

# Problem Solving Skills Interview Questions And Answers Guide.



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# Problem Solving Skills Job Interview Preparation Guide.

## Question # 1

Tell me what is a problem?

### Answer:-

The concise defines a problem as:

- \* A doubtful or difficult matter requiring a solution.
- \* Something hard to understand or accomplish or deal with.

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## Question # 2

What are the common features of all the problems?

### Answer:-

All problems have two features in common:

- \* Goals
- \* Barriers

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## Question # 3

What do you mean by goals in problems?

### Answer:-

Problems involve setting out to achieve some objective or desired state of affairs and can include avoiding a situation or event.

Goals can be anything that you wish to achieve, where you want to be. If you are hungry then your goal is probably to eat something, if you are a head of an organisation then your main goal may be to maximize profits. In the example of the CEO the main goal may need to be split into numerous sub-goals in order to fulfill the ultimate goal of increasing profits.

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## Question # 4

What do you mean by barriers in all the problems?

### Answer:-

If there were no barriers in the way of achieving a goal, then there would be no problem. Problem solving involves overcoming the barriers or obstacles that prevent the immediate achievement of goals.

Following our examples above, if you feel hungry then your goal is to eat. A barrier to this may be that you have no food available, you take a trip to the supermarket and buy some food, removing the barrier and thus solving the problem. Of course for the CEO wanting to increase profits there may be many more barriers preventing the goal from being reached. The CEO needs to attempt to recognize these barriers and remove them or find other ways to achieve the goals of the organisation.

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## Question # 5

Tell me what is a problem solving?

### Answer:-

Problem solving consists of using generic methods, in an orderly manner, for finding solutions to problems. Some of the problem-solving techniques developed and used in artificial intelligence, computer science, engineering, mathematics, medicine, etc are related to mental problem-solving techniques studied in psychology.

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## Question # 6

How does a problem solving skills help you?

### Answer:-

Having good strong problem solving skills can make a huge difference to your career. Problems are at the center of what many people do at work every day. Whether



you are solving a problem for a client (internal or external), supporting those who are solving problems or discovering new problems to solve, the problems you face can be large or small, simple or complex and easy or difficult.

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### **Question # 7**

Why is it important to be a problem solver?

**Answer:-**

A fundamental part of every manager's role is finding ways to solve problems. So, being a confident problem solver is really important to your success. Much of that confidence comes from having a good process to use when approaching a problem. With one, you can solve problems quickly and effectively. Without one, your solutions may be ineffective or you will get stuck and do nothing, with sometimes painful consequences.

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### **Question # 8**

What does looking at the problems in terms of goals and barriers help with?

**Answer:-**

Looking at the problem in terms of goals and barriers can offer an effective way of defining many problems and splitting bigger problems into more manageable sub-problems.

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### **Question # 9**

What is important in defining the problems?

**Answer:-**

At this stage, it is also important to ensure that you look at the issue from a variety of perspectives. If you commit yourself too early, you can end up with a problem statement that is really a solution instead.

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### **Question # 10**

Give example of defining the problem?

**Answer:-**

Example:

Consider this problem statement:

We have to find a way of disciplining of people who do substandard work. This does not allow you the opportunity of discovering the real reasons for under-performance.

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### **Question # 11**

What are the stages of problem solving?

**Answer:-**

Effective problem solving usually involves working through a number of stages, such as those outlined below:

- \* Problem identification
- \* Structuring the problem
- \* Looking for possible solutions
- \* Making a decision

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### **Question # 12**

What do you know about defining the problems?

**Answer:-**

The key to a good problem definition is ensuring that you deal with the real problem is not its symptoms. For example, if performance in your department is substandard, you might think the problem is with the individuals submitting work. However, if you look a bit deeper, the real issue might be a lack of training or an unreasonable workload.

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### **Question # 13**

Described problems complexity?

**Answer:-**

When your problem is simple, the solution is usually obvious and you do not need to follow the four steps we outlined earlier. So it follows that when you are taking this more formal approach, your problem is likely to be complex and difficult to understand because there is a web of interrelated issues.

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### **Question # 14**

Tell me what is structuring a problem?

