s like to have them on a team. Interviewers want to see that you communicate clearly, stay reliable, and don’t create extra work for people. Good answers highlight things like being open to feedback, asking questions when you’re unsure, and keeping teammates updated so no one is surprised.

It also helps to show that you can adjust your style depending on the project. The goal is to sound like someone who is easy to work with and will fit a team culture.

#### Suggested **Insight Method** videos:

- Pillar 3 – Simplify Your Message: The Dreaded Filler Words
- Pillar 6 – Humanize It - (all lessons!)

## Teamwork & Work Style: Question 1

**“Tell me about a time you worked on a cross-functional team.”**

### Purpose of the question

- See your interpretation of collaboration
- Examine your communication skills

### Bad Examples

- **“I mostly worked alone.”**
  - A lot of analysts like to work alone. That’s fine sometimes. But this answer shows that you don’t even like work on a team.
- **“The team didn’t communicate well.”**
  - Why? This shows that maybe you don’t the ability to fix communication issues (which definitely come up in careers)

### Good Example

**“For this one college business case study, I took the analyst role in my group. I helped break the case into clear questions and gathered all the data. We all helped checked the numbers and made sure our final answer was defensible. We also stayed in touch on progress. It helped us stay organized and we ended up with a really good presentation.”**

### Why It’s Good

Shows collaboration and clarity

## Teamwork & Work Style: Question 2

### “How do you handle tight deadlines?”

#### Purpose of the question

- See how well you manage task prioritization
- Test your ability to stay calm under pressure

#### Bad Examples

- **“I just work late.”**
  - Can seem like a good “workaholic” type of answer but shows that you don’t prioritize well and might eventually burn out
- **“I rush and hope for the best.”**
  - Indicates a lack of control on the situation

#### Good Example

**“I try to get clear on what really matters, break the work into simple steps, and be upfront if something might take longer or require a tradeoff. Then I focus on getting the most important part done really well before worrying about the extras.”**

#### Why It’s Good

Shows maturity and control.



**Extra Insight:** Most people think “managing workload” is about working faster or later, but the real skill is *resetting expectations early*. People would rather hear an honest timeline on day one than get a surprise on day five!

## Teamwork & Work Style: Question 3

“Describe a time you made a mistake in your analysis.”

### Purpose of the question

- See if you have accountability
- Show learning and humility

### Bad Examples

- **“I’ve never made a mistake.”**
  - This is a total dealbreaker. Everyone makes mistakes. It’s fine. The question here is to see how you handle it and correct it
- **“I made a mistake but it wasn’t my fault.”**
  - This shows a lack of accountability. Blaming someone else is not the correct way to avoid errors.

### Good Example

**“I once mis-joined two tables, which inflated a metric. A manager caught it during their checks and asked what happened. I looked to see where the error was, corrected it, and sent a thank you to my manager for finding the error.”**

### Why It’s Good

Shows humility and growth

## Teamwork & Work Style: Question 4

“What’s your approach to giving and receiving feedback?”

### Purpose of the question

- Test if you can show openness and the ability to grow
- See if you can handle criticism

### Bad Examples

- **“I don’t like giving feedback unless it’s positive.”**
  - This may sound like you’re an upbeat person, but constructive criticism is a crucial part of a successful business.
- **“I take feedback way too personally.”**
  - Indicates you might be emotionally immature and not ready for productive career

### Good Example

**“I’ve given positive and negative feedback so I’m comfortable with that. I do try to focus on the outcomes instead of the person to keep it light. As for receiving feedback, I always make sure I ask clarifying questions. This way I know exactly what could use improving.”**

### Why It’s Good

Shows emotional intelligence



**Extra Insight:** Peer review is a huge part of real work. Most feedback comes from teammates, not bosses, so being able to give and take quick, honest notes without getting defensive makes every project smoother.

