

Hot Tips — Conducting Interviews

Interviews should be structured around the specific job-related information you need to gather from each candidate. Ask all candidates the same questions and take notes on candidate-specific worksheets that indicate the responses of the candidate to each question.

Consider panel or team interviews of candidates. A panel or team interview involves people who will be working with the successful hire in the position. Team members might include people who will eventually report to the successful candidate. By involving more people in the interview process (trained in the rules of interviewing), you are more able to gather better data.

1. **Pre-Interview Assignment.** For some jobs, it is useful for candidates to come to the interview after doing some pre-work. This pre-work might involve: visiting and reporting observations on a company facility, making a presentation on a specific topic, or reviewing company materials and offering improvement suggestions.
2. **Put Candidate at Ease.** Put the candidate at ease at the beginning of the interview. If the candidate feels comfortable, he/she will be more likely to share information with you.
3. **Ask Behavioral, Facilitative, Open-Ended, and “Neutral” Questions.** Try to ask open-ended questions that will facilitate discussion. Avoid questions that require a yes or no answer. Also, don't ask leading questions—questions that appear to have only one “right” answer or which suggest the answer you're looking for.
4. **Job-Related Questions.** Ask only job related, behavior-based questions—questions that get at the candidate's ability or capacity to do the job. Avoid all questions relating to gender, age, race, color, national origin, disability status, sexual preferences, religious affiliation, arrest or conviction record, alcohol/drug use, or marital status.
5. **Standardized Questions.** Ask each candidate the same set of job-related questions. Follow-up questions for clarifying and drawing out are okay, but don't ask a fundamentally different question of one candidate that you don't ask of all candidates.
6. **Listen.** Don't interrupt the candidate. The more you talk, the less you'll know about the candidate.
7. **Observe.** Watch his/her body language and facial expressions. These expressions will provide you with additional insight about what is being discussed at the time. Be careful not to attribute attitudes/behaviors based upon observed body language/expressions.
8. **Take Notes.** Use a standardized interview form to record each candidate's responses. Record notes that reflect only what you hear and observe — not what you think. Ensure that, for each question, you know what an extraordinary response is — and what an unacceptable response might be.
9. **Discuss.** Following each **team** or **panel** interview, members should discuss their observations concerning the candidate in question.