**Answer:-**

This stage involves a period of observation, careful inspection, fact-finding and developing a clear picture of the problem.



Following on from problem identification, structuring the problem is all about gaining more information about the problem and increasing understanding. This phase is all about fact finding and analysis, building a more comprehensive picture of both the goals and the barriers. This stage may not be necessary for very simple problems but is essential for problems of a more complex nature.

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### **Question # 15**

Tell me about problem identifications?

#### **Answer:-**

This stage involves in detecting and recognizing that there is a problem, identifying the nature of the problem, defining the problem.

The first phase of problem solving may sound obvious but often requires more thought and analysis. Identifying a problem can be a difficult task in itself, is there a problem at all? What is the nature of the problem, are there in fact numerous problems? How can the problem be best defined? this should be by spending some time defining the problem you will not only understand it more clearly yourself but be able to communicate its nature to others, this leads to the second phase.

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### **Question # 16**

What is problem solving implementation?

#### **Answer:-**

This stage involves accepting and carrying out the chosen course of action.

Implementation means acting on the chosen solution. During implementation more problems may arise especially if identification or structuring of the original problem was not carried out fully.

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### **Question # 17**

Tell me what is monitoring or seeking feedback in problem solving?

#### **Answer:-**

The last stage is about reviewing the outcomes of problem solving over a period of time, including seeking feedback as to the success of the outcomes of the chosen solution.

The final stage of problem solving is concerned with checking that the process was successful. This can be achieved by monitoring and gaining feedback from people affected by any changes that occurred. It is good practice to keep a record of outcomes and any additional problems that occurred.

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### **Question # 18**

What do you need to be able to do in problem solving skills?

#### **Answer:-**

You need to be able to:

- \* Problems can also be opportunities: they allow you to see things differently and to do things in a different way: perhaps to make a fresh start.
- \* Evaluate information or situations.
- \* Break them down into their key components.
- \* Consider various ways of approaching and resolving them.
- \* Decide on the most appropriate of these ways.

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### **Question # 19**

What skills are the key to problem solving?

#### **Answer:-**

Solving these problems involves both analytical and creative skills. Which particular skills are needed will vary, depending on the problem and your role in the organisation but the following skills are key to problem solving:

- \* Analytical Ability
- \* Lateral Thinking
- \* Initiative
- \* Logical Reasoning
- \* Persistence

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### **Question # 20**

What is lateral thinking skill as a key to problem solving?

#### **Answer:-**

Lateral thinking, is the ability to think creatively or outside the box as it is sometimes referred to in business, to use your inspiration and imagination to solve problems by looking at them from unexpected perspectives. Lateral thinking involves discarding the obvious, leaving behind traditional modes of thought and throwing away preconceptions.

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### **Question # 21**

How is a lateral thinking skill is important in problem solving?

#### **Answer:-**

It is very important in careers such as advertising, marketing, the media and art and design where you may get questions in the selection process along the lines of



write down one hundred ways to use a brick/paperclip, but it can also be of value in the job hunting process itself.

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### **Question # 22**

Tell me about the initiative roles in problem solving?

#### **Answer:-**

Use initiative to act on opportunities. Become a leader before other people view you as one. Healthy organisations reward those who take the lead, not just those with formal management roles:

- \* Take responsibility for own objectives, set priorities.
- \* Display a can do attitude even in demanding situations. Try to solve problems, rather than to pass them on to other people.
- \* Go the extra mile when asked to do tasks. Go beyond your job description. Do work that gets you noticed.
- \* Show enthusiasm: this will be noticed and you will eventually be rewarded.
- \* Take ownership of problems: anticipate potential problems, take emotive action and act quickly to resolve problems.
- \* Introduce improvements to the way things are done.
- \* Develop innovative practices. Value innovative thinking.
- \* Learn new skills that will enhance capability.

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### **Question # 23**

How do analytical and critical thinking skills help you in problem solving?

#### **Answer:-**

Analytical and critical thinking skills help you to evaluate the problem. A logical and methodical approach is best in some circumstances.

Example:

You will need to be able to draw on your academic or subject knowledge to identify solutions of a practical or technical nature.

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### **Question # 24**

List some of the problems that are typically faced by students?

