ias 17 questions and answers

By Daphney Stiedemann on June 26th, 2026

ias 17 questions and answers is a common search term among accounting students, professionals, and auditors who seek to understand
the intricacies of lease accounting standards. IAS 17, which stood for International Accounting Standard 17, was the standard
governing lease accounting before its replacement by IFRS 16 in January 2019. Despite its supersession, many organizations and
practitioners still refer to IAS 17 for historical transactions or in jurisdictions where the new standard has not been fully
adopted. This article aims to provide comprehensive IAS 17 questions and answers to clarify the fundamental concepts,
classification criteria, accounting treatments, and practical applications associated with lease agreements under IAS 17.

--

Understanding IAS 17: An Overview

What is IAS 17?

IAS 17 is an international accounting standard issued by the International Accounting Standards Board (IASB) that provides
guidance on the accounting treatment for leases. It distinguishes between finance leases and operating leases and prescribes how
lessees and lessors should recognize, measure, and disclose lease transactions.

Why was IAS 17 replaced?

IAS 17 was replaced by IFRS 16 to improve lease accounting transparency and comparability. IFRS 16 introduces a single lessee
accounting model, requiring most leases to be recognized on the balance sheet, thereby providing a more faithful representation of
lease obligations. However, IAS 17 remains relevant for historical data, certain jurisdictions, and specific lease types.

--

Key IAS 17 Questions and Answers

1. What is the primary distinction between a finance lease and an operating lease under IAS 17?

Answer:

Under IAS 17, the classification hinges on the transfer of risks and rewards incidental to ownership of the leased asset.

* Finance Lease: A lease is classified as a finance lease if it effectively transfers substantially all the risks and rewards of ownership to the lessee. In such cases, the lessee capitalizes the leased asset and recognizes a liability.

* Operating Lease: If the lease does not transfer substantially all the risks and rewards, it is classified as an operating lease. The lessee recognizes lease payments as an expense over the lease term.

Key indicators of a finance lease include:

* The lease term covers a major part of the economic life of the asset.
* The present value of lease payments amounts to at least substantially all of the fair value of the asset.
* The lessee has an option to purchase the asset at a bargain price.

2. How should a lessee account for a finance lease under IAS 17?

Answer:

For a finance lease, the lessee should:

* Recognize the leased asset as an asset on the balance sheet at the lower of the fair value of the asset and the present value of minimum lease payments.
* Recognize a corresponding liability for the lease obligation, measured at the same amount.
* Allocate lease payments between interest expense and reduction of the liability over the lease term.
* Depreciate the leased asset over its useful life or the lease term, whichever is shorter.

3. What is the accounting treatment for an operating lease by the lessee?

Answer:

Under IAS 17, lessees operating under an operating lease:

* Do not recognize the leased asset or lease liability on the balance sheet.
* Recognize lease payments as an expense on a straight-line basis over the lease term unless another systematic basis is more representative of the time pattern of benefits.

4. How are lessors supposed to account for leases under IAS 17?

Answer:

Lessor accounting depends on the lease classification:

* Finance Lease: The lessor recognizes a lease receivable at an amount equal to the net investment in the lease, and derecognizes the leased asset. Income is recognized over the lease term based on a pattern reflecting a constant periodic rate of return.

* Operating Lease: The lessor retains the leased asset on the balance sheet and recognizes lease income on a straight-line basis over the lease term, along with relevant depreciation.

5. What are the criteria for classifying a lease as a finance lease?

Answer:

The main criteria include whether the lease transfers substantially all risks and rewards of ownership. Specific indicators are:

* Ownership transfer by the end of the lease term.
* An option to purchase the asset at a bargain price.
* Lease term covers the major part of the asset’s economic life.
* Present value of lease payments equals or exceeds substantially the fair value of the asset.
* The leased asset is of a specialized nature with no alternative use to the lessor.

6. How is the lease term determined under IAS 17?

Answer:

The lease term includes:

* The non-cancellable period of the lease.

* Periods covered by options to extend or terminate the lease if it is reasonably certain that the lessee will exercise or not
exercise these options.
* Any renewal periods if renewal is reasonably certain.

The lease term is crucial in calculating present values and classification.

7. How are lease payments to be measured and recognized?

Answer:

Lease payments include:

* Fixed payments.
* Variable lease payments that depend on an index or rate.
* Payments for options to purchase the asset, if it is reasonably certain they will be exercised.
* Penalties for early termination.

For measurement, lease payments are discounted using the interest rate implicit in the lease or, if that cannot be readily
determined, the lessee's incremental borrowing rate.

