SSRS Interview

Questions & Answers

SQL Server Reporting Services skills are required in more and more IT jobs. If you need to interview someone and you need to assess candidate SSRS skills below are some example of questions. Feel free to suggest so other good SSRS Interview questions and answers, we are happy to include them in our blog post.

NOTE: We will cover SSRS 2008 R2 which should be applicable to 2008 & SSRS 2012.

Who is it for?:
- People doing SSRS Interviews (face to face or over the phone)
- Recruiters trying to check the candidate's proficiency with SSRS
- Candidates who can prepare better for the interview (You won't get explicit answers here)

Content:
- List of SSRS interview questions
- General SSRS Questions
- SSRS Development open questions
- SSRS Advanced questions
- SSRS interview "narrowed" questions
- Mandatory question (task)
- SSRS Books
- PDF Download - ebook

LIST OF SSRS INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:
If you want to answer the question first without our answers feel free to use the list here. Later in the our blog post you will see both question and answers.

NOTE: Answers show our experience in specific type of projects and SSRS is one of the tools that can be used in many different ways so you might get very different
opinions to our answers. So it is up to you to decide if our answer is suitable to your situation.

**Question:** Which versions of SSRS have you used?
**Question:** Have you got samples of your work?
**Question:** Do you have Data Visualization skills? (optional)
**Question:** How have you learnt SSRS (on the job, articles, books, conferences)
**Question:** How do you normally create reports (wizard/manually)?
**Question:** What languages have you used to query data for SSRS Reports?
**Question:** Gives examples where you used parameters?
**Question:** What types of graphs do you normally use and what effects do you apply to them?
**Question:** Have you used custom assemblies in SSRS? If Yes give an example
**Question:** Can you update report data using SSRS?
**Question:** What is the formatting code (format property) for a number with 2 decimal places?

Below are "narrowed" questions:

**Question:** What does rdl stand for?
**Question:** How to deploy an SSRS Report?
**Question:** What is Report Manager?
**Question:** What is Report Builder?
**Question:** What permission do you need to give to users to enable them to use Report Builder?
**Question:** What do you need to restore report server database on another machine?
**Question:** Can you create subscription using windows authentication?
**Question:** What caching options do you have for reports on report server?
**Question:** How to find slow running reports?
**Question:** How can you make calendar available in report parameter?
**Question:** How to pass multi-valued parameter to stored procedure in dataset?
**Question:** Which functions are used to pass parameter to MDX query?
**Question:** How to create "dependent " parameter "Make, Model, Year"
**Question:** How to create “alternate row colour”?
**Question:** How to create percentile function?
**Question:** How to create median function?
**Question:** How to make conditional sum in SSRS?

**Question:** How to find a value in another dataset based on current dataset field (SSRS 2008 R2)?

**Question:** How to change parameter value inside the report?

**Question:** How to identify current user in SSRS Report?

**GENERAL SSRS QUESTIONS**

**Question:** Which versions of SSRS have you used?

Comment: Differences between 2005 and 2008 are quite big so if someone hasn’t used 2008 or 2008 R2 before (or vice versa) than make sure you know this will require a few days to get up to speed with the new/previous version. If the candidate used several versions ask to describe the differences between them.

**Question:** Have you got samples of your work?

Comment: If SSRS is main skills for the role than it is worth asking for samples (before interview) they will often tell you a lot about the candidate quality of work.

**Question:** Do you have Data Visualization skills? (optional)

Comment: If you need dashboards then it is worth asking this question (we will ask more specific questions later). This is also related to previous question. When you review samples ask the candidate or yourself two questions: What is the purpose? And is it useful? Someone who does not know anything about data visualization will usually use pie charts, gauges (exception is bullet chart which is classified as gauge in SSRS), 3D effects, make colourful designs (without any colour meaning). Some candidates may mention Stephen Few or Edward Tufte and this normally is a big plus.

**Question:** How have you learnt SSRS (on the job, articles, books, conferences)

Comment: The thing is that most people who read good books have usually an advantage over those who hasn’t because they know what they know and they know what they don’t know (but they know it exists and is available). ... Blog/Articles vary in quality so best practise articles is a big plus++, conferences can be also a plus.

**SSRS DEVELOPMENT OPEN QUESTIONS**
Question: How do you normally create reports (wizard/manually)?
Comment: If wizard in most cases then you got rather inexperienced person, if manually than it is usually good answer. The best answer is using a template. Generally developers create reports from scratch which is not bad but it is not very efficient either.