#### **Answer:-**

Some of the problems that are typically faced by students include:

- \* Putting together an argument for an essay.
- \* Debugging a computer program.
- \* Dealing with an awkward customer when working part-time in a shop or restaurant.
- \* Thinking about how you are going to manage your budget to keep you going until the end of term.
- \* Working out why your printer will not respond.
- \* Developing a strategy to reach the next level of a computer game.

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### **Question # 25**

List a few ways for problem solving?

#### **Answer:-**

There are several ways to solving a problem:

Evaluating the problem  
Managing the problem  
Decision-making  
Resolving the problem  
Examining the results

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### **Question # 26**

List a few ways for evaluating the problem?

#### **Answer:-**

- \* Clarifying the nature of a problem
- \* Formulating questions
- \* Gathering information systematically
- \* Collating and organizing data
- \* Condensing and summarizing information
- \* Defining the desired objective

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### **Question # 27**

List a few ways for managing the problems?

#### **Answer:-**

- \* Using the information gathered effectively.
- \* Breaking down a problem into smaller, more manageable, parts.
- \* Using techniques such as brainstorming and lateral thinking to consider options.
- \* Analyzing these options in greater depth.
- \* Identifying steps that can be taken to achieve the objective.



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### Question # 28

How would you develop problem solving skills?

#### Answer:-

Most problem-solving skills are developed through everyday life and experience. However, the following interests and activities may be useful in demonstrating a high level of these skills. This may be particularly important when applying to employers in areas such as engineering, IT, operational research and some areas of finance:

- \* Mind games such as cryptic crosswords, Sudoku, chess, bridge, etc.
- \* Computer games are the best of these can involve strategic planning, critical and statistical analysis and assessing the pros and cons of different courses of action.
- \* Practical interests such as programming, computer repairs, car maintenance.
- \* Working with sound or lighting equipment for a band, event or shows.
- \* Academic study is evaluating different sources of information for essays, designing and constructing a microshelter for an architecture project, setting up a lab experiment.

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### Question # 29

How to deal with possible problem solving solutions?

#### Answer:-

During this stage you will generate a range of possible courses of action but with little attempt to evaluate them at this stage.

From the information gathered in the first two phases of the problem solving framework it is now time to start thinking about possible solutions to the identified problem. In a group situation this stage is often carried out as a brain-storming session, letting each person in the group express their views on possible solutions (or part solutions). In organisations different people will have different expertise in different areas and it is useful, therefore, to hear the views of each concerned party.

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### Question # 30

How to make a problem solving decision?

#### Answer:-

This stage involves careful analysis of the different possible courses of action and then selecting the best solution for implementation.

This is perhaps the most complex part of the problem solving process. Following on from the previous step it is now time to look at each potential solution and carefully analyse it. Some solutions may not be possible, due to other problems, like time constraints or budgets. It is important at this stage to also consider what might happen if nothing was done to solve the problem, sometimes trying to solve a problem that leads to many more problems requires some very creative thinking and innovative ideas.

Finally, make a decision on which course of action to take. Decision making is an important skill in itself.

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### Question # 31

How good decision making help to solved problems?

#### Answer:-

- \* Deciding between the possible options for what action to take.
- \* Deciding on further information to be gathered before taking action.
- \* Deciding on resources (time, funding, staff etc) to be allocated to this problem.

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### Question # 32

What are the things included in resolving the problem?

#### Answer:-

- \* Implementing action
- \* Providing information to other stakeholders, delegating tasks
- \* Reviewing progress

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### Question # 33

How would you give an evidence to an employer to convince them that you have problem solving skills?

#### Answer:-

Examples could come from your course, extra-curricular activities such as student societies, school, work or work experience, year-in-industry placements, travel or other sources.

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### Question # 34

Give examples of giving evidence that you have problem solving skills?

#### Answer:-

EXAMPLES:

- \* Analyzing data from a project or experiment.
- \* Working as a troubleshooter on a computer help desk.
- \* Advising a client at the law clinic.



- \* Implementing a new filing system in an office job.
- \* Acting as a student representative.
- \* Dealing with staff problems or unexpected staff shortages in a part-time job.
- \* Coping with living on a limited student budget.

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### **Question # 35**

What are the competency areas which can be considered part of problem solving?

