McKinsey Solve and the Red Rock Study

How it works: what you click, type and check, shown on real screens.

Checked 10 November 2026. Independent practice, not affiliated with McKinsey & Company.

Investigation 07:53 •••

OBJECTIVE + Measure how Bighorn Sheep's share of total population chang...

EXHIBIT 2 · TABLE

Population by Species†

Individuals

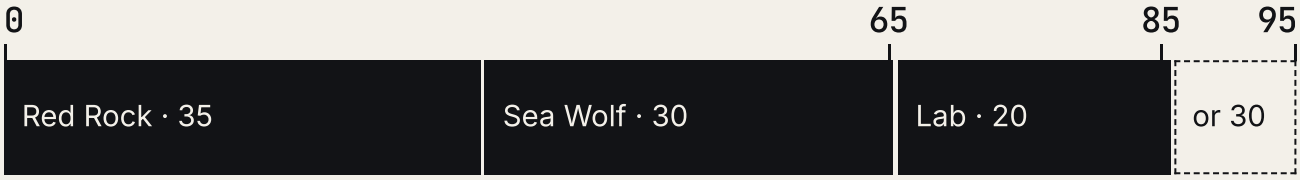
SPECIES	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Bobcat	394	406	413	423	429
River Otter	119	113	102	96	89
Fox	163	144	129	119	105
Mule Deer	221	208	190	181	169
Red-tailed Hawk	261	252	240	229	216
Bighorn Sheep	331 ✓	351	370	402	441 ✓

† Counts come from an aerial survey, which sees about **70%** of the animals present.

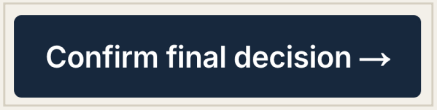
NOTES AND RECORDS

What Solve is

Solve is McKinsey's online assessment: timed **games**, taken in one go. Your invitation states the minutes.[a]



Read your invitation's minutes off the bar: 65 means Red Rock and Sea Wolf; 85 adds the 20-minute Lab; about 95 means the 30-minute Lab instead.[b]

Red Rock 35 minutes	A study with numbers, then six short cases. This guide teaches it in depth.	
Sea Wolf 30 minutes	Pick three microbes for each of three ocean sites.	
The Lab 20 or 30 minutes	The Sustainable Future Lab: long text decisions, no numbers.	

Before the clock. A technical check runs first. Each game then opens with a tutorial that has no clock: it reads "Timer Paused" until you begin.[a] Use it to click everything once.

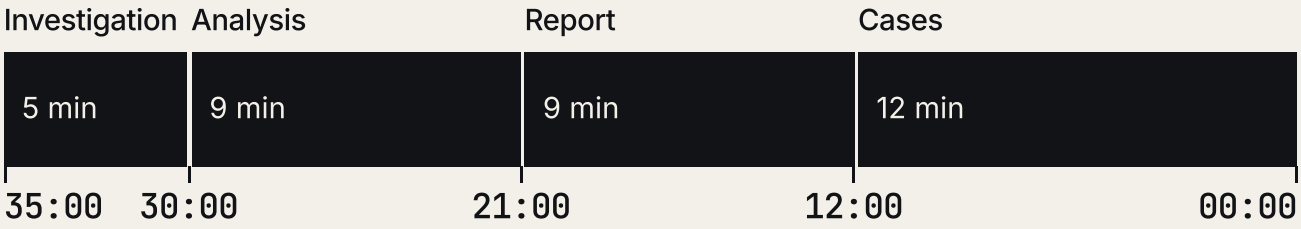
Scoring. Known: showing your work matters in Red Rock.[a] Not published: how Solve is scored, or a pass mark.[c]

a McKinsey's Solve page and video. **b** reported by candidates on a public forum, 2026.
c McKinsey's Solve FAQ, Sept 2026.

See all the games →
Free samples · no account

Red Rock on one clock

Red Rock is the first game: the **Study** in three stages, then six **Cases**, all on one 35-minute clock.[a]



30 · 21 · 12

The clock counts down. Leave Investigation when it reads 30:00, Analysis at 21:00 and the Report at 12:00. That keeps 12 minutes for the six cases, 2:00 each. McKinsey's own tutorial suggests keeping even more, half the clock, for the cases.[a]

Can you go back?

