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## Critical-thinking interview questions

Use these sample critical-thinking interview questions to discover how candidates evaluate complex situations and if they can reach logical decisions.

### Why test candidates' critical-thinking skills

Critical-thinking skills allow people to evaluate situations through reasoning to reach logical decisions. Companies benefit from employees who think critically (as opposed to mechanically performing tasks) because these individuals use an independent mindset to seek ways to improve processes.

Critical thinkers are great assets in all teams and roles. They are:

- **Responsible.** You can count on them to make tough decisions.
- **Consistent.** They're top performers who check their facts before acting.
- **Unbiased.** They keep their emotions in check to reach sound decisions.
- **Creative.** They suggest out-of-the-box solutions.

Challenge candidates with complex critical thinking questions to reveal their skills. But, present them with realistic problems related to the job. Brainteasers (e.g. some Google-type questions) are off-putting for candidates who already feel the pressure of the interview process. Questions like "How many haircuts happen in America every year?" are very popular online, but may not reveal much about their skills. Asking something like "How would you explain cloud computing to a 6-year-old?" will more accurately show you a candidate's way of thinking.

Keep your challenging interview questions as job-related as possible. Sometimes it's not important to assess whether the answer is right or wrong. Puzzling questions are your opportunity to evaluate how candidates react outside their comfort zone.

These critical-thinking interview question examples will help you identify candidates with high potential for future leadership positions. Combine them with various behavioral interview question types (like [problem-solving](#) and [competency-based](#) questions) to create complete candidate profiles and make better hiring decisions.

### Examples of critical-thinking interview questions

- Tell me about a time you had to make a decision with incomplete information. What did you do?

- During a live [presentation](#) to key stakeholders, you spot a mistake in your manager's report, but your manager isn't at the presentation. How do you handle this?
- Describe a time when you had to convince your manager to try a different approach to solve a problem.
- You're working on a project and you struggle coming to an agreement with your team about your next step. What would you do to make sure you choose the right direction and get your co-workers onboard?
- What's the best sales approach: increase prices to achieve higher revenues or decrease prices to improve customer satisfaction?

## How to assess critical-thinking skills in interviews

- Use hypothetical scenarios and examples from candidates' past experiences to understand their mindsets. An analytical way of thinking (comparing alternatives and weighing pros and cons) indicates people who make logical judgments.
- When problems arise, employees don't always have ample time to design a detailed action plan. Opt for candidates who strike a balance between good and fast decision-making.
- Critical thinking requires questioning facts and the status quo. Look for candidates who have implemented new procedures or applied changes to processes in their past positions. These are signs of professionals who actively seek ways to improve how things get done, as opposed to taking the "this is how we always do it" approach.
- Candidates who are intrigued by solving problems are more likely to effectively manage challenges and stressful situations on the job. During your interview process, keep an eye out for candidates who show enthusiasm and don't easily quit when faced with problems, even if they can't immediately find solutions.

## Red flags

- **They don't fact-check.** If you present candidates with a hypothetical problem and they don't ask for clarifications, it's a sign they take information for granted. A critical thinker should always research data for accuracy before relying on it.
- **They make assumptions.** Beyond taking things for granted, employees who make assumptions tend to jump to rushed and often biased conclusions. Look for candidates who use logical arguments to justify their decisions.
- **They don't answer.** If they don't at least try to solve the problem, they'll probably keep procrastinating when something goes wrong or push their work onto someone else. Asking for help when you face a challenge is more than acceptable, but avoiding problems reveals irresponsible employee behavior.
- **They give you the obvious answer.** Tricky questions are tricky for a reason. Candidates

who go with the first answer that comes in mind are more likely to approach challenges superficially and avoid using critical-thinking skills to come up with the best solution.