

This study guide will consist of **15 small scenarios** that do not currently use the GPS framework, followed by **multiple-choice answers** on the correct application of the GPS method, and an **answer key** at the end.

GPS Structured Summary Study Guide

The **GPS structured summary method** is a powerful communication tool designed to help you **start workplace conversations clearly and concisely** by focusing on three key elements: **Goal, Problem, and Solution**. It's a fundamental part of the "first minute" communication strategy, ensuring your audience understands the core message, what is expected of them, and the necessary next steps.

Before diving into the scenarios, let's briefly review the components of GPS:

- **Goal:** This defines **what you are trying to achieve** or the desired outcome of the situation. The goal is the desired state, not the act of solving the problem itself.
- **Problem:** This identifies **the specific issue or obstacle that is preventing you from reaching your goal**. It's crucial to avoid common pitfalls such as:
 - **Mixing it with the goal:** The goal is the aspiration, the problem is the barrier.
 - **Focusing on variables and dependencies:** The problem statement should describe the actual problem to be solved, not just contributing factors.
 - **Summarizing more than one problem at once:** Each distinct problem typically requires its own structured summary, especially if different solutions are needed. If multiple problems share a common root cause, that root cause becomes the singular problem for the summary.
- **Solution:** This outlines **what you or others are going to do to solve the problem and reach the goal**. The solution must be **forward-looking and actionable**, focusing on future steps rather than dwelling on the past. If the solution isn't fully known, it can be a request for help in finding one, or a proposal of one or two ideas for advice.

This method helps avoid common communication mistakes like diving into excessive detail, going off on tangents, or dwelling on past issues instead of focusing on next steps.

Study Scenarios

For each scenario, identify the best application of the GPS structured summary method.

Scenario 1: Project Budget Overrun You need to inform your manager that your project is over budget. You've already spent a lot of time analyzing where the money went, but you're not sure how to prevent it from happening again.

A. **Goal:** We need to get the project back on track financially. **Problem:** Last quarter's spending spiraled out of control due to unexpected material costs and contractor fees, which I have detailed in my report. **Solution:** I have compiled a detailed report of all expenses for your review. B. **Goal:** Maintain the project within its allocated budget. **Problem:** We have exceeded our budget by 15% this quarter. **Solution:** I need your guidance on how to reallocate funds or if additional budget can be approved. C. **Goal:** Avoid future budget overruns. **Problem:** We need to understand why the budget was exceeded. **Solution:** Let's review the historical spending data to pinpoint the exact causes. D. **Goal:** Finish the project. **Problem:** We spent too much money. **Solution:** We need more money.

Scenario 2: Team Morale Issues You're noticing a significant drop in team morale, leading to decreased productivity. You want to address this with your department head. You have some ideas but want their input.

A. **Goal:** Boost team morale and productivity. **Problem:** Employee engagement surveys show a decline, and there's a lot of gossip about workload. **Solution:** I propose we implement flexible hours and conduct a team-building retreat, but I'd like your thoughts on these ideas. B. **Goal:** Make the team happier. **Problem:** People are complaining a lot, and work isn't getting done as fast. **Solution:** We should probably just give everyone a bonus. C. **Goal:** Understand the morale problem. **Problem:** There's a negative atmosphere on the team because of various past incidents. **Solution:** We need to talk about everything that went wrong leading up to this point. D. **Goal:** Get more work done. **Problem:** The team is unproductive. **Solution:** We need to enforce stricter deadlines.

Scenario 3: New Software Implementation Delay A critical new software system, essential for automating several processes, is three weeks behind schedule. Your team needs to inform senior management.

A. **Goal:** Successfully implement the new software system to automate processes. **Problem:** The system is three weeks behind schedule due to unexpected integration challenges with legacy systems. **Solution:** We need approval to extend the deadline and allocate additional developer resources for the next two sprints. B. **Goal:** Automate our processes. **Problem:** The new software is late, but it's not our fault because the vendor delivered late. **Solution:** We just have to wait for the vendor. C. **Goal:** Avoid future delays. **Problem:** We are behind. **Solution:** We should find a new vendor next time. D. **Goal:** Get the software working. **Problem:** It's complicated. **Solution:** We will work harder.

Scenario 4: Customer Complaint About Product Quality A key customer has complained about a recent batch of your product having quality issues. You need to discuss this with the production manager to find a resolution.