In CaseStar's practice test you can reopen the exhibits during Analysis. Opening the Report locks the two stages before it.[b]

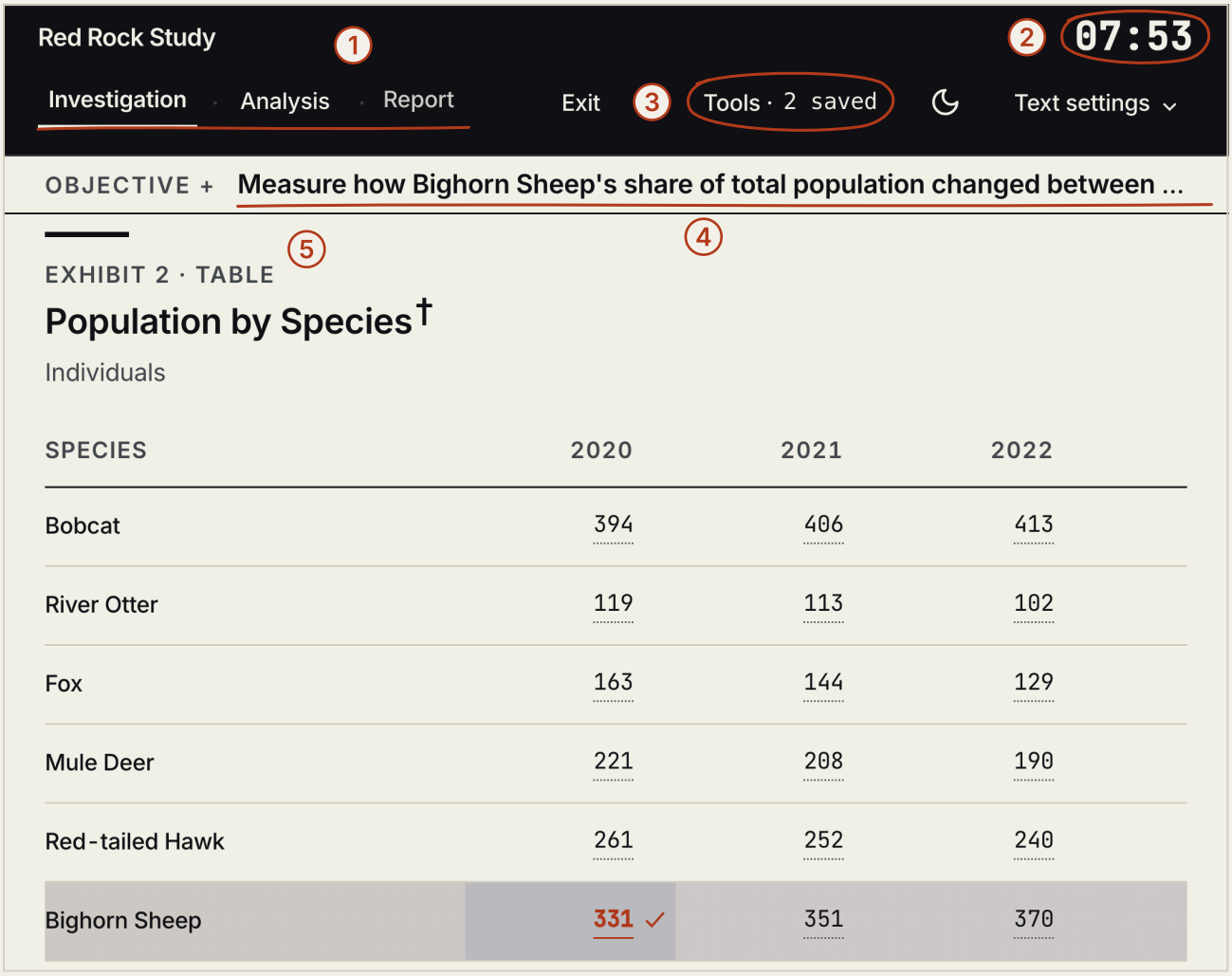
At 00:00

In CaseStar's practice test the test ends where you are. What you answered is marked; what you did not reach scores nothing. McKinsey does not say how unanswered questions count, so when time is short, type your best estimate and move on.

a McKinsey's Solve video. **b** CaseStar's practice rules; reports of the real rules differ. The plan is CaseStar's.

