# Behavioural and Fit Questions (Insurance)

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INT.NB.1.a · Motivation and fit

**Explain why insurance, and why it rather than banking or consulting, with one or two reasons about how insurers work and one thing you have done that shows the interest is real.**

Why insurance is usually the first question, because it shows whether you understand what insurers do. An insurer takes premiums from many customers in exchange for a promise to pay when defined bad events happen. It earns from underwriting profit, which is premiums less claims and expenses, plus investment income on money held before claims are paid. A weak answer says you like finance, numbers and a stable industry, which fits banking and consulting equally well. A strong answer gives one or two reasons about the work itself: deciding which risks to accept and at what price before the outcome is known, helping customers at the moment something has gone wrong, or watching how new risks such as floods and cyber attacks change what can be insured. Back each reason with something you did, such as comparing quotes, reading an annual report or following a loss in the news. For why not banking or consulting, say what insurance gives you and respect the alternatives. Expect a follow-up that tests the reason, such as how an insurer makes money. Avoid claiming a lifelong ambition.

WORKED EXAMPLE: TURNING A RISING CLUB PREMIUM INTO A WHY-INSURANCE ANSWER

Imran Qureshi is an invented candidate. His student society insures 18,000 of equipment at a rate of 3% of the sum insured, so the premium was 540 a year. Last year the society made two claims, 1,150 and 420, each with a 100 excess paid by the society. At renewal the quote rose to 810. His first draft says only that he likes the stability of insurance. Build a better why-insurance answer from what he saw, stating what the numbers do and do not show. Ignore tax and assume the earlier two years had no claims.

**Answer:** A why-insurance answer built on one premium of 540, claims paid of 1,370 (253.7% in the year, 84.6% over three years), a 50.0% renewal rise and a 300 effect from a higher excess, with the limits of a small sample stated.

> **Interview tip:** Say it aloud: what drew me to insurance was our society's renewal. Our premium was 540 and we claimed 1,370 in a year, so I could see why the price rose, and I wanted to understand how insurers judge that on thin evidence. I know one small account is not typical. Then stop and let the interviewer ask where you would like to go next.

INT.NB.1.b · Motivation and fit

**Build a why-this-firm and why-this-role answer for underwriting, claims, broking or actuarial work from facts you have checked, with the trade-offs named.**

Why this firm and why this role are asked together, and generic answers are easy to spot. Start with what each role does. An underwriter decides which risks to accept and at what price. A claims handler decides how a valid claim is investigated and paid, and treats the customer fairly while doing it. A broker advises the client, shapes the cover and places it with insurers. An actuarial trainee estimates future claims and liabilities with data and models. Then pick the role that matches evidence from your own life, and say what would change your mind. For the firm, use facts you have checked, such as the lines of business, how the graduate rotations run, and what the annual report shows, and treat each as something to confirm with people. Common rules of thumb help, for example a combined ratio below 100% usually means an underwriting profit. State a trade-off honestly, such as less variety in a specialist insurer. Do not praise the brand, and do not name a role only because it sounds senior.

**WORKED EXAMPLE: USING AN ANNUAL REPORT TO CHOOSE A ROLE AND A REASON**

Priya Nair is an invented candidate applying to Tamarisk Specialty, an invented insurer. Its annual report shows gross written premium of 840m, a combined ratio of 94%, 1,050 staff and 30 graduates a year on a rotation through underwriting, claims and actuarial teams. Premium by line is property 35%, liability 30%, marine 20% and cyber 15%. Her dissertation compared flood risk in three towns. Build a why-this-firm and why-this-role answer, assuming earned premium equals written premium and ignoring reinsurance.

**Answer:** A role-and-firm answer built on a 94% combined ratio (about 50.4m of underwriting profit), property at 294m as the largest line, 0.8m of premium per member of staff and a 30-graduate intake, linked to her flood dissertation, with the trade-off named.