## Teamwork & Work Style: Question 5

### “Why do you want to be an analyst?”

#### Purpose of the question

- Test where your heart is
- See if your mindset aligns with the role

#### Bad Examples

- **“It seems like a stable job with good pay.”**
  - This comes across as self-focused and uninspired. The interviewer wants to know how much to love doing what you do.
- **“I’m good at Excel so it seemed like a fit.”**
  - This answer doesn’t show any emotional ties to the role, meaning there’s a good chance you’re uninterested in the long-run

#### Good Example

**“I love understanding how things work and using data to explain patterns. Being an analyst lets me combine problem-solving, communication, and business impact. I enjoy turning messy information into outcomes that helps teams make better decisions.”**

#### Why It’s Good

Shows passion, curiosity, and a clear understanding of the role’s value.

## Teamwork & Work Style: Question 6

“What’s your learning process when you encounter something new?”

### Purpose of the question

- Test your pattern of logic and learning
- See how well you use resources

### Bad Examples

- **“I Google it.”**
  - Comes across as too shallow. Internet searches are okay for research, but it doesn’t get to the “why” or “how” of why this new topic needs to be learned.
- **“I wait for someone to explain it to me.”**
  - Getting explanation for someone else is great, but not waiting for it. This answer shows a lack of initiative.

### Good Example

**“I break the topic into smaller parts so I know what I need to learn. Then I look for good sources like examples or people who know the topic. I try it out right away with a small test because doing it helps me remember. I also write down what I learned so I can use it again later.”**

### Why It’s Good

Shows ownership, structure, and a growth mindset.



Appendix

Cheat Sheets



# S.T.A.R. Method Cheat Sheets

Enter four situations and memorize them for your interview!

Time yourself and keep them under 60 seconds

Situation	
Task	
Action	
Result	

Situation	
Task	
Action	
Result	

Situation	
Task	
Action	
Result	

Situation	
Task	
Action	
Result	

# 20 Common Business Analogies

## Business Concept

## Simple Analogy

1. Supply & Demand	Like a popular lunch spot. If more people want it the line gets longer.
2. Market Competition	Two pizza places on the same block trying to win customers.
3. Customer Segmentation	Sorting your friends into groups based on what movies they like.
4. Value Creation	Making something genuinely useful. Like fixing a bike so someone can ride again.
5. Cost Structure	The list of bills you must pay every month.
6. Profitability	Having money left over after buying everything you need.
7. Economies of Scale	Buying in bulk at Costco because it's cheaper per item.
8. Opportunity Cost	Choosing to study instead of going out. You have to give up one to do the other.
9. Incentives	Rewarding yourself with dessert after finishing homework.
10. Risk vs. Reward	Jumping off a diving board; weighing the thrill against the fear.
11. Cash Flow	Money moving in and out like water in a bathtub; too much outflow drains it fast.
12. Product-Market Fit	When a product "clicks" with customers. Like a phone case that actually protects your phone.
13. Innovation Cycle	Upgrading your phone every few years as new features come out.
14. Competitive Moat	A unique advantage; having the only treehouse with a ladder.
15. Customer Lifetime Value	A reliable friend. They're valuable not just once, but over time.
16. Market Positioning	Deciding how you want to be seen. Like choosing your role on a sports team.
17. Operational Efficiency	Cleaning your room in half the time because you have a system.
18. Strategic Tradeoffs	You can't be everywhere at once. Like choosing one club over another.
19. Decision Frameworks	A recipe that helps you cook consistently every time.
20. Change Management	Helping everyone adjust when the teacher switches the seating chart.

## About the Author

I'm John—an actuary turned analyst, manager, and mentor who's spent years helping early-career professionals find their footing in the world of business problem-solving. I've worked across analytics, consulting, and risk, and along the way I've learned that interviews aren't just tests of knowledge; they're tests of clarity, calm thinking, and how you communicate under pressure.

I created **InterviewMentor** because I kept seeing talented candidates struggle not with ability, but with *how to show* their ability. Many of the habits and frameworks in this booklet come from real moments in my own career. I learned the hard way, refined myself over time, and now teach to others. My goal is simple: give you practical tools that make interviews feel less mysterious and more manageable, so you can show your potential with confidence and authenticity



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