Take the 35-minute practice test →
Free with a free account · on a computer

The Red Rock screen



① The stage you are in: Investigation, Analysis or Report.

② The clock, counting down.

③ **Tools**: your Journal and the calculator.

④ The **objective**: what the Study asks you to find.

⑤ An **exhibit**: a table or chart. A **figure** is one number in it. This table runs on to 2024: see page 5.

⑥ An answer box, in Analysis. The unit sits beside it.

a McKinsey's Solve video. Screen: CaseStar's free 8-minute sample, so its clock starts at 8:00. The real one will differ in details.

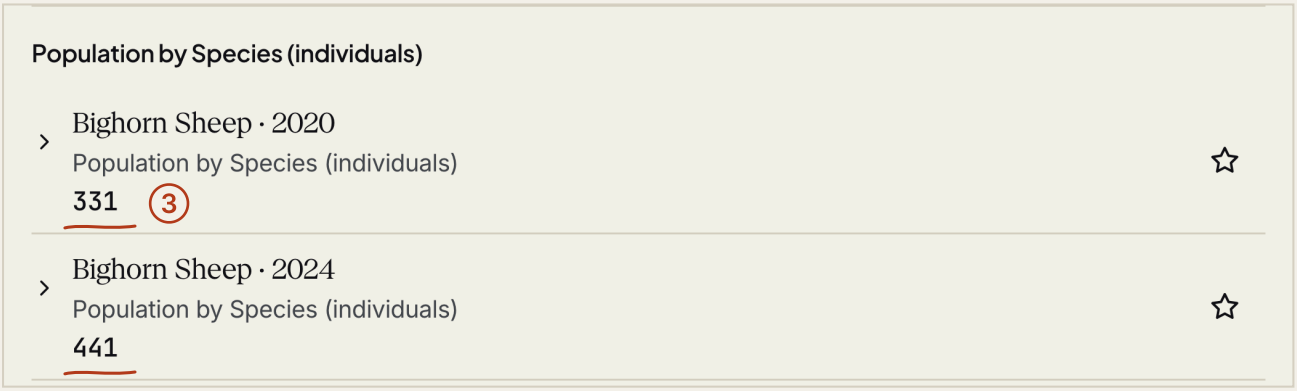
Open this screen yourself →

Free · 8 min · no account · works on a phone

Investigation: save a figure

The objective reads: “Measure how Bighorn Sheep’s share of total population changed between 2020 and 2024, and report it.” Save the sheep’s 2020 and 2024 figures. Each share also needs a whole-column total (next page). Your **Journal** is the on-screen notebook.[a]

SPECIES	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Bobcat	394	406	413	423	429
River Otter	119	113	102	96	89
Fox	163	144	129	119	105
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Red-tailed Hawk	261	252	240	229	216
Bighorn Sheep	① 331 ✓	351	370	402	② 441 ✓



① Click the 2020 figure: it turns red and gets a tick.

② Click the 2024 figure the same way.

③ Open Tools: both figures are in your Journal, each with its label.

How many to save? Only what the questions will use. In CaseStar’s practice test, saved figures no question uses lower the score for how you worked.[b]

a McKinsey’s Solve video. **b** CaseStar’s marking; McKinsey does not publish how saved figures count.

Practise saving figures →
Free · 8 min

Analysis: work one question

1 What share of total population did Bighorn Sheep represent in 2020? Round to two decimal places. ①

Enter a number... % Submit ④

SPECIES	2020
Bobcat	394
River Otter	119
Fox	163
Mule Deer	221
Red-tailed Hawk	261
Bighorn Sheep	③ 331

② (spans the 2020 column)

① Read what the share is of: total population. A **share** is a part divided by its total.

