

Sample Interview Questions and Responses – Self Control Skills

Here are examples of behavioral questions that you might be asked in an interview. These questions are designed to assess how you **cope** with stressful or frustrating situations. The interviewer might not ask you these questions in exactly the same way, and you will not be asked all of these questions. In fact, you might only be asked 2 -3 of these kinds of questions, or you might be asked none at all. But it is still good to practice responding to these kinds of questions.



You will also see examples of appropriate and inappropriate responses to these questions. These examples will help you create your *own* answers to these questions using the S.T.A.R. method worksheet.



For each question set, we have provided three levels of the question. These three levels are different in terms of complexity of the question, and complexity of the response.



- **Level 1:** Basic
- **Level 2:** Intermediate
- **Level 3:** Advanced



We recommend that you read and practice responding to the level that you are most comfortable with. If needed, ask someone (a teacher, parent, coach, therapist) to help you decide what level you should practice.



Questions that interviewers might ask to assess your self control skills:



SET #1	Sample question	 Appropriate response	 Inappropriate response
Level 1	<i>“What is / was the hardest class for you in school? What did you do when you had a particularly hard time with it?”</i>	<p><i>“English was really hard for me in school. I had a hard time understanding all of our assigned readings. I really liked math and science where there was a clear-cut answer. But, English literature was a requirement for graduation, so I went to afterschool tutoring for extra help. I did better on my tests and papers and passed the class.”</i></p> <p>Why appropriate? This response is appropriate because the interviewee explains why the class was hard for him, and then gives an appropriate response for what he did when he was having a hard time with it. He still presented himself in a positive way, even though he was admitting that something was hard for him.</p>	<p><i>“English Literature was the hardest class for me in school. I went to afterschool tutoring.”</i></p> <p>Why inappropriate? This response is inappropriate because it is too brief and does not provide enough information. The interviewee should have elaborated a little more on both why the class was hard for him as well as what he did when he had a hard time with it.</p>
Level 2	<i>“What kind of person makes you angry? What do you do when you have to be around them?”</i>	<p><i>Someone who cannot accept other people’s differences makes me angry. Everyone has strengths and weaknesses and it is important to respect one another despite their weaknesses. When I am around someone like this, I do my best to stay calm. I may point out calmly and politely that is okay to be different, but I do not show my anger.”</i></p> <p>Why appropriate? This response is appropriate because the interviewee gives an example of when it is reasonable to be angry at someone, and then describes an appropriate way of handling that anger.</p>	<p><i>“I get really angry at people who boss me around and tell me what to do. I am a hard working person and don’t need another mother to nag me. When I have to be around people like this, I usually tell them to stop telling me what to do. If they continue, I ignore them and do things my way.”</i></p> <p>Why inappropriate? This response is inappropriate because at a workplace, you are going to have to take orders from someone at some point. If you cannot handle being told what to do, you are going to be a difficult employee at almost every workplace. This response could really scare off an interviewer.</p>

SET #1	Sample question	 Appropriate response	 Inappropriate response
Level 3	“What kind of people do you find most difficult to get along with? Can you tell me what happened when you had to cooperate with that type of person?”	<p><i>“I try hard to get along with everyone because it makes things easier in all areas of life. I would say that I have the most difficulty getting along with people who are really competitive. Honestly, I can be competitive too sometimes. When I have to cooperate with these kinds of people, I try to remember that everyone wants to be really good at things, and we can each use our individual strengths to get projects and tasks done better.”</i></p> <p>Why appropriate? This response is appropriate because the interviewee first says that he tries to get along with everyone. The interviewee answers the question by turning a relative weakness into strength. He says that getting along with competitive people can be hard, but he also says that he can be competitive sometimes. Employers like employees who work hard and try to do their very best (which is something that most competitive people try to do).</p>	<p><i>“I have the most difficulty getting along with males. I am more comfortable working with females because they are more tolerant. I typically tend to shy away when having to cooperate with males.”</i></p> <p>Why inappropriate? This response is inappropriate because it is sexist, meaning the person has a bias towards a particular sex or gender (in this case, males). Your responses should never be sexist, racist, or discriminatory in any way. You would offend an interviewer and not get the job.</p>

SET #2	Sample question	 Appropriate response	 Inappropriate response
Level 1	<i>"What is the best thing for you to do when you feel like you might lose your temper?"</i>	<p><i>"The best thing for me to do is take a short break. I have a routine that helps me calm down. During my break, I take some deep breaths, get some water, and write down how I am feeling. Then I am ready to get back to work."</i></p> <p>Why appropriate? This response is appropriate because the interviewee handles his frustration in a way that is healthy and does not interfere with the work place. He also mentions that he returns back to work shortly, which shows that his temper is not going to take away from his productivity at work.</p>	<p><i>"Hmm. I'm not really sure. I'll have to think about that one."</i></p> <p>Why inappropriate? While it is hard to have answers for all the questions you will be asked, this person does not even attempt to answer the question. If you don't know a good answer off the top of your head, it is okay to pause and think about it for about 20-30 seconds to come up with an answer. If you still cannot come up with an answer, then it is okay to say so and ask if you can get back to them at a later time with that response.</p>
Level 2	<i>"What are some things that might make you lose your temper? What do you do when you feel tempted to do or say something in anger?"</i>	<p><i>"I have never lost my temper at work before, but something that may cause me to lose my temper is if a co-worker says rude things to me or puts me down. However, I am usually good at controlling my temper, and if tempted, I remind myself that I must behave professionally at work and it's important to be the bigger person."</i></p> <p>Why appropriate? This person says that he has not lost his temper before at work. If this is true for you, it is a good idea to say it because that is a very good thing. Employers want workers who will get along with others and not cause trouble at work. However, he also mentioned something that could potentially make him an angry and explained how he would handle the situation appropriately.</p>	<p><i>"I get angry when someone does not do their tasks the way they are supposed to be done. I also get annoyed when people are messy and disorganized. When there is a mess, it makes it difficult for me to work productively. When people listen to music or talk amongst each other, it is hard for me to work productively too, so that irritates me too."</i></p> <p>Why inappropriate? This person lists many things that annoy him. First of all, he should not point out so many things that annoy him in an interview, even if it's true. This makes him seem difficult to please and be around. Secondly, he begins by naming something that makes him angry, and then starts naming things that make him irritated or annoyed - The question is really about anger and losing your temper, not minor annoyances here and there. Finally, he did not answer the second part of the question, which asks what do you do when you feel tempted to do or say something in anger.</p>

