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# Machine Learning Engineer interview questions

This **Machine Learning Engineer** interview profile brings together a snapshot of what to look for in candidates with a balanced sample of suitable interview questions.



**Jump to section:**

- [Introduction](#)
- [Role-specific questions](#)

## Machine Learning Engineer Interview

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The **machine learning engineer role** is a highly technical role that is usually relevant to companies whose main product line has a very strong data-driven component. Machine learning engineers have the practical skills relevant to a [data scientist](#) but are particu

with machine learning t  
engineer will have studi  
machine learning and b  
optimization, data mini

They know how to choo  
diverse array of these a  
limitations and assumpt  
as use the right metrics  
this role and candidates  
are highly sought after.

From a practical perspective, candidates will have experience working with specialized tools and packages for machine learning such as scikit-learn (Python), Spark ML, R, Mahout and so on. Candidates will most often approach this role from a computer science or statistics background.

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## Role-specific questions

*(Understanding how a model works)*

A fantastic way to start and build up a technical conversation is to have a candidate describe how a model with which they are familiar works. Technical interviews can often be very stressful for candidates and this is one way to allow candidates to relax slightly and talk about something in which they have more experience. It doesn't matter if they choose something very simple because the goal is to see if the candidate really understands the model and doesn't just know the basics. Going into substantial depth on something as simple as k-nearest neighbors or linear regression can be quite revealing about a candidate.

- What type of problem does the model try to solve?

- Does the model make any important assumptions about the data? When might these be unrealistic? How do we examine the data to test whether these assumptions are satisfied?
- Does the model have any hyperparameters or will the same training data work with random effects?
- What types of data (structured, unstructured, etc.) does the model require?
- Can the model handle missing data?
- How interpretable is the model?
- What alternative models are there to solve the problem, and how does it compare to those?
- Can we update the model without retraining it from the beginning?
- How fast is prediction compared to other models? How fast is training compared to other models?
- Does the model have any meta-parameters and thus require tuning? How do we do this?

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### *(Deeper machine learning questions)*

- What is the EM algorithm? Give a couple of applications
- What is deep learning and what are some of the main characteristics that distinguish it from traditional machine learning
- What is linear in a generalized linear model?
- What is a probabilistic graphical model? What is the difference between Markov networks and Bayesian networks?

- On what type of ensemble technique is a random forest based? What particular limitation does it try to address?
- What methods for dimensionality reduction can you think of? How do they compare with each other?
- What are some good ways to evaluate a model? How do you handle exhaustive search?
- How would you evaluate a model's performance? What about K-means?

*(Tools and research)*

- Do you have any research experience? If so, what? Do you have any publications?
- What tools and environments have you used to train and assess models?
- Do you have experience with Spark ML or another platform for building machine learning models using very large datasets?



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