② Add the 2020 column for the total.

```
394 + 119 + 163 +
221 + 261 + 331
= 1,489
```

③ Divide Bighorn Sheep's figure by it.

```
331 ÷ 1,489 × 100
= 22.2297
```

④ Type it in the unit shown, rounded once, at the end:

22.23

331/1489*100 = ⑤
22.229684351914038

⑥ Save

22.22968435

Journal values · 2 saved +

⑤ Open Tools, then Calculator,[a] and type the sum. It keeps every decimal.

⑥ Save puts the result in your Journal.

Current 8-minute sample and 35-minute test: press Enter or leave a numeric box to save; marks come in review. The pictured Submit button is from an earlier screen. Type 22.23, not 0.2223 (percent); "20" and "20.00" count the same.[b]

a McKinsey's Solve video. **b** CaseStar's marking compares the number, within a small band.

Work a question on screen →
Free · 8 min

Report: fill the blanks

The Report is a paragraph with four gaps, called **blanks**. This format is reported, not confirmed by McKinsey.[a] The small book beside a blank opens your Journal.

Bighorn Sheep's share of total population was [1] 22.23 % Saved in 2020. By 2024 it had [2] risen Saved, a change of [3] 8.21 Saved percentage points. Once the animals the surveys miss are added back, Bobcat numbered about [4] 613 Saved individuals in 2024.

① **22.23**: your answer to the question on the page before.

② **risen**: the 2024 share is higher. `441 ÷ 1,449 = 30.43%`

③ **8.21 percentage points**, the plain gap between two percentages: `30.4348 - 22.2297`. Rounding first gives 8.20; CaseStar accepts both.[b]

④ **613**: the note under the table says the survey sees 70% of the animals, so `429 ÷ 0.70 = 613`.

SPECIES	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Bobcat	394	406	413	423	④ 429
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Mule Deer	221	208	190	181	169
Red-tailed Hawk	261	252	240	229	216
Bighorn Sheep	331 ✓	351	370	402	② 441 ✓

④

† Counts come from an aerial survey, which sees about **70%** of the animals present.

a reported; McKinsey's video says only "written and visual form". **b** CaseStar's review.

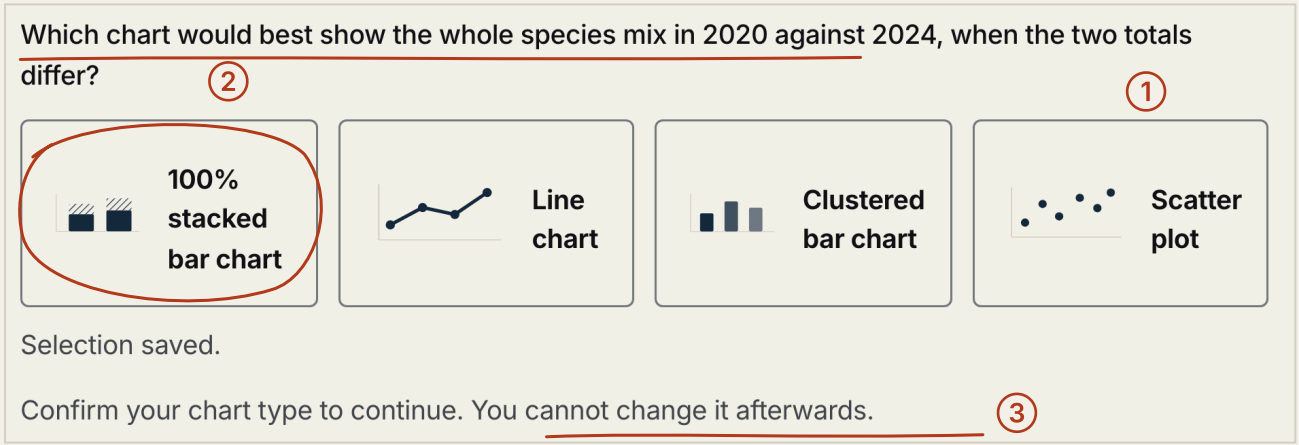
Fill a Report on screen →
Free · 8 min

Report: choose the chart

The Report ends with one chart to choose, and the choice is final.[b] Decide what the message is; the chart follows.[a]

A mix compared, when the totals differ	→	**100% stacked bar chart**
A trend over time	→	**Line chart**
Sizes compared across groups	→	**Clustered bar chart**
Whether two measures move together	→	**Scatter plot**

A clustered bar chart sets bars side by side, one cluster per group. A scatter plot is a cloud of dots, one per observation. A 100% stacked bar makes every bar the same height, so only the mix shows.