#### **Answer:-**

Here are just some of the competency areas that can be considered part of problem solving:

- \* Initiative: You step up and take action without being asked. You look for opportunities to make a difference.
- \* Creativity: You are an original thinker and have the ability to go beyond traditional approaches.
- \* Resourcefulness: You adapt to new/difficult situations and devise ways to overcome obstacles.
- \* Analytical Thinking: You can use logic and critical thinking to analyze a situation.
- \* Determination: You are persistent and do not give up easily.
- \* Results-Oriented: Your focus is on getting to the desired outcome for solving the problem.

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### **Question # 36**

Do you know why interviewers ask about the problem solving skills?

#### **Answer:-**

The interviewer is likely looking for a general problem solving orientation to your personality. For many jobs, the hiring manager is also looking for a proven track record in addressing the types of challenges that are common in the role.

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### **Question # 37**

List some tips for handling problem solving behavioral questions?

#### **Answer:-**

Here are some tips for handling behavioral questions about problem solving:

- \* Select a strong example
- \* Be specific about your actions
- \* Practice

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### **Question # 38**

What are the things included in selecting a strong example while answering questions about problem solving?

#### **Answer:-**

- \* Choose an example that truly demonstrates your problem solving skills at their best. Do not settle for a lame or boring problem or one that makes you look bad.
- \* Go with examples that are relevant for the job description. If you are interviewing for a job with a project management component, choose a time when you overcame an obstacle on an important project. If the posting stresses analytic skills, go with that time you used your Excel macro skills to save the day.
- \* Do not try to skate by with generalities like, I consider myself a great problem solver. I solve problems every day in my job. You are not answering the question. Pick an example to illustrate your point.
- \* Avoid raising red flags by talking about problems that you caused or negatively contributed to. Remember that you want to be the hero in your interview stories whenever possible (we will talk about responding to behavioral questions about negative experiences in a future post).

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### **Question # 39**

What are the things included in being specific about your actions?

#### **Answer:-**

- \* To stand out from the crowd
- \* You must also keep your story concise
- \* Reminder the star format

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### **Question # 40**

What do you mean by standing out from the crowd?

#### **Answer:-**

To stand out from the crowd, you need to provide enough detail to give a sense of who you are and how you think. Many of my coaching clients have made the mistake of rushing through their stories and leaving out the most interesting and memorable details. Good stories offer an opportunity to connect with your interviewer. Give them some details that they can relate to.

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### **Question # 41**

What you must remind while answering questions about problem solving?

#### **Answer:-**

Reminder, the star format is not about scripting and memorizing stories (and it is certainly not about fiction writing). The example above is more scripted than you



want or need. We did it this way to illustrate how the final delivery might sound.

When preparing your own STAR stories, it is not necessary to write complete sentences with clean transitions. Just jot down the rough bullet points for each section. You want to create a framework that ensures you hit your key points but your delivery will likely be a little bit different each time.

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### **Question # 42**

Why do you need practice for answering questions?

#### **Answer:-**

If you are a regular reader, you know how we feel about practice. Over several years working with thousands of job seekers, I have seen the magic of practicing for the job interview, especially when it comes to answering behavioral questions.

I know that practice interviewing can feel awkward but please do not skip this step. It really does make a difference. Academic studies and my own experience consistently show that the candidates who practice land more job offers. Practice makes you more eloquent and more confident and will considerably increase your odds of getting hired.

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### **Question # 43**

Why you must keep your problem solving stories?

#### **Answer:-**

Of course, you must also keep your story concise. It is easy to wander off into extraneous details if you have not prepared your stories in advance. The goal is to find a nice balance between interesting detail and conciseness. The beauty of the STAR format is that it keeps you focused.

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### **Question # 44**

List a few ways for mining the results?

#### **Answer:-**

- \* Monitoring the outcome of the action taken.
- \* Reviewing the problem and problem-solving process to avoid similar situations in future.

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### **Question # 45**

List four basic steps of solving problem?

#### **Answer:-**

There are four basic steps in solving a problem:

- \* Defining the problem.
- \* Generating alternatives.
- \* Evaluating and selecting alternatives.
- \* Implementing solutions.

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