



Practice Sheet: From Record-Keeper to Strategic Advisor

Here are 10 real-world scenarios based on the "Future of Accounting & Math" guide.

1. Forecasting: The Coffee Shop

- **Question:** A small coffee shop had total sales of \$350,000 last year. Based on new foot traffic from an office that opened nearby, you project an average growth rate of 12% for next year. What are the projected sales for next year?
- **Answer:** The projected sales for next year are \$392,000.
- **Explanation:** This uses the forecasting formula from the guide: $\text{This Year's Sales} \times (1 + \text{Growth Rate})$. The calculation is: $\$350,000 \times (1 + 0.12) = \$350,000 \times 1.12 = \$392,000$. This is a core skill for a "strategic advisor," helping the owner plan for inventory and staffing.

2. Anomaly Detection: The Software Subscription

- **Question:** A marketing department's budget for "Software Subscriptions" is normally \$5,000 per month. You are reviewing the month-end report and see the expense for this month was \$20,000. What is your immediate action, and what are two possible "stories" you might investigate?
- **Answer:** Your immediate action is to flag this \$15,000 variance as an "anomaly" and investigate it; you would not simply record it.
- **Explanation:** This is "Anomaly Detection." The number isn't just an error; it's the start of a story. Possible stories to investigate include:
 1. **A coding error:** A one-time purchase (like new computers) was accidentally coded to "Software Subscriptions" instead of "Capital Expenses."
 2. **A timing issue:** The company paid for its annual subscription for all its software at once, and this expense should be spread out (amortized) over the next 12 months.

3. Optimization: The E-commerce Ad Budget

- **Question:** SEKAEL's e-commerce store has a \$10,000 monthly ad budget. They are currently spending it all on Facebook ads. As a strategic advisor, what "Optimization" question would you ask, and what data would you need to answer it?

- **Answer:** The optimization question is: "How can we allocate this \$10,000 budget across different platforms (e.g., Facebook, Google, TikTok) to get the *highest possible* return on investment (most sales)?"
- **Explanation:** This is "Optimization." Instead of just recording the \$10,000 expense (a record-keeper task), you are trying to find the "best choice." To answer this, you would need data on the *cost per customer acquisition* and *customer lifetime value* from each platform to build a model.

4. Country Focus (U.S.): The Investor Report

- **Question:** You are an accountant for a U.S. tech startup seeking a new round of funding. The investors are not just asking for past reports; they are asking, "What happens to your profitability if a key competitor lowers their prices by 15%?" What "future math skill" is this, and how does it align with the U.S. accounting focus?
- **Answer:** This is "Scenario Analysis."
- **Explanation:** As the guide notes, the U.S. focus is on "investor reporting" and "scenario analysis." The investors want to see if you have modeled the future. You would use data to "paint a picture" of a potential future, showing how your company would respond—this is a key strategic advisor function.

5. Role Shift: The "Bad Month"

- **Question:** A company's Profit & Loss (P&L) statement shows that profit was down 30% last month.
 - What is the "Record-Keeper" reaction?
 - What is the "Strategic Advisor" reaction?
- **Answer:**
 - **Record-Keeper:** "Here is the report for last month. The numbers are accurate, and profit was \$50,000." (Focuses on the past and accuracy).
 - **Strategic Advisor:** "I've analyzed the 30% profit drop. It was driven by two factors: a 10% increase in material costs and a 20% drop in sales from our European division. I've prepared a forecast showing the impact if this trend continues and two optimization scenarios for us to discuss: finding a new supplier or adjusting our European prices." (Focuses on *why* it happened and *what to do next*).

6. Country Focus (Japan): The Tax System

- **Question:** A medium-sized business in Japan is implementing the new "Invoice System" for consumption tax. Why would this company invest heavily in an AI-powered accounting tool, according to the guide?
- **Answer:** The company would invest in AI to ensure perfect "tax compliance."
- **Explanation:** The guide identifies Japan's main focus as "tax compliance" and "bookkeeping precision." The new invoice system is complex. An AI tool can automate the checks for compliance on thousands of transactions, reducing the risk of costly

errors and freeing up the human accountant to "run tax-saving simulations," which is the strategic part of tax.

7. Forecasting: The Restaurant Chain

- **Question:** A restaurant chain with 10 locations had sales of \$12,000,000 last year. They are projecting 5% growth. However, they are also planning to open 2 new locations, which are projected to add \$800,000 in sales *each*. What is their total projected sales for next year?
- **Answer:** Their total projected sales are \$14,200,000.
- **Explanation:** This is a multi-step forecast.
 1. **Growth on existing stores:** $\$12,000,000 \times 1.05 = \$12,600,000$
 2. **Sales from new stores:** $2 \text{ stores} \times \$800,000 = \$1,600,000$
 3. **Total Projected Sales:** $\$12,600,000 + \$1,600,000 = \$14,200,000$This shows how forecasting combines simple math with business "scenario analysis" (opening new stores).

8. Anomaly Detection: The Payroll Puzzle

- **Question:** A company's average monthly payroll is \$250,000. This month, the report shows \$249,500. An AI flags this as a "potential anomaly," even though the amount is *lower*. Why would a lower-than-normal expense be flagged, and what might it mean?
- **Answer:** It's flagged because it deviates from the normal pattern. A lower expense can be just as problematic as a higher one.
- **Explanation:** This is a more subtle "Anomaly Detection." A lower payroll could mean:
 1. A new employee's paperwork wasn't processed, and they weren't paid. (A major HR problem).
 2. An employee who quit was correctly removed from payroll, and this is the new, correct baseline.
 3. A manager forgot to approve a part-time employee's hours. The advisor's job is to investigate to find the *story* behind the number.

9. Country Focus (Philippines): The BPO Hub

- **Question:** You work for an accounting BPO (Business Process Outsourcing) firm in the Philippines. A new client from the U.S. wants you to handle their bookkeeping. Why is your firm particularly valuable to them, according to the guide?
- **Answer:** Your firm is valuable because you have high-skill talent that understands both *international standards* (like IFRS or U.S. GAAP, which the client uses) and *local systems* (like BIR eFPS, which your firm uses to operate).
- **Explanation:** The guide identifies the Philippines as a "global accounting BPO" leader. The key skill is the ability to manage different global and local rules, using technology to do so efficiently. You aren't just doing data entry; you are acting as the client's international accounting hub.

10. Mindset: The New Software

- **Question:** Your company is adopting a new AI-powered tool that will automate 80% of your current "record-keeping" tasks (data entry, report generation). Why is this an *opportunity* for an accountant with a "growth mindset" and not just a threat?
- **Answer:** It is an opportunity because it automates the "record-keeper" tasks, freeing the accountant to focus on the "strategic advisor" tasks.
- **Explanation:** As the guide concludes, the "growth mindset" is critical. The accountant can now "step out of their comfort zone" and use the time saved to focus on high-value work: performing scenario analysis, finding anomalies, and optimizing spending. The tool doesn't replace the accountant; it changes the job to be *about* "reading the numbers and painting a picture of the future."