① Read the message: a mix (“species mix”), compared (2020 against 2024), totals differ.

② Click the chart the rule gives: the 100% stacked bar chart.

③ Confirm only when sure: you cannot change it afterwards.

The review’s reason, word for word: “Composition in two periods with different totals is a 100% stacked bar chart: each bar is rescaled to 100%.”[c]

a the rule CaseStar’s practice test marks to. **b** reported, not confirmed by McKinsey.
c CaseStar’s review of this run.

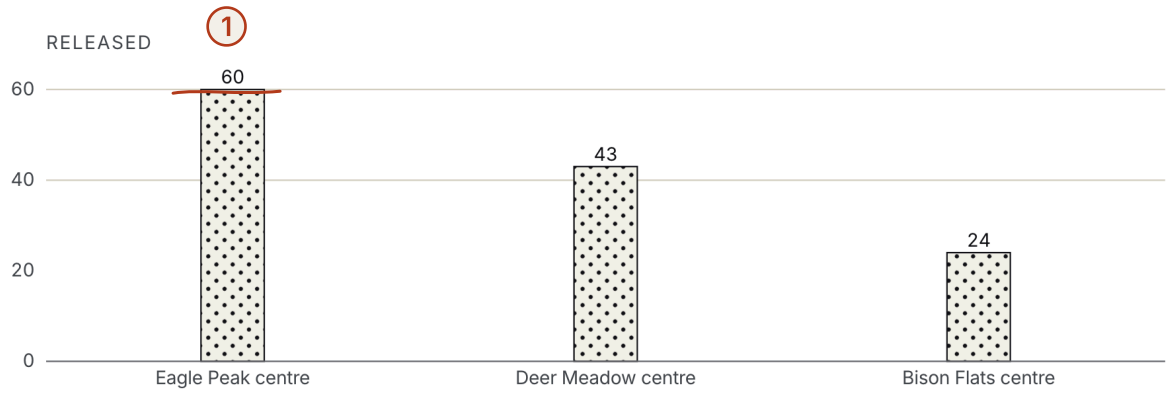
Choose a chart on screen →
Free · 8 min

Cases: answer one

After the Report come six **cases**:[a] short questions, each on new data, nothing carried over from the Study.[b] The sample has one.

EXHIBIT 1 · CHART

Black Bear released by rescue centre



LINE ITEM	VALUE
Animals admitted across all centres	187
Animals still in care	34

1 Add the releases: `60 + 43 + 24 = 127`

2 Find the whole: 187 admitted.

1 What percentage of the network's Black Bear admissions ended in release? Round to one decimal.

Enter a number... 3 Submit

3 Divide and type: `127 ÷ 187 × 100 = 67.9`

The 34 animals still in care are not needed. A case often holds a figure you should leave alone. In CaseStar's cases, Tools and its calculator stay open to you.[c]

a McKinsey's Solve video. **b** reported by candidates. **c** CaseStar's practice test; McKinsey's video shows the calculator in Analysis.

Answer a case on screen →

Free · 8 min

Your turn

Three questions on the same table. Round to two decimal places. Answers are at the foot.

SPECIES	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
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1. What share of the 2021 total was Bobcat?
2. By how many percentage points did Mule Deer's share change from 2020 to 2024?
3. The survey sees 70% of the animals. About how many Red-tailed Hawk were really there in 2022?

A WRONG ANSWER, MARKED

What share of total population did Bighorn Sheep represent in 2020? Round to two decimal places.

Your answer 28.58 %

Correct answer: 22.23 %.
2020 total: 394 + 119 + 163 + 221 + 261 + 331 = 1489.
331 ÷ 1489 × 100 = 22.23%.

