



HIRING INTERVIEW QUESTION BANK

Behavioral & situational questions for SE candidates

How to use: Pick 6–8 questions per interview. Mix categories. Score each answer 1–3 using the guide. Take notes during, not after. Even better: record the interview with a conversation intelligence tool (with the candidate's consent) and evaluate the transcript against this scorecard.

1 Weak — vague, defensive, no examples 2 Adequate — reasonable but generic 3 Strong — specific, self-aware, bar-raising

DISCOVERY & PAIN FINDING

"Walk me through how you'd handle a prospect who says 'Skip discovery, just show me the product.'"

Strong: Earns the right to ask questions without refusing. Weaves discovery into the demo. Understands WHY discovery matters. ▶ Skips straight to demo with no pushback.

"Tell me about a deal where your discovery completely changed the direction of the opportunity."

Strong: Specific story of uncovering an unstated problem. Explains what question/signal led there. Not a checklist approach. ▶ Can't name a specific deal.

DEMO & PRESENTATION

"You're demoing to 8 people — tech users, a VP, and procurement. How do you structure it?"

Strong: Segments audience, plans for each. Business outcome (VP), day-to-day (users), security (procurement). Mentions tailored storyline. ▶ "I'd show the same demo to everyone."

"Tell me about a demo that went sideways. What happened and how did you recover?"

Strong: Honest about what went wrong. Stayed composed, adapted, turned negative into connection. ▶ "Nothing comes to mind."

TECHNICAL DEPTH & LEARNING

"You're asked a technical question you don't know the answer to. What do you do?"

Strong: Admits confidently, commits to follow-up timeline, asks WHY they need it. Never bluffs. Never guesses. ▶ Bluffs or makes something up.

"Explain a complex technical concept from your product as if I'm a non-technical VP."

Strong: Simplifies without dumbing down. Uses analogies, connects to business outcomes. If they light up teaching = great sign. ▶ Drowns in jargon, can't simplify.

SALES PARTNERSHIP & DEALS

"Tell me about a time you disagreed with an AE on deal strategy."

Strong: Had perspective, voiced it respectfully, backed with evidence. Supported team decision. ▶ "I just do what the AE says."

"Walk me through how you'd scope a POC. What needs to be true before you agree?"

Strong: Success criteria, timeline, stakeholder commitment, clear next step if successful. Written agreement before starting. ▶ "I just build whatever they ask for."

COACHABILITY & SELF-AWARENESS

"What's the hardest feedback you've received? How did you respond?"

Strong: Real feedback (not humble brag). Honest emotional reaction AND what they did about it. #1 predictor of coachability. ▶ Humble brag or gets defensive.

"Tell me about a skill you've deliberately improved in the last year."

Strong: Specific and intentional. "I wanted to improve at exec presentations, so I volunteered for QBRs and asked for feedback." ▶ Can't name anything specific.

SITUATIONAL / ROLE-PLAY

"I'm a prospect. 'We've been looking at [competitor] and they do everything we need. Why bother with you?' Go."

Strong: Doesn't trash competitor. Acknowledges, pivots to discovery. "What are the top 3 things driving your evaluation?" ▶ Immediately trashes the competitor.

"Tech team loves us but the CFO is blocking — doesn't see ROI. Your move?"

Strong: Builds business case, quantifies cost of problem, arms champion to present upward. May ask for CFO meeting. ▶ "That's the AE's problem, not mine."

✓ Hire

- ✓ Scores 2 or 3 across most categories
- ✓ No weak scores in Discovery or Demo — core SE skills
- ✓ Gives specific, real examples — not hypotheticals
- ✓ Shows self-awareness and willingness to learn

✗ Pass

- ✗ Two or more weak scores across categories
- ✗ Any weak score in Discovery or Demo
- ✗ Answers stay vague or generic — no real stories
- ✗ Defensive when challenged or low self-awareness