A. **Goal:** Ensure our key customer receives high-quality products. **Problem:** The latest batch of product XYZ has defects. **Solution:** We need to investigate the production line immediately to identify the root cause and initiate a recall for the affected batch. B. **Goal:** Make the customer happy. **Problem:** The product is bad. **Solution:** We should offer them a full refund. C. **Goal:** Figure out what went wrong. **Problem:** Our quality control seems to have failed somewhere down the line. **Solution:** Let's look at all the production logs from the past month. D. **Goal:** Get rid of the bad products. **Problem:** We have defective products. **Solution:** We should stop selling them.

Scenario 5: Outdated Employee Training Program Your company's employee onboarding training is outdated, leading to new hires feeling unprepared and taking longer to become productive. You want to propose an overhaul to HR.

A. **Goal:** Ensure new hires are quickly and effectively integrated into their roles. **Problem:** Our current onboarding training is outdated, resulting in longer ramp-up times and disengagement. **Solution:** We need to develop a modernized training program focusing on hands-on modules and mentorship, and I have a draft proposal to share. B. **Goal:** Improve new hire experience. **Problem:** New people don't know what they're doing. **Solution:** HR needs to fix the training. C. **Goal:** Update old training. **Problem:** The training materials are boring and irrelevant. **Solution:** We should just get rid of it. D. **Goal:** Be more efficient. **Problem:** New hires aren't productive fast enough. **Solution:** We should fire them if they don't learn quickly.

Scenario 6: Server Downtime Report You are reporting to the IT Director about a recent server downtime that affected critical operations for an hour. The issue has been resolved.

A. **Goal:** Maintain continuous server uptime for critical operations. **Problem:** The main production server was down for one hour yesterday due to a power surge. **Solution:** We have already installed a new UPS system and improved our surge protection protocols to prevent recurrence. B. **Goal:** Inform you about the server. **Problem:** The server crashed. **Solution:** It's fixed now. C. **Goal:** Document the incident. **Problem:** The server went down, and it was quite disruptive, but we're not sure why. **Solution:** We need to analyze all the logs from the last 24 hours to find the real problem. D. **Goal:** Avoid future downtime. **Problem:** We had a power surge. **Solution:** We need to ask for a bigger budget for IT infrastructure.

Scenario 7: Insufficient Marketing Campaign Performance A recent marketing campaign generated lower-than-expected leads, impacting sales targets. You need to strategize with the sales manager.

A. **Goal:** Generate sufficient leads to meet sales targets. **Problem:** Our Q2 marketing campaign generated 30% fewer leads than projected. **Solution:** I'd like to collaborate on analyzing campaign data to identify weak points and develop a revised strategy for Q3. B. **Goal:** Get more leads. **Problem:** The marketing campaign didn't work very well. **Solution:** Marketing needs to try harder next time. C. **Goal:** Blame someone. **Problem:** Sales didn't follow up on the leads properly, so it's their fault the numbers are low. **Solution:** We need to hold a meeting to discuss

sales' lead conversion process. D. **Goal:** Get the numbers up. **Problem:** We are behind our sales targets. **Solution:** We need to discount our products heavily.

Scenario 8: Overwhelmed Customer Support Team Your customer support team is overwhelmed with inquiries, leading to long wait times and frustrated customers. You want to request additional staffing from operations management.

A. **Goal:** Provide timely and effective customer support. **Problem:** The volume of customer inquiries has increased by 25% this month, leading to average wait times exceeding 10 minutes. **Solution:** We need to hire two additional customer support agents to handle the increased load. B. **Goal:** Help our customers. **Problem:** Our customers are getting angry because they wait too long. **Solution:** We need to tell them to be more patient. C. **Goal:** Make the team less stressed. **Problem:** The support team is complaining about being busy. **Solution:** We should reduce their workload by removing some responsibilities. D. **Goal:** Improve customer satisfaction. **Problem:** Our support team is small. **Solution:** Let's train our existing staff to be faster.

Scenario 9: Project Team Member Leaving A key team member essential for your current project is leaving next month, creating a significant knowledge gap and potential delays. You need to inform your project sponsor.