> **Interview tip:** Say it aloud: Tamarisk's report shows property as the biggest line and a combined ratio of 94%, and my dissertation was on flood risk, so I would like to start in property underwriting. I want to see claims in the rotation too. I know a specialist insurer has fewer lines, and I see that as depth. Then ask how the rotation is decided.

**INT.NB.1.c · Motivation and fit**

### Structure any behavioural answer in about two minutes with situation, task, action, result and learning, own your part honestly, and prepare questions to ask the interviewer.

Behavioural questions ask for evidence: tell me about a time you. A reliable structure is situation, task, action, result and learning, often called STAR with a learning step added. Spend most of the time on the action, because that is where the interviewer learns what you did and how you think. Use I for your own steps and we for the team, and never claim the whole result if others contributed. Put one number in the result, even a small one, and say honestly if the outcome was partial. Finish with what you would do differently. About two minutes is a sensible length, which at a normal pace is roughly 300 words, so a rambling background wastes the answer. Prepare four or five stories that can be reused for teamwork, pressure, a customer, an error and a disagreement. At the end you are usually asked for questions, so prepare three that show curiosity about the work, such as how graduates get feedback, and drop any the conversation already answered. Avoid questions about pay or holiday at this stage.

**WORKED EXAMPLE: CUTTING A 410-WORD STORY TO TWO MINUTES**

Daniel Whitcombe is an invented candidate. His story is about checking 160 member records in a society spreadsheet against bank payments and finding 7 errors. He speaks at 150 words a minute and wants a 2-minute answer. His draft has 120 words of situation, 40 of task, 160 of action, 50 of result and 40 of learning. Plan the cuts, using shares of 15%, 10%, 45%, 20% and 10%.

**Answer:** A 300-word answer with 45, 30, 135, 60 and 30 words, cutting 110 words (26.8% of the draft), with a result of 7 errors in 160 records (4.4%).

> **Interview tip:** Say it aloud: the society's records were in a spreadsheet, and I was asked to check them against bank payments. I checked 160 records one by one, found 7 differences, which is 4.4 percent, and traced each. Two were timing. What I would do differently is agree a check each term. Then stop, and let the interviewer choose where to probe.

**INT.NB.2.a · Behavioural situations**

### Describe teamwork, pressure and setbacks with evidence of your own contribution, one number, and what you changed afterwards.

Teamwork and resilience questions are about how you behave when work is shared or goes wrong, which matters in insurance because underwriting, claims and actuarial work all depend on colleagues handing over reliable information. Choose a real example with a clear goal, say your part in one or two sentences, and give a number such as hours, items checked or a mark. When a team member is struggling, the order is facts, then a private conversation to understand the reason, then a fair redistribution, and only then escalation. Do not take over silently and do not report first. For a setback, state what went wrong without blaming others, what you changed, and what happened next. Resilience is evidence of recovery, not a claim that you never panic. Be careful with credit: say what you did, what others did, and what you cannot be sure about. Interviewers often probe with how do you know it was you, so have the evidence ready. Avoid hypothetical answers, which start with I would, when the question asks about a time.

**WORKED EXAMPLE: TELLING A TEAM STORY WITH THE HOURS AS EVIDENCE**

Nadia Farouk is an invented candidate. In a four-person university project, hours logged in the first three weeks were 40, 38, 37 and 17. The fourth member, Leo, was working night shifts. Nadia spoke to him privately, they moved him to smaller tasks, and hours in the next three weeks were 36, 35, 36 and 30. The team mark was 71, up from 61 on the previous project. Build the story, owning her part and stating limits.

**Answer:** A teamwork story built on Leo's share rising from 12.9% to 21.9% of hours, a private conversation, a reallocation and a mark of 71 against 61, with her own part separated from the team's and the limits stated.

**Interview tip:** Say it aloud: I noticed from our log that one teammate had logged 17 of 132 hours, so I asked him privately what was in the way. He was on night shifts, so we gave him smaller tasks, and his share rose from about 13 to 22 percent. It was better, not equal. Next time I would agree availability in week one. Then stop.