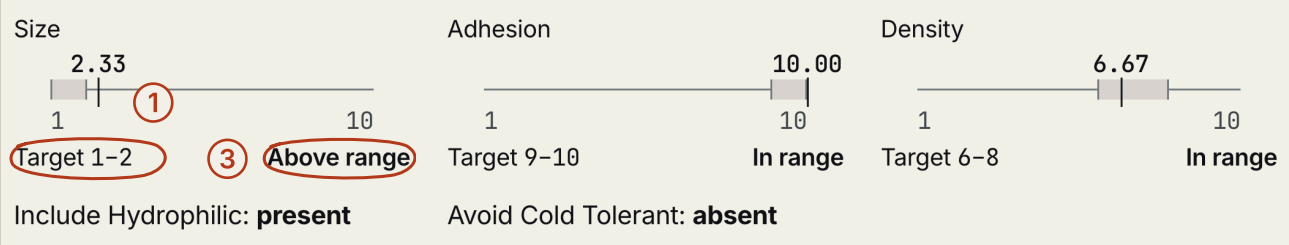
CaseStar's **review** circles a wrong answer and writes the working beside it. This one divided by the five other species (`331 ÷ 1,158 = 28.58`) and left Bighorn Sheep out of the total.

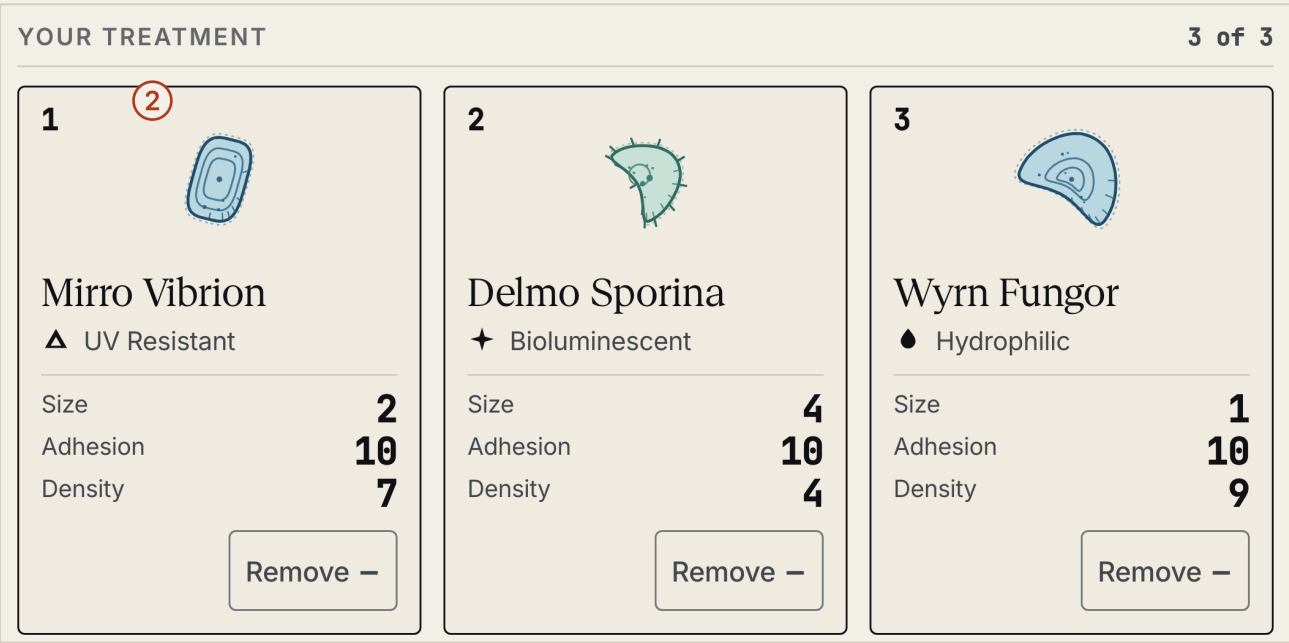
Answers. 1: 406 ÷ 1,474 = 27.54%. 2: 11.6632 − 14.8422 = −3.18 percentage points. 3: 240 ÷ 0.70 = 343.