A. **Goal:** Ensure the project remains on schedule and within quality standards. **Problem:** John, our lead developer, is leaving in four weeks, creating a critical knowledge gap for the XYZ module. **Solution:** We need to immediately begin cross-training other team members and accelerate recruitment for his replacement. B. **Goal:** Keep the project going. **Problem:** Someone important is leaving the team. **Solution:** We just have to hope for the best. C. **Goal:** Find a new person. **Problem:** John is gone. **Solution:** Post a job opening quickly. D. **Goal:** Avoid disruption. **Problem:** We might miss the deadline if John leaves. **Solution:** We need to try to convince him to stay longer.

Scenario 10: Proposal for New Vendor You've found a new vendor that could significantly reduce costs for a specific component. You want to present this to procurement for approval.

A. **Goal:** Reduce the cost of component X by 15%. **Problem:** Our current vendor's pricing for component X is significantly higher than market rates. **Solution:** I recommend we switch to "NewCo" as they offer the same quality at a 15% lower cost, and I have prepared a comparative analysis for your review. B. **Goal:** Save money. **Problem:** Our current vendor is expensive. **Solution:** We should just stop buying from them. C. **Goal:** Get approval for a new vendor. **Problem:** I found a cheaper vendor. **Solution:** Can you approve this? D. **Goal:** Find better deals. **Problem:** We are spending too much. **Solution:** We need to review all our vendor contracts.

Scenario 11: Cybersecurity Vulnerability Identified A security audit has identified a critical cybersecurity vulnerability in your internal network that needs immediate attention to prevent a data breach. You are informing the CISO.

A. **Goal:** Secure our internal network and protect sensitive data. **Problem:** A recent audit revealed a critical vulnerability (CVE-2023-XXX) that could lead to a data breach within 48 hours. **Solution:** We have already isolated the affected systems and need immediate authorization to deploy the emergency patch developed by the security team. B. **Goal:** Pass future audits. **Problem:** We have a security flaw. **Solution:** We need to hide it until the next audit. C. **Goal:** Prevent a hack. **Problem:** Our network is vulnerable. **Solution:** We need to hire more cybersecurity experts. D. **Goal:** Inform you. **Problem:** We found a security vulnerability in our network. **Solution:** Nothing yet, we are still analyzing it.

Scenario 12: Decline in Website Traffic Your company website has seen a steady decline in traffic over the past quarter, impacting online sales. You need to discuss this with the marketing lead.

A. **Goal:** Increase website traffic to boost online sales. **Problem:** Website traffic has decreased by 10% each month over the last quarter, directly affecting conversion rates. **Solution:** We need to review our SEO strategy and content marketing efforts, and I'd like to schedule a deep-dive meeting to brainstorm specific actions. B. **Goal:** Get more people to our website. **Problem:** People aren't visiting our site. **Solution:** We need more advertising. C. **Goal:** Understand the trend. **Problem:** Website traffic is down, but we don't know why. **Solution:** We should look at competitor websites. D. **Goal:** Keep sales up. **Problem:** Online sales are dropping. **Solution:** Offer discounts on everything.

Scenario 13: Inter-departmental Conflict There's ongoing tension between the R&D and Production departments over project handoffs, causing delays and rework. You want to facilitate a resolution with both department heads.

A. **Goal:** Improve collaboration and efficiency between R&D and Production during project handoffs. **Problem:** Miscommunication and conflicting priorities during project handoffs are causing significant delays and rework, delaying product launches. **Solution:** I propose we jointly develop a standardized handoff protocol and schedule a cross-functional workshop to align on shared objectives. B. **Goal:** Stop the fighting. **Problem:** R&D and Production don't get along. **Solution:** They just need to talk more. C. **Goal:** Get products out faster. **Problem:** R&D keeps designing things that Production can't build easily. **Solution:** R&D needs to simplify their designs. D. **Goal:** Inform you. **Problem:** There's a lot of blame shifting between R&D and Production. **Solution:** Not sure, I just wanted to make you aware.

Scenario 14: Personal Request for Flexible Work Arrangement You want to request a flexible work arrangement (e.g., working from home two days a week) from your manager due to a long commute, but you want to assure them it won't impact your productivity.

A. **Goal:** Maintain my high productivity and performance while reducing commute stress. **Problem:** My current commute of 90 minutes each way is impacting my work-life balance and energy levels, though not yet my output. **Solution:** I would like to request working from home two days a week, and I can demonstrate how I will maintain full productivity and collaboration during those days. B. **Goal:** Work from home. **Problem:** My commute is too long. **Solution:** Can

I work from home? C. **Goal:** Be happier. **Problem:** I'm tired from my commute. **Solution:** I should just find a job closer to home. D. **Goal:** Improve my work-life balance. **Problem:** The traffic is terrible every day. **Solution:** We need the company to provide transportation.