8. What disclosures are required by IAS 17?

Answer:

Lessees and lessors must disclose:

* The total future minimum lease payments under non-cancellable leases.
* The amount of lease income recognized.
* For finance leases, a reconciliation of the gross investment in the lease and the present value.
* Contingent rents recognized as expenses.
* The nature of lease arrangements and restrictions.

9. How does IAS 17 address lease modifications?

Answer:

Lease modifications, such as extensions or terminations, are accounted for based on whether they are considered separate leases or
adjustments. If a modification grants a new right, the lessee or lessor reassesses the lease classification and adjusts the
carrying amount accordingly.

10. What are the main differences between IAS 17 and IFRS 16 regarding lease accounting?

Answer:

While IAS 17 distinguishes between operating and finance leases, IFRS 16 eliminates the distinction for lessees:

* Under IFRS 16, most leases are recognized on the balance sheet as a right-of-use asset and a lease liability.
* Lease expense recognition shifts from straight-line operating expense to depreciation and interest expense.
* Lessors' accounting remains largely similar, but IFRS 16 simplifies the lessee's accounting.

Practical Examples and Application

Example 1: Classifying a Lease

A company enters into a 5-year lease for machinery with annual payments of $10,000. The machinery's estimated useful life is 10
years, and the present value of lease payments is $45,000. The fair value of the machinery is $50,000.

Question: Should this lease be classified as a finance or operating lease?

Answer:

Since the present value of lease payments ($45,000) is close to the machinery's fair value ($50,000), and the lease term (5 years)
is half of the machinery's useful life, the lease could be classified as a finance lease if it transfers substantially all risks
and rewards. Given the present value and lease term, it likely qualifies as a finance lease under IAS 17 because the present value
exceeds substantially all of the fair value, and the lease term is significant relative to the asset's useful life.

Example 2: Accounting Entry for a Finance Lease

A company enters into a finance lease with a present value of lease payments of $100,000, payable over 5 years, with an effective interest rate of 10%. The annual payment is approximately $25,000.

Question: What journal entries are made at the inception and during the lease?

Answer:

At inception:

* Dr. Leased Asset $100,000
* Cr. Lease Liability $100,000

Annual payment:

* Dr. Interest Expense ($100,000 10%) = $10,000
* Dr. Lease Liability ($25,000 - $10,000) = $15,000
* Cr. Cash $25,000

Depreciation:

* Dr. Depreciation Expense $20,000 (assuming straight-line over 5 years)
* Cr. Accumulated Depreciation $20,000

Conclusion

Despite the transition from IAS 17 to IFRS 16, understanding IAS 17 questions and answers remains a vital part of grasping lease
accounting fundamentals. This standard provided a clear framework for classifying leases, recognizing assets and liabilities, and
ensuring transparency in financial statements. Whether dealing with historical data or specific lease arrangements, mastering IAS
17 principles enables accountants and auditors to interpret lease transactions accurately. As accounting standards evolve, the
core concepts of risk transfer, lease classification, and disclosure continue to underpin effective lease accounting practices.

Note: Always consult the latest standards and local regulations, as lease accounting standards are subject to updates and jurisdictional variations.

--

IAS 17 questions and answers have long been a fundamental resource for accounting professionals, auditors, and students aiming to understand the intricacies of lease accounting prior to its replacement by IFRS 16. As a standard issued by the International Accounting Standards Board (IASB), IAS 17 provided comprehensive guidance on the classification, recognition, measurement, and disclosure of leases. In this detailed review, we will explore common questions and answers related to IAS 17, dissect its core concepts, and analyze its practical implications for entities worldwide.

--

INTRODUCTION TO IAS 17

IAS 17, titled "Leases," was introduced to establish uniform accounting practices for leasing transactions. It primarily distinguished between finance leases and operating leases, each with different accounting treatments. The standard aimed to improve comparability and transparency in financial statements by clearly defining lease types and associated recognition criteria.

However, with the advent of IFRS 16, IAS 17 has been largely superseded, but it remains relevant for historical financial statements and understanding lease accounting evolution.

--

CORE CONCEPTS AND FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQS)

Q1: WHAT IS THE MAIN DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A FINANCE LEASE AND AN OPERATING LEASE UNDER IAS 17?

Answer:

Under IAS 17, the classification of a lease as either a finance lease or an operating lease hinges on the transfer of risks and
rewards of ownership.

* Finance Lease: A lease is classified as a finance lease if it effectively transfers substantially all the risks and rewards
  incidental to ownership of the asset to the lessee.
* Operating Lease: If the lease does not transfer these risks and rewards, it is classified as an operating lease.