Now do it on screen →
Free · 8 min · no account · works on a phone

Sea Wolf

The second game. At each of three ocean sites you choose three microbes. The average of each attribute must land inside the site's range, with one wanted trait and one unwanted.[a] Your **pool** is the ten microbes you may choose from.





① Read the range each average must land in.

② Pick three microbes from your pool.

③ Check each average. Here Size misses: 2.33, above 1 to 2.

This is a miss, shown on purpose. No three microbes in this pool fit every range: this trio is the closest. Candidates report real sites like that too.[b]

Sourced: three sites, three microbes, averages in range, the two traits (McKinsey's video); 30 minutes (candidates). In the real game you first describe what the site needs and sort ten microbes, and that decides your pool;[a] our sample starts after that and works the averages out for you. This guide gives Sea Wolf a first look only.

a McKinsey's Solve video. **b** reported by candidates. Screen: CaseStar's free sample.

Try one Sea Wolf site →
Free · 10 min

The Lab

The third game, on longer invitations. No numbers and no tools: you read a situation and choose what to do.[a]

The dredger problem ①

The dredger needs repairs; choose a sediment delivery.

PROGRAMME BOARD

Booking	The early 60% reservation closes Friday; it cannot be extended.
Deliveries	Early sediment costs an extra mobilisation; full delivery needs a repair assessment.
Assessment	The repair assessment arrives Monday after the booking expires.

A **Early allocation** ②

Reserve the early sediment today for the exposed cells. Allow for the additional mobilisation and a smaller programme if the balance slips. Use the repair assessment later to schedule the remaining delivery with the contractor.

B **Repair assessment**

Wait for the repair assessment before committing to delivery. Hold the early allocation until Friday. Use the findings to choose between an extra mobilisation and full delivery, and give the contractor your decision when the report arrives.

Confirm final decision → ③

① Read the situation and its facts.

② Read every option to the end. None is clearly right.

③ Confirm. You cannot go back.

The story's own words (a dredger moves sediment; mobilisation is bringing equipment to site) do not need learning. **20-minute Lab:** 13 situations, each with two to four long options; reading is the time pressure.[a] **30-minute Lab:** you lead four researchers across four work stations for three days.[b] Our sample also has a ranking question and shows a consequence after each answer; no first-hand account confirms those.[c]

a reported by candidates, March to August 2026. **b** reported by candidates, September to October 2026. **c** described only by companies that sell preparation.

Try the Lab's sample →

Free · 6 min

On the day

MCKINSEY SAYS[a]

- [ ] Start and finish in one go. Your invitation states the minutes.
- [ ] Use a PC or Mac; full screen is recommended.
- [ ] No other applications, websites, chatbots or automated tools.
- [ ] No prepared notes, no screenshots, no help from anyone.
- [ ] If something breaks, McKinsey's support can add time or reset your link.

CANDIDATES REPORT[b]

- [ ] Freezes and slow loading are common. Leave time before your deadline.

NOT SETTLED

- [ ] Scratch paper: McKinsey's list does not mention it.[c] Follow the instructions you are given.

QUESTIONS PEOPLE ASK[d]

Can I go back to an earlier stage?
In our practice test: to the exhibits during Analysis, yes; after opening the Report, no. McKinsey's rule is not published.

Is the calculator there in the Cases?
In our practice test, yes. McKinsey's video shows it in Analysis.

Do extra saved figures cost marks?
In our practice test they lower the working-method part of the score. McKinsey does not say.

Is "20" accepted for "20.00"?
In our practice test, yes: the number is compared, not the typing.

a McKinsey's Solve page, FAQ (Sept 2026) and video. **b** reported by candidates, April to September 2026. **c** one company that sells preparation says it is fine. **d** CaseStar's practice rules and marking.

Rehearse every game in one go →
Full Solve · Solve Pass · on a computer

One page to keep

RED ROCK, IN ORDER

Investigation	Save the figures the objective needs. Leave at 30:00.
Analysis	Read, total, divide, type. Leave at 21:00.
Report	Fill the four blanks, choose the chart. Leave at 12:00.
Cases	Six, about 2:00 each.

