

Behavioral Question Bank

Select 5 questions across different competencies. Check the boxes for questions you'll use in today's mock interview.

1. Leadership & Initiative

Assessing: Taking ownership, stepping up, driving results without being asked

What to Look For

- Identifies problems proactively, doesn't wait to be told
- Takes ownership of outcomes, not just tasks
- Influences others without formal authority
- Shows clear "I did" vs "we did" — knows their specific contribution
- Demonstrates follow-through to measurable results
- Volunteers for stretch assignments or ambiguous situations

Red Flags

- Waits for permission or explicit instructions
- Takes credit for team efforts ("we" without clarifying their role)
- Confuses activity with leadership (busy ≠ leading)
- Can't articulate the impact of their initiative
- Blames others when initiative fails
- Leadership examples are all about authority, not influence

- ☐ "Tell me about a time you took initiative on a project without being asked."
- ☐ "Describe a situation where you had to lead a team or project. What was your approach?"
- ☐ "Tell me about a time you identified a problem before others noticed it. What did you do?"
- ☐ "Describe a time you went above and beyond what was expected."

- ☐ "Tell me about a time you had to make a decision without all the information you needed."
- ☐ "Describe a time you convinced others to follow your approach or idea."

- ☐ "Tell me about a time your leadership approach didn't work. What happened?"

2. Problem-Solving & Technical Judgment

Assessing: Analytical thinking, debugging approach, technical decision-making

What to Look For

- Structured approach: breaks down complex problems systematically
- Considers multiple solutions before deciding
- Articulates trade-offs clearly (cost, time, quality, risk)
- Uses data/evidence to support decisions
- Knows when to ask for help vs. push through
- Learns from debugging experiences—doesn't repeat mistakes

Red Flags

- Jumps to solutions without understanding the problem
- Can't explain their reasoning or thought process
- "Trial and error" without hypothesis-driven approach
- Overcomplicates simple problems or oversimplifies complex ones
- Blames tools, time, or others for technical failures
- No mention of validation or testing decisions

- ☐ "Walk me through how you approached a complex technical problem."
- ☐ "Tell me about a time you had to debug a difficult issue. What was your process?"
- ☐ "Describe a technical trade-off you had to make. How did you decide?"
- ☐ "Tell me about a time you had to learn a new technology or tool quickly."

- ☐ "Describe a time you improved an existing process or system."
- ☐ "Tell me about a project where you had to balance multiple constraints."

☐ "Tell me about a technical decision you made that turned out to be wrong."

☐ "Describe a time you were stuck on a problem. How did you get unstuck?"

3. Teamwork & Collaboration

Assessing: Working with others, cross-functional skills, supporting teammates

✔ What to Look For

- Shares credit genuinely—highlights teammates' contributions
- Adapts communication style for different audiences
- Seeks to understand before being understood (active listening)
- Puts team success above personal recognition
- Offers help proactively, not just when asked
- Handles conflict constructively—focuses on solutions, not blame

🚩 Red Flags

- "I" language only—no acknowledgment of team
- Speaks negatively about previous teammates/managers
- Avoids conflict entirely OR escalates unnecessarily
- Takes a "not my job" attitude
- Can't give specific examples of helping others
- Blames team dynamics for personal failures

- ☐ "Tell me about a successful team project. What was your role?"
- ☐ "Describe a time you had to work with someone difficult. How did you handle it?"
- ☐ "Tell me about a time you helped a teammate who was struggling."
- ☐ "Describe a cross-functional project you worked on."

- ☐ "Tell me about a time you received critical feedback. How did you respond?"

☐ "Describe a conflict you had with a teammate. How did you resolve it?"

☐ "Tell me about a time a team project didn't go well. What happened?"

☐ "Describe a time you disagreed with your manager. What did you do?"

4. Communication & Influence

Assessing: Explaining complex ideas, persuading stakeholders, presenting

✔ What to Look For

- Adjusts message complexity for the audience

🚩 Red Flags

- Uses jargon when explaining to non-experts

- Uses concrete examples, analogies, or visuals
- Listens and addresses objections thoughtfully
- Shows preparation and structure in presentations
- Delivers difficult messages with empathy and clarity
- Persuades through logic AND relationship-building

- ☐ "Tell me about a time you had to explain something technical to a non-technical audience."
- ☐ "Describe a time you had to persuade someone to see your point of view."
- ☐ "Tell me about a presentation you gave. How did you prepare?"

