



The scenario

You are three weeks into your new job as a junior data analyst. The company you work for has just collected data on their weekend sales. Your manager asks you to perform a thorough exploration of this data. To get this project started, you must ask some questions and get some information.

SMART questions

As a refresher, SMART questions are:

- **Specific:** Questions are simple, significant, and focused on a single topic or a few closely related ideas.
- **Measurable:** Questions can be quantified and assessed.
- **Action-oriented:** Questions encourage change.
- **Relevant:** Questions matter, are important, and have significance to the problem you're trying to solve.
- **Time-bound:** Questions specify the time to be studied.

Next, you will use the SMART framework to ask effective questions about the scenario above. Then, you will reflect on the topics your SMART questions should address.

Ask the right type of questions

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Some common topics for questions include:

- **Objectives**
- **Audience**
- **Time**
- **Resources**
- **Security**

Think about how you can ask SMART questions about each of these topics.

Reflection

Consider the scenario above:

- Based on the SMART framework, which questions are most important to ask?
- How will these questions clarify the requirements and goals for the project?
- How does asking detailed, specific questions benefit you when planning for a project? Can vague or unclear questions harm a project?

Now, write 2-3 sentences (40-60 words) in response to each of these questions. Enter your response in the text box below.



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1. Based on the SMART framework, which questions are most important to ask? "The most important SMART questions would clarify the project's primary goal and deadline. For example: 'What is the single most important business decision we need to support with this data analysis?' (Specific, Action-oriented) and 'What is the specific deadline for the final report?' (Time-bound). This ensures my effort is focused and timely." 2. How will these questions clarify the requirements and goals for the project? "These questions will transform a vague request into a clear, actionable plan. By defining a specific goal, I will know which metrics to focus on. Knowing the audience and deadline helps me tailor the complexity and depth of my analysis to their needs and time constraints." 3. How does asking detailed, specific questions benefit you when planning for a project? Can vague or unclear questions harm a project? "Detailed questions save time and resources by preventing misunderstandings and rework. They ensure the analysis delivers relevant, actionable insights. Conversely, vague questions can lead to an irrelevant analysis, wasted effort, and incorrect business decisions, ultimately harming the project's value and credibility."

Great work reinforcing your learning with a thoughtful self-reflection! A good reflection on this topic would describe how you applied SMART questions to the scenario.

Here are a few questions you might want to ask:

- When is the project due?
- Are there any specific challenges to keep in mind?
- Who are the major stakeholders for this project, and what do they expect this project to do for them?
- Who am I presenting the results to?

Here are some examples of questions you might ask based on the suggested topics:

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Here are some examples of questions you might ask based on the suggested topics:

- **Objectives:** What are the goals of the deep dive? What, if any, questions are expected to be answered by this deep dive?
- **Audience:** Who are the stakeholders? Who is interested or concerned about the results of this deep dive? Who is the audience for the presentation?
- **Time:** What is the time frame for completion? By what date does this need to be done?
- **Resources:** What resources are available to accomplish the deep dive's goals?
- **Security:** Who should have access to the information?

These questions can help you focus on techniques and analyses that produce results of interest to stakeholders. They also clarify the deliverable's due date, which is important to know so you can manage your time effectively. When you start work on a project, you need to ask questions that align with the plan and the goals and help you explore the data. The more questions you ask, the more you learn about your data, and the more powerful your insights will be.

Asking thorough and specific questions means clarifying details until you get to concrete requirements. With clear requirements and goals, it's much easier to plan and execute a successful data analysis project and avoid time-consuming problems down the road.