FOUR RULES

Read what the share is of. Find the exact row and year. Round once, at the end. A blank scores nothing: estimate.

WORDS

Solve McKinsey's online assessment

Study Red Rock's first part, in three stages

Objective what the Study asks you to find

Figure one number in an exhibit

Share a part divided by its total, in percent

Journal the on-screen notebook of saved figures

Blank a gap in the Report you fill

Sample CaseStar's short free version of a game

Review your marked answers, after a sample or test

Solve Pass CaseStar's one-time paid pass, €69

Game one timed section of Solve

Case a short question on new data

Exhibit a table or chart you are given

Result a number you worked out

Percentage points the plain gap between two percentages

Tools the button for the Journal and calculator

Pool in Sea Wolf, the microbes you may pick from

Practice test CaseStar's full-length version

Full Solve all the games in one go

Clustered bar chart bars side by side, one cluster per group

Practise before the real one →
Free · 8 min

Sources

McKinsey's own material is at mckinsey.com/careers/mckinsey-digital-assessment. Read it first: it outranks every guide, including this one. Screens, links and prices were checked on 10 November 2026; McKinsey's material and the candidate accounts are as recorded in CaseStar's facts register, verified 24 September 2026. Numbers in brackets are pages of this guide.

McKinsey's video "Learn more about Solve", on its Solve page, 10 Sep 2025	Games taken in one go; technical check; untimed tutorial and "Timer Paused" (2). Red Rock: 35 minutes, the Study in three stages, six Cases, half the clock for the cases (3). Journal and calculator (4 to 6). "Written and visual form" (7). Showing your work matters (2). Sea Wolf: three sites, three microbes, averages in range, two traits, the first step (11). Rules and equipment (13).
McKinsey's Solve FAQ, September 2026	Minutes in the invitation; scoring not published (2). Rules, support (13).
First-hand candidate accounts on the public forum r/McKinsey_BCG_Bain, 2026	Order of the games; Sea Wolf 30 minutes; Lab 20 minutes; invitations of 65, 85 and about 95 (2). Cases on new data (9). Sea Wolf sites that cannot be solved perfectly (11). The Lab: 13 situations, long options, no clear right answer; the 30-minute Lab (12). Freezes and slow loading (13).
Second-hand accounts and companies that sell preparation	The Report's blanks and its one-way chart choice (7, 8). The Lab's ranking question and consequences (12). Scratch paper (13).
CaseStar's free 8-minute Red Rock sample: one run on www.casestar.io, 10 November 2026	Every Red Rock screen, question, table, figure and marked answer (1, 4 to 10). The screens were recorded in that run and are shown at a narrower window so their text prints readably.
CaseStar's free Sea Wolf and Lab samples, 10 November 2026	The screens on pages 2, 11 and 12.
CaseStar's practice test: its plan, rules and marking	The time plan 5, 9, 9, 12 and the readings 30:00, 21:00, 12:00 (3). Going back; what happens at 00:00 (3, 13). Saved figures and the score (5). How a typed number is compared (6). Both 8.21 and 8.20 accepted (7). The chart rule (8). The calculator in the Cases (9).
CaseStar's price list and catalogue, 10 November 2026	Free samples, free practice tests, the Solve Pass at €69 once with no expiry (16).

CaseStar is independent practice. It is not affiliated with, endorsed by or connected to McKinsey & Company, and nothing here is McKinsey's software or questions. Your invitation and McKinsey's own instructions set the real assessment.

Ready to practise

Start practising · free →

casestar.io
Free samples of every game · no account · works on a phone

Red Rock practice test → Free with a free account · on a computer	35 min
Sea Wolf practice test → Free with a free account · on a computer	30 min
The Lab practice test → Free with a free account · on a computer	20 min
Full Solve: all the games in one go → Solve Pass · on a computer	85 min

FREE

€0

A short sample of each game, no account.

One practice test of each game, with a free account. It is marked, and your review stays open for 72 hours.

SOLVE PASS

€69 once · no expiry

As many practice tests as you need of Red Rock, Sea Wolf, the 20-minute Lab and Full Solve. One payment, no subscription.

See the Solve Pass →