Scenario 15: Critical Equipment Failure A critical piece of machinery in your factory has broken down, halting production. You need to inform the operations director and suggest immediate next steps.

A. **Goal:** Resume full production capacity as quickly as possible. **Problem:** Machine 7B, critical for Widget X production, has suffered a major mechanical failure, halting our main line. **Solution:** We need to immediately procure replacement parts and schedule emergency repairs, and I've already contacted two suppliers for quotes and technician availability. B. **Goal:** Tell you the bad news. **Problem:** The machine broke. **Solution:** We are waiting for it to be fixed. C. **Goal:** Avoid future breakdowns. **Problem:** The machine is old. **Solution:** We need to buy new equipment. D. **Goal:** Fix the machine. **Problem:** It stopped working this morning. **Solution:** I'm not sure, I'm still trying to diagnose the issue.

Answer Key

Scenario 1: B

- **Goal:** Maintain the project within its allocated budget.
- **Problem:** We have exceeded our budget by 15% this quarter.
- **Solution:** I need your guidance on how to reallocate funds or if additional budget can be approved.
 - *Rationale:* Option B clearly states the desired financial goal, the specific problem (over-budget by 15%), and an actionable solution that seeks input or approval, rather than just reporting the issue or focusing on past analysis.

Scenario 2: A

- **Goal:** Boost team morale and productivity.
- **Problem:** Employee engagement surveys show a decline, and there's a lot of gossip about workload.
- **Solution:** I propose we implement flexible hours and conduct a team-building retreat, but I'd like your thoughts on these ideas.
 - *Rationale:* Option A identifies a clear, positive goal (boost morale AND productivity), a specific problem (decline in surveys, gossip about workload), and actionable, forward-looking solutions while inviting feedback.

Scenario 3: A

- **Goal:** Successfully implement the new software system to automate processes.

- **Problem:** The system is three weeks behind schedule due to unexpected integration challenges with legacy systems.
- **Solution:** We need approval to extend the deadline and allocate additional developer resources for the next two sprints.
 - *Rationale:* Option A states a clear goal of implementation, a specific problem (delay due to integration), and a concrete, actionable solution that seeks necessary approval to move forward.

Scenario 4: A

- **Goal:** Ensure our key customer receives high-quality products.
- **Problem:** The latest batch of product XYZ has defects.
- **Solution:** We need to investigate the production line immediately to identify the root cause and initiate a recall for the affected batch.
 - *Rationale:* Option A clearly states the customer-centric goal, identifies the specific product quality problem, and proposes immediate, actionable steps to resolve it and prevent further issues.

Scenario 5: A

- **Goal:** Ensure new hires are quickly and effectively integrated into their roles.
- **Problem:** Our current onboarding training is outdated, resulting in longer ramp-up times and disengagement.
- **Solution:** We need to develop a modernized training program focusing on hands-on modules and mentorship, and I have a draft proposal to share.
 - *Rationale:* Option A sets a clear goal for new hire integration, pinpoints the problem (outdated training causing slow ramp-up), and offers a concrete, actionable solution with a readiness to present details.

Scenario 6: A

- **Goal:** Maintain continuous server uptime for critical operations.
- **Problem:** The main production server was down for one hour yesterday due to a power surge.
- **Solution:** We have already installed a new UPS system and improved our surge protection protocols to prevent recurrence.
 - *Rationale:* Option A clearly states the goal (uptime), the specific problem (downtime due to power surge), and a solution that highlights actions *already taken* to address the issue and prevent recurrence, making it forward-looking and positive.

Scenario 7: A

- **Goal:** Generate sufficient leads to meet sales targets.
- **Problem:** Our Q2 marketing campaign generated 30% fewer leads than projected.

- **Solution:** I'd like to collaborate on analyzing campaign data to identify weak points and develop a revised strategy for Q3.
 - *Rationale:* Option A defines the clear goal (sufficient leads), the measurable problem (30% fewer leads than projected), and an actionable solution focused on collaboration and future strategy development.