SET #2	Sample question	 Appropriate response	 Inappropriate response
Level 3	"What are some strategies that you use to stay calm under pressure?"	<p><i>"When I am under pressure to get something done, it is usually because I have a lot of work or school assignments to do. When this happens, I first like to write out a plan. This helps me see exactly what steps I need to take. I also set short-term deadlines for each step, so that the big, overall task does not seem so overwhelming. I set goals for how long I will work on a task each day, and that helps me manage my time. I give myself short breaks so that I can feel refreshed and in control."</i></p> <p>Why appropriate? This response is appropriate because the interviewee specifically describes the steps he takes to stay calm when he feels pressure. This response shows that he can handle his work, even when it is difficult or stressful.</p>	<p><i>"When I am under pressure to get something done, I need to stop working and take some time off. Maybe the rest of the day, or maybe a week. Then, I can take a break so I will feel less stressed."</i></p> <p>Why inappropriate? This response is inappropriate because it shows that the interviewee cannot deal with pressure very well. It is totally fine to take a short break when work is stressful or hard, but it is not okay to stop working for days. That is too long of a break, and the work will never get done if you take a break that long.</p>

SET #3	Sample question	 Appropriate response	 Inappropriate response
Level 1	<i>"Have you ever lost a game or competition and felt really annoyed about it? What did you do when this happened?"</i>	<p><i>"Last year, I was the first runner up in our school's fine arts competition, and only the winner gets to go to regionals. This was really upsetting to me because computer art has always been a strength for me. Even though I was upset, I congratulated the winner. This year, I am competing again."</i></p> <p>Why appropriate? This response is appropriate because it is on topic, talks about an academic or work-related situation, and provides the right amount of detail. He also described handling a tough situation well.</p>	<p><i>"Last year, I was the first runner up in our school's fine arts competition. The winner was Sandra Barinski, who transferred from another high school the year before. Her area was painting with water colors. Only the winner was able to go move on to regionals, which meant Sandra moved on, not me. And then she lost at regionals, and didn't make it to states. But, I am entering the competition again this year. The competition begins on March 8th. I think it will take place in Charleston, but maybe it's in Columbia."</i></p> <p>Why inappropriate? This answer provides too many irrelevant details. The content is fine because he describes an impressive academic situation, but he includes way too much detail. The interviewer does not need to know the winner's name, that she transferred from another school, or the date and location of the next competition. These details detract from the main point of his answer and may bore the interviewer.</p>

SET #3	Sample question	 Appropriate response	 Inappropriate response
Level 2	<i>“Did you ever feel like you had too much to get done, all at the same time? What did you do about it?”</i>	<p><i>“At my last job, I worked in the finance department. At the end of the fiscal year, I would often have too much to get done by a specific deadline, and this could be stressful. In order to get everything done, my supervisor and I created a long term schedule and then daily to do lists of the tasks to prioritize. Breaking down the work helped make it manageable, and I was able to get everything done in time for the end of the fiscal year.”</i></p> <p>Why appropriate? This person gives a nice example of having too much work to do, and handling it using an effective strategy. The answer is clear, concise, and on-topic.</p>	<p><i>“At my last job, I worked in the finance department. At the end of the fiscal year, I would often have too much to get done by a specific deadline, and this could be stressful. Sometimes, my supervisor had to accept the fact that I just could not get everything done by the deadlines. But I always got it done eventually.”</i></p> <p>Why inappropriate? This response is inappropriate because it shows that the interviewee cannot meet deadlines, and he does not take any steps to get help when things get stressful. He makes it sound like it is okay to miss deadlines at work – but that is almost never okay.</p>
Level 3	<i>“Have you ever been around someone else who is losing their temper? How did you respond?”</i>	<p><i>“When someone else is losing their temper, I try to give them some space so they can calm down. If they need my help, I try to help them. But, it does not help to yell at them or to tell them what to do when they are upset. Everyone needs time to calm down, and then they can deal with the problem more effectively.”</i></p> <p>Why appropriate? This response is appropriate because it shows that the interviewee tries to understand other people’s perspectives. This response shows that he is willing to try to help someone when they are upset, and he knows how to stay calm even when someone else is losing their temper. This will make the interviewer think that he can work well with co-workers, supervisors, and maybe even customers.</p>	<p><i>“I try to tell them to chill out and stop it. When other people lose their cool, I am not able to focus on my work, and that makes me frustrated too. People need to remember that things could always be worse.”</i></p> <p>Why inappropriate? This response is inappropriate for several reasons. First of all, it is not usually effective to tell someone to “chill out” when they are upset. Secondly, the interviewee complains about how the other person’s behavior affects his work, rather than talking about how they might really try to help that upset person. This makes it seem that the interviewee does not care about other people very much.</p>