- Rambles without clear structure or point
- Gets defensive when challenged
- Avoids difficult conversations entirely
- Relies on authority/position rather than persuasion
- Can't give examples of adapting communication style

- ☐ "Describe a time you had to deliver difficult news or feedback."

- ☐ "Tell me about a time you failed to communicate effectively. What happened?"

- ☐ "Describe a time you couldn't convince someone. What did you learn?"

5. Adaptability & Learning

Assessing: Handling change, learning quickly, dealing with ambiguity

✔ What to Look For

- Embraces change as opportunity, not threat
- Has a systematic approach to learning new things
- Stays calm under uncertainty—takes action anyway
- Seeks out unfamiliar challenges proactively
- Shows curiosity and asks good questions
- Quickly integrates new information into their approach

- ☐ "Tell me about a time you had to adapt to a significant change."
- ☐ "Describe a situation where you had to learn something new under pressure."
- ☐ "Tell me about a time priorities shifted mid-project. How did you handle it?"

► Red Flags

- Resists change or complains about shifting priorities
- "That's not what I was hired to do" attitude
- Freezes when facing ambiguity—needs all answers first
- Relies only on familiar methods, won't try new approaches
- Learning approach is passive (waiting to be taught)
- Gets frustrated easily when things don't go as planned

- ☐ "Describe how you approach learning a new skill or technology."

- ☐ "Tell me about a time you struggled to adapt to something new."

- ☐ "Describe a time you were outside your comfort zone. How did it go?"

6. Failure & Self-Awareness ★ MUST ASK AT LEAST ONE

Assessing: Humility, self-reflection, growth mindset, accountability

✔ What to Look For (Strong Answers)

- Owns the failure fully—no deflection or excuses

► Red Flags (Weak Answers)

- Blames others, circumstances, or timing

- Shows genuine self-reflection, not scripted humility
- Describes specific actions taken to improve
- Shares a REAL failure, not a humble-brag
- Demonstrates growth—behavior actually changed
- Comfortable discussing imperfection (emotionally mature)

☐ "Tell me about a time you failed. What did you learn?"

☐ "Describe a mistake you made at work. How did you handle it?"

☐ "What's the worst decision you've made? What happened?"

☐ "Tell me about a time you realized you were wrong about something."

- "Failure" is actually a disguised success
- Can't name a genuine failure (lack of self-awareness)
- Gets defensive or uncomfortable with the topic
- Learning is generic: "I learned to work harder"
- No evidence the lesson was actually applied

☐ "Describe a time you received negative feedback. How did you respond?"

☐ "Tell me about a project that didn't meet expectations. What went wrong?"

☐ "What's your biggest weakness? Give me an example of how it's affected your work."

☐ "Tell me about a time you had to admit you didn't know something."

7. Drive & Motivation

Assessing: Passion for engineering, career goals, intrinsic motivation

✔ What to Look For

- Genuine enthusiasm—eyes light up talking about work
- Clear career direction with logical reasoning
- Pursues learning outside of job requirements
- Connects personal interests to professional goals
- Shows curiosity about the role and company specifically
- Has researched the company and asks thoughtful questions

☐ "What got you interested in engineering/this field?"

☐ "What's a project you're most proud of? Why?"

☐ "Where do you see yourself in 5 years?"

► Red Flags

- Generic answers: "I like solving problems"
- Motivation is purely extrinsic (salary, title, prestige)
- No side projects, learning, or personal development
- Can't articulate why THIS role vs. any other
- Career goals seem unrealistic or disconnected
- No questions about the role, team, or company

☐ "What do you do to stay current in your field?"

☐ "Tell me about a side project or personal initiative in engineering."

☐ "Why are you interested in this role/company specifically?"

Total Questions: 50+ across 7 competencies | Red questions = Negative/Stress questions