Features & Criteria:

* Finance Lease:
* Title transfers at the end of the lease term or there is a purchase option likely to be exercised.
* The lease term covers a major part of the asset’s economic life.
* Present value of lease payments equals or exceeds substantially the fair value of the asset.
* The leased asset is of such a specialized nature that only the lessee can use it without major modifications.

* Operating Lease:
* Does not meet the above criteria.
* Lease payments are recognized as an expense on a straight-line basis over the lease term.

Pros/Cons:

* Pros: Clear criteria help in consistent classification.
* Cons: Subjectivity in assessing risks and rewards can lead to inconsistent classification.

Q2: HOW ARE LEASES CLASSIFIED AND ACCOUNTED FOR UNDER IAS 17?

Answer:

Leases are classified as either finance or operating leases, with different accounting treatments:

* Finance Lease:
* Lessee recognizes the leased asset as an asset on the balance sheet.
* Corresponding liability is recognized for the present value of future lease payments.
* The asset is depreciated over its useful life.
* Lease payments are split into interest expense and repayment of principal.

* Operating Lease:
* Lease payments are recognized as an expense in the income statement on a straight-line basis over the lease term.
* No asset or liability is recognized on the balance sheet (except for certain cases under specific standards).

This approach aimed to reflect the economic substance of leases accurately but was often criticized for lack of transparency,
especially for operating leases.

Q3: HOW IS THE PRESENT VALUE OF LEASE PAYMENTS CALCULATED UNDER IAS 17?

Answer:

The present value of lease payments is calculated using the interest rate implicit in the lease if that rate can be readily
determined. If not, the lessee’s incremental borrowing rate is used.

Steps to Calculate:

1. Identify the lease payments (fixed payments, variable payments linked to index or rate, and residual value guarantees where applicable).
2. Determine the appropriate discount rate (implicit rate or incremental borrowing rate).
3. Discount the lease payments to their present value.

Important notes:

* The present value calculation is crucial for classifying leases as finance or operating.
* Accurate estimation of the discount rate impacts the recognized lease asset and liability.

--

LEASE RECOGNITION AND MEASUREMENT

Q4: WHEN SHOULD A LESSEE RECOGNIZE A LEASED ASSET AND LIABILITY UNDER IAS 17?

Answer:

Under IAS 17, a lessee should recognize a leased asset and liability only if the lease is classified as a finance lease. For
operating leases, no asset or liability is recognized on the balance sheet; instead, lease payments are expensed as incurred.

Key Points:

* Recognition occurs at the lease commencement date.
* The lease liability is measured at the present value of future lease payments.
* The leased asset is initially recognized at an amount equal to the lease liability, adjusted for any prepaid lease payments or
  initial direct costs.

Implication:

* This treatment results in balance sheet recognition, providing a more accurate picture of the lessee's financial position for
  finance leases.

--

Q5: HOW ARE LEASE PAYMENTS TREATED IN THE INCOME STATEMENT?

Answer:

* Finance Lease:
* The lease expense is split into depreciation of the leased asset and interest expense on the lease liability.
* Depreciation is usually on a straight-line basis over the useful life.
* Interest expense is calculated using the effective interest method.

* Operating Lease:
* Lease payments are recognized as an expense on a straight-line basis over the lease term.
* No depreciation or interest expense is separately recognized.

Pros/Cons:

* Pros: Reflects the economic reality of finance leases.
* Cons: Operating lease expenses may be uneven if payments are not uniform, though IAS 17 mandated straight-line recognition.

DISCLOSURES AND FINANCIAL STATEMENT IMPACT

Q6: WHAT DISCLOSURES ARE REQUIRED UNDER IAS 17?

Answer:

IAS 17 required lessees and lessors to disclose information that enables users to assess the amount, timing, and uncertainty of
cash flows arising from leases.

Disclosures include:

* Total minimum lease payments payable in future periods.
* Present value of minimum lease payments.
* Contingent rents recognized during the period.
* Future operating lease commitments not recognized on balance sheet.

Features:

* Enhances transparency.
* Allows better assessment of lease obligations.

Limitations:

* Did not require detailed qualitative disclosures for operating leases, leading to potential under-disclosure.

--

Q7: HOW DID IAS 17 INFLUENCE FINANCIAL RATIOS AND ANALYSIS?

