Overview

Now that you have been introduced to the SMART framework for asking questions, pause to apply what you are learning. In this self-reflection, you will consider the questions you would ask in a specific scenario.
This self-reflection will help you develop insights into your own learning and prepare you to apply your knowledge of the SMART question framework to your own data investigations. As you answer questions—and come up with questions of your own—you will consider concepts, practices, and principles to help refine your understanding and reinforce your learning. You've done the hard work, so make sure to get the most out of it: This reflection will help your knowledge stick!

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

You can apply the SMART framework to all types of questions. The type of questions you ask can help you explore deeper with your data. Consider the ways your questions help you examine objectives, audience, time, security, and resources.
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.

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:

- 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.