Question: What languages have you used to query data for SSRS Reports?
Comment: Most answers will probably be SQL (TSQL). But T-SQL is not the only query language. If someone build reports based on cubes before than they will say MDX. You can also query data from other sources (not recommended) or use data mining expressions (DMX = advanced).

Question: Gives examples where you used parameters?
Comment: Typically you use parameters to filter data in datasets (or data on reports) but you can also use them to restrict values like the well-known make->model->year example. You can also have hidden and internal parameters which get very handy for more advanced stuff.

Question: What types of graphs do you normally use and what effects do you apply to them?
Comment: Good graph are bar, line, scatter, bullet graphs. Bad graphs are pie charts, area graphs, gauges (apart from bullet graph which classified as gauge in SSRS). Effects should be limited to minimum. Developers should avoid 3D effects, "glass" effect, shadows etc

SSRS ADVANCED QUESTIONS

Question: Have you used custom assemblies in SSRS? If Yes give an example
Comment: This allows to re-use code in reports and it is not very common. Re-usability is good but building dependencies is not so good... so one small mistake might break all reports using it; so it should be used with care.

Question: Can you update report data using SSRS?
Comment: This is not often used (and probably shouldn't be used in most cases) but it is possible.
Question: What is the formatting code (format property) for a number with 2 decimal places?
Comment: N2. Attention to details and good memory is always welcome.

SSRS INTERVIEW "NARROWED" QUESTIONS
In this section I will give you fairly long list of short and narrowed questions:

**Question**: What does rdl stand for?
Answer: Report Definition Language

**Question**: How to deploy an SSRS Report?
Answer: Configure project properties (for multiple environments) and deploy from bids, upload manually or use rs.exe for command line deployment.

**Question**: What is Report Manager?
Answer: Web based tool that allows to access and run reports.

**Question**: What is Report Builder?
Answer: Report Builder is a self-service tool for end users.

**Question**: What permission do you need to give to users to enable them to use Report Builder?
Answer: "Report Builder" role and "system user". Report builder should also be enable in report server properties.

**Question**: What do you need to restore report server database on another machine?
Answer: SSRS Encryption key

**Question**: Can you create subscription using windows authentication?
Answer: No.

**Question**: What caching options do you have for reports on report server?
Answer: Do no cache, expiry cache after x minute, on schedule.

**Question**: How to find slow running reports?
Answer: Check ReportExecution table

**Question**: How can you make calendar available in report parameter?
Answer: Set parameter data type to date.
**Question:** How to pass multi-valued parameter to stored procedure in dataset?
Answer: Join function in SSRS and split function in T-SQL

**Question:** Which functions are used to pass parameter to MDX query?
Answer: StrToMember and StrToSet

**Question:** How to create "dependant" parameter "Make, Model, Year"
Answer: They need to be in correct order, and previous parameter should filter next parameter dataset. For instance Model dataset should be filtered using Make parameter

**Question:** How to create "alternate row colour"?
Answer: use RowNumber and Mod function OR visit our tutorial.

**Question:** How to create percentile function?
Answer: Custom code is required. Visit our tutorial for more details.

**Question:** How to create median function?
Answer: Custom code is required. Visit our tutorial for more details.

**Question:** How to make conditional sum in SSRS?
Answer: IIF condition true then SUM else nothing. Visit our tutorial for more details

**Question:** How to find a value in another dataset based on current dataset field (SSRS 2008 R2)?
Answer: Use lookup function.

**Question:** How to change parameter value inside the report?
Answer: Set action. "Jump to itself" and pass different value for the parameter.

**Question:** How to identify current user in SSRS Report?
Answer: User!UserID

**Mandatory question (task)**
The last question (task) is one of the most important ones. Ask the candidate to do the job using the software! It doesn’t have to be anything special. You can ask them just to create a simple report, graph, chart or use one of the questions and ask the person to explain it using SSRS. It is usually very easy to spot how familiar is the
person with the software and options/properties.

SSRS Books I read and I can recommend

I have read several books related to SSRS and I can recommend those two:

For beginners:

Microsoft SQL Server 2008 Reporting Services Step by Step

For those who want to learn more:

Microsoft SQL Server Reporting Services Recipes: for Designing Expert Reports (Wrox Programmer to Programmer)

www.KatieAndEmil.com