Answer:

The classification and recognition criteria under IAS 17 affected key financial ratios:

* Leverage Ratios: Finance leases increased reported debt levels.
* Asset Turnover: Recognized leased assets increased total assets.
* EBITDA: Operating lease expenses affected profit margins and cash flow analysis.

Advantages:

* Facilitated more accurate assessment of a company's debt and asset base.

Disadvantages:

* Some companies might have structured leases to qualify as operating leases, thus keeping liabilities off-balance sheet,
potentially skewing financial analysis.

--

TRANSITION AND PRACTICAL CHALLENGES

Q8: WHAT ARE SOME COMMON CHALLENGES FACED BY ORGANIZATIONS WHEN IMPLEMENTING IAS 17?

Answer:

* Classification Difficulties: Determining whether a lease is finance or operating can be subjective, especially in borderline
cases.
* Data Collection: Gathering detailed lease data, especially for leases entered into before the standard’s adoption.
* Valuation of Lease Payments: Estimating future lease payments and discount rates.
* Impact on Financial Ratios: Significant effects on debt ratios and asset base can influence

covenants and investor perception.

Pros:

* Encouraged organizations to improve lease data management.
* Increased transparency in financial reporting.

Cons:

* Implementation costs and complexity.
* Potential for inconsistent classification if criteria are interpreted variably.

--

Q9: HOW DID IAS 17 IMPACT LEASE NEGOTIATIONS AND LEASING STRATEGIES?

Answer:

The requirement to recognize leased assets and liabilities on balance sheets for finance leases pushed lessors and lessees to
renegotiate lease terms:

* Lessors offered more operating leases to keep assets off balance sheet.
* Lessees sought lease structures that minimized balance sheet impact.
* Leasing became a strategic decision balancing operational flexibility and balance sheet implications.

--

POST-IAS 17 DEVELOPMENTS AND LEGACY

Q10: WHAT REPLACED IAS 17, AND HOW DOES THE NEW STANDARD DIFFER?

Answer:

IAS 17 was replaced by IFRS 16 "Leases," effective from January 2019, which significantly changed lease accounting:

* Lessee Accounting: All leases (except short-term and low-value assets) are recognized on the balance sheet as a right-of-use
  asset and lease liability.
* Impact: Greater transparency and comparability, eliminating the distinction between operating and finance leases for lessees.

Key differences:

* Under IFRS 16, the lease classification concept is largely removed for lessees.
* Lease expenses are replaced by depreciation and interest expense, similar to finance leases under IAS 17.

--

CONCLUSION

IAS 17 questions and answers serve as a comprehensive guide to understanding the lease accounting principles prior to the adoption
of IFRS 16. Its classification system, measurement criteria, and disclosure requirements provided a structured approach but also
posed challenges due to subjectivity and potential for off-balance-sheet arrangements. While IAS 17's legacy persists in
historical financial statements and in the conceptual evolution of lease accounting, the new standards aim to improve

> QuestionAnswer
>
> What is IAS 17 and what does it cover?
> IAS 17 is an International Accounting Standard that addresses accounting for leases, requiring lessees and lessors to recognize
> and measure lease transactions, including operating and finance leases.
>
>
> How did the introduction of IFRS 16 impact the treatment of leases compared to IAS 17?
> IFRS 16 replaced IAS 17 by requiring lessees to recognize most leases on the balance sheet as a right-of-use asset and a lease
> liability, eliminating the distinction between operating and finance leases for lessees.
>

>
> What are the key differences between operating leases and finance leases under IAS 17?
> Under IAS 17, finance leases are capitalized on the lessee's balance sheet with asset and liability recognition, while operating
> leases are treated as rental expenses, not recorded on the balance sheet.
>
>
> Why was IAS 17 replaced by IFRS 16, and what are the main changes introduced?
> IAS 17 was replaced by IFRS 16 to improve transparency by requiring lessees to recognize all leases (except short-term and
> small-value leases) on the balance sheet, providing a clearer view of a company's lease obligations.
>
>
> How should a company account for lease payments under IAS 17?
> Under IAS 17, lease payments for operating leases are expensed on a straight-line basis over the lease term, while finance
> leases involve recognizing assets and liabilities on the balance sheet and interest expense.
>
>
> Are there any exemptions or practical expedients in IAS 17 regarding lease accounting?
> Yes, IAS 17 allowed exemptions for short-term leases (lease term of 12 months or less) and leases of low-value assets,
> permitting lessees to expense payments on a straight-line basis without recognizing assets or liabilities.

Related keywords: IAS 17, lease accounting, operating leases, finance leases, lease recognition, lease disclosures, lease
classification, lease term, lease payments, accounting standards