Scenario 8: A

- **Goal:** Provide timely and effective customer support.
- **Problem:** The volume of customer inquiries has increased by 25% this month, leading to average wait times exceeding 10 minutes.
- **Solution:** We need to hire two additional customer support agents to handle the increased load.
 - *Rationale:* Option A presents a clear service goal, a quantifiable problem (increased volume, longer wait times), and a direct, actionable solution (hiring more staff).

Scenario 9: A

- **Goal:** Ensure the project remains on schedule and within quality standards.
- **Problem:** John, our lead developer, is leaving in four weeks, creating a critical knowledge gap for the XYZ module.
- **Solution:** We need to immediately begin cross-training other team members and accelerate recruitment for his replacement.
 - *Rationale:* Option A clearly states the project-focused goal, the specific problem (key team member leaving and knowledge gap), and immediate, actionable steps to mitigate the impact.

Scenario 10: A

- **Goal:** Reduce the cost of component X by 15%.
- **Problem:** Our current vendor's pricing for component X is significantly higher than market rates.
- **Solution:** I recommend we switch to "NewCo" as they offer the same quality at a 15% lower cost, and I have prepared a comparative analysis for your review.
 - *Rationale:* Option A defines a measurable goal (15% cost reduction), a clear problem (high current vendor pricing), and a specific, actionable solution with supporting information.

Scenario 11: A

- **Goal:** Secure our internal network and protect sensitive data.
- **Problem:** A recent audit revealed a critical vulnerability (CVE-2023-XXX) that could lead to a data breach within 48 hours.
- **Solution:** We have already isolated the affected systems and need immediate authorization to deploy the emergency patch developed by the security team.

- *Rationale:* Option A clearly states the security goal, identifies the urgent and specific problem (critical vulnerability with breach risk), and outlines immediate actions already taken and what authorization is needed for the solution.

Scenario 12: A

- **Goal:** Increase website traffic to boost online sales.
- **Problem:** Website traffic has decreased by 10% each month over the last quarter, directly affecting conversion rates.
- **Solution:** We need to review our SEO strategy and content marketing efforts, and I'd like to schedule a deep-dive meeting to brainstorm specific actions.
 - *Rationale:* Option A sets a clear, measurable goal (increase traffic, boost sales), a specific problem (quantifiable traffic decrease impacting conversions), and a forward-looking, collaborative solution to explore specific actions.

Scenario 13: A

- **Goal:** Improve collaboration and efficiency between R&D and Production during project handoffs.
- **Problem:** Miscommunication and conflicting priorities during project handoffs are causing significant delays and rework, delaying product launches.
- **Solution:** I propose we jointly develop a standardized handoff protocol and schedule a cross-functional workshop to align on shared objectives.
 - *Rationale:* Option A clearly states the goal (improved collaboration and efficiency), identifies the root problem (miscommunication and conflicting priorities causing delays/rework, rather than just blaming departments), and proposes actionable, collaborative solutions.

Scenario 14: A

- **Goal:** Maintain my high productivity and performance while reducing commute stress.
- **Problem:** My current commute of 90 minutes each way is impacting my work-life balance and energy levels, though not yet my output.
- **Solution:** I would like to request working from home two days a week, and I can demonstrate how I will maintain full productivity and collaboration during those days.
 - *Rationale:* Option A clearly articulates a professional goal alongside a personal one, defines the problem (commute impact on energy), and presents a specific, actionable solution while proactively addressing potential concerns.

Scenario 15: A

- **Goal:** Resume full production capacity as quickly as possible.
- **Problem:** Machine 7B, critical for Widget X production, has suffered a major mechanical failure, halting our main line.
- **Solution:** We need to immediately procure replacement parts and schedule emergency repairs, and I've already contacted two suppliers for quotes and technician availability.

- *Rationale:* Option A states the clear production goal, identifies the specific equipment problem halting production, and proposes immediate, concrete actions with progress already made, demonstrating a proactive approach.

Analogy: Think of the GPS structured summary method as a **precision scalpel for communication**. Instead of broadly sweeping across a topic and hitting many non-essential points, a scalpel allows you to make **precise, clean incisions** directly to the heart of your message. This ensures you **quickly expose the core Goal, the precise Problem, and the actionable Solution**, leading to **faster understanding and effective next steps**, just like a surgeon efficiently gets to the core of an issue to begin the repair.