



Case Interviewing

Often used by **consulting**, **investment banking**, and **financial service companies**, case interviews test candidates' **analytical**, **problem solving**, and **communication skills** (to name a few). Questions are meant to replicate problems you might encounter on the job; the candidate is given a challenge and asked to resolve the situation. Often, the interviewer is more interested in your line of **reasoning** rather than if the answer is spot-on.



Types of Case Questions*

Brainteasers May pop up in the first round of interviews. These are riddles or conundrums interviewers use to see if you can come up with a good answer and how well you handle pressure. Can you stay calm under pressure and have fun with it? *Sample question: Why are manhole covers round?*

Market-sizing Can be found at any round of the interview process. Market-sizing questions can be broken down into population-based questions, household questions, or preposterous questions. Be sure to know which one you're answering, as it will help you strategize. *Sample population based question: How many gas stations are in the U.S.? Sample household based question: How many garden hoses were sold in the U.S. last year? Sample preposterous question: How many slices of pizza does it take to reach the moon?*

Familiarize yourself with popular statistics; they will give you a starting point when it seems like you have none. Popular statistics include world population, U.S. population, number of adults in the U.S., number of households in the U.S., average household size in the U.S., life expectancy of Americans in the U.S., and minimum wage in the U.S.

Business problem Questions typically come in one of two forms: 1) number problems; or 2) strategy or operations problems. *Sample number business problem: Our total costs are \$20 million. Labor costs make up 25% of total costs. How much are our labor costs? Sample strategy question: DuPont has just invented a light-weight, super-absorbent, biodegradable material that would be perfect for disposable diapers. Estimate the size of the diaper market and tell me if DuPont should enter this market and if so, how?*

Factor questions Less common and are often asked in lieu of market size questions when the interviewer is short on time. They start with "What factors influence..." or "What factors would you consider..." These are broad questions, so don't get too detailed. *Sample factor question: What factors would you consider when marketing a theatrical film?*

Skills the Interviewer is Looking For

▶ *Analytical*

Do you have logical line of reasoning?
How do you structure your answers?
Can you make quantitative calculations?

▶ *Problem-Solving*

How well can you narrow down a problem?
Are you asking relevant questions?
Can you be creative in your ability to solve problems in the face of challenges?

▶ *Communication*

Are you a good listener and can you state a plan to provide an answer?
Do you explain and defend your ideas?
Can you brainstorm ideas out loud?
Are you able to bring closure to the problem and identify a solution?

Strategies

1. **Do your homework and practice.** While interviewers aren't looking for the "right" answer, some answers that are better than others—aim for close approximations.
2. **Take notes and do math on paper.**
3. Use **round numbers** to simplify your quantitative process.
4. **Ask clarifying questions.**
5. **Brainstorm out loud.** It might feel weird, but it helps your interviewer see your line of reasoning.

Additional Resources

Some of the additional resources below can be found in Tutt Library. Contact the Career Center for access to others.

Case in Point, Marc P. Cosentino

Ace Your Case: Consulting Interviews, WetFeet

Mastering the Case Interview, Alexander Chernev

Vault Guide to the Case Interview, Mark Asher

Also check out consulting firm websites to get example case questions and find out more information about their particular process.