**INT.NB.2.b · Behavioural situations**

### Handle a customer, difficult client or difficult colleague situation with listening, a plain explanation, fairness and a clear next step, without promising what you cannot deliver.

Insurance is a service promise, so interviewers ask about customers and difficult people to see whether you stay calm and fair when someone is upset. A customer who is angry about a payment, a premium rise or a refusal usually wants three things: to be heard, to understand why, and to know what happens next. The sequence is listen without interrupting, acknowledge the feeling without admitting fault you are not sure of, check the facts from the policy or file, explain in plain words with the arithmetic, and set out the next step, including how to ask for a review or complain. Do not promise an outcome you cannot control, and do not bend a rule to end an unpleasant call, because that is unfair to other customers. With a difficult client or colleague, speak privately, use a specific example, and ask what would help before escalating. For a broker the client is also the person paying, so frame bad news with options. Record what you said and agreed. Avoid blaming the customer or the system.

**WORKED EXAMPLE: EXPLAINING A POLICY LIMIT TO A CUSTOMER WHO EXPECTED FULL VALUE**

Hannah Brooks is an invented candidate who worked part-time on the phones at an invented insurer. A customer's bicycle valued at 1,200 was stolen from outside a cafe. The invented policy pays up to 1,000 for a bicycle left unattended, with a 100 excess. The customer expected 1,200 and is angry. Show how Hannah handles the call, with the arithmetic, and ignore any other terms.

**Answer:** A customer call handled by listening, checking the wording, explaining a payment of 900 (limit 1,000 less 100 excess) against an expectation of 1,200, a shortfall of 300 or 25.0%, and giving a review route without a promise.

**Interview tip:** Say it aloud: I let him finish, then checked the policy. The limit for an unattended bicycle was 1,000 and the excess 100, so we paid 900, which is 300 or 25 percent below what he hoped. I explained that plainly, told him how to ask for a review, and did not promise a result. Then stop.

**INT.NB.2.c · Behavioural situations**

### Answer ethics and fairness questions by naming the conflict, the people affected, the rule or authority limit, and the escalation you would use.

Ethics questions test judgement under pressure, which sits at the centre of insurance because decisions about price, cover and claims affect real people and firms. Typical situations are a target that tempts you to cut a corner, an authority limit that a manager asks you to ignore, a client who wants a claim left out of a submission, a mistake you find in your own work, or a customer who appears vulnerable. A good answer names the issue, says who could be harmed, states the rule or limit that applies, quantifies what is at stake, and describes the proportionate action: refer, document and speak up through the right channel. Never present the dilemma as a choice between loyalty and honesty, because a well-run firm wants early warnings. Do not claim you would always refuse, and do not claim you would never be tempted. Say what you would say to the person, what you would not do, and what you would do if the pressure continued. Practice varies between firms, so hedge on exact procedures. Avoid dramatic whistleblowing language for ordinary situations.

### WORKED EXAMPLE: A MANAGER ASKS A TRAINEE TO BIND ABOVE AUTHORITY

Sofia Marek is an invented trainee underwriter whose authority is 10m per risk. A broker submits a warehouse with a sum insured of 12.5m at a rate of 0.45% of the sum insured. The team is 80,000 short of a quarterly premium target, and her manager says to bind it now and sign off later. Show how she thinks, ignoring tax and commission.

**Answer:** An authority-limit answer built on a 12.5m risk against a 10m limit, premium of 56,250 (70.3% of an 80,000 gap), an alternative 80% share of 45,000, a prompt referral and a written record.

> **Interview tip:** Say it aloud: the risk was 12.5m and my authority 10m, so I could not bind it, and the premium of about 56,000 would not have closed our gap anyway. I told my manager I wanted the business, offered to prepare a referral that day, and suggested a smaller share. Then stop.

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Summary of the Charta interview-preparation topic. Companies and figures in the examples are invented. Draft content, not yet expert reviewed.