

Guidelines for Structured Interviews

Selecting a qualified candidate for the job is the #1 priority of the selection process. Interviews are a means to learn more about the suitability of the candidate under consideration for a particular job. Simply put, the interview is a formal, in-depth conversation conducted to evaluate an applicant's compatibility with the job opening. There are clear limitations to the utility of interviews due to the very human nature of the process. To this end, your organization should utilize a structured interview, which will make the interviewing process more systematic.

A structured interview is the standardizing of the development, administration, scoring, and interpretation of an applicant's score. **A structured interview supports an equitable hiring process by requiring that all applicants applying for the same job be asked the same job-related questions in a standardized order.** This type of interview reduces the likelihood of external conversation which often lends way to unconscious bias and subjectivity. Rather, a structured interview provides more objectivity to the interview process through interview panels, prepared questions based on the job description, and rating forms. "Furthermore, asking the same questions in the same order helps interviewers collect similar types of information delivered in a uniform context from interviewees." ([Indeed, 2022](#))

A structured interview entails:

- **Panel Interviews**
- **Job-related Questions**
- **Question(s) from candidates**
- **Rating Forms**

While interview panels, predetermined questions, and rating forms *may* appear to make interviews impersonal, the use of job-related **behavioral-based** questions will *not* sacrifice spontaneity. Instead, there is still consistent treatment of applicants, and it prevents raters from making snap judgments. However, you can follow up on candidate responses or information on their resume. Highly structured interviews predict job success more accurately than informal approaches. Additionally, be sure to leave room for questions at the end. A way to invite questions from candidates is to kickstart this section of the structured interview process by asking the candidates, "Is there anything we have not asked you that you feel you would like us to know?"

Convene an Interview Panel

The use of an interview team (i.e., more than two interviewers) is the preferred approach for conducting interviews. Ideally, a panel of three interviewers should be able to provide ample perspective. Furthermore, having a team that consists of culturally diverse members will increase the richness of the perspective that the panel can provide. Larger teams can overwhelm an applicant, hindering performance during the interview. In addition, the presence of more interviewers can easily overburden the process, resulting in an interview that feels more like an interrogation and potentially delaying the overall interview process.

Note: The same team should be used for all interviews for a given position, and all team members should be present for each interview. Preferably, the team members should be at the same or higher organizational level and representatives from the specified profession should be included. At least one panel member should be in a supervisory capacity. Some collective bargaining contracts may require that only supervisors, and not peers, be used as interviewers. Additionally, it may be beneficial to include a representative from the agency's Diversity Office.

It is best for the interviewers to meet before (or during) the 14-day posting period. The sooner the better, as this will give way to a more efficient hiring process. The objectives of that initial meeting are:

- Review the job posting
- Review the resumes and cover letters within the first 14 days of the job being posted
- Discuss the scheduling of interviews
- Determine the length of the interview and how many interview rounds there will be
- Review and gain agreement regarding the interview questions and format of the interview, such as whether questions will be redirected
- Assess and gain agreement on the scoring instructions and the process for selecting the candidate who will receive a second interview
- Assign questions to team members
- Practice the interview

One member of the team should be identified as the team leader. The team leader will be responsible for conducting the flow of the interview, including introductions, explanations of the entire interview and selection process, additional information about the position, initial questioning, control of the interview, follow-up questions, and the conclusion of the process. After the interview process is complete, the leader will prepare a summary of the results of the applicants interviewed.

Prepare the Interview Questions

The purpose of the interview questions is to learn about the candidate's work experience, knowledge, skills, abilities, management style, and career and professional goals from a variety of angles. Additionally, the interview questions should give the interviewers an idea of the candidate's motivation to perform and experience working with a diverse workforce. An excellent predictor of future job performance is past job performance.

Who develops the questions? The questions can be developed by the hiring manager, the interview team, HR personnel, the Diversity Team, or some combination thereof. Regardless of who develops them, the interview questions should focus on job-related qualifications. As you're drafting your interview questions, it would be very useful to connect with your Diversity Team to ensure the questions are free of bias and connected to the job requirements.

What are some general procedures to develop the interview questions? A well-prepared job description is critical in developing interview questions. Using the list of experiences, skills, characteristics, and subject matter knowledge developed from the job description, draft a series of questions.

Questions should:

- Measure knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to do the job.
- Assess only prerequisites for performing important aspects of the job.
- Not based on knowledge, skills, and abilities to be learned *on* the job.
- Be open-ended behavioral-based questions. Behavioral questions allow candidates to show their potential for succeeding in the role by providing specific examples of how they've previously handled similar situations.
- Allow the interviewers to explore the candidate's current and previous positions and search for the highlights of these experiences.
- Enable the interviewers to uncover the candidate's preferences and work behaviors.
- Focus on the candidate's professional skills, knowledge, and abilities.
- Provide space for the candidate to recall and describe specific events to allow the interviewer to determine whether the candidate has the desired skills based on the candidate's behavior in the situation.
- Seek information about the candidate's management style, as well as their preferences regarding the management style of the supervising manager.
- Focus on the candidate's past and future goals.
- Allow the candidate to summarize their strengths, identify potential areas of development, and explain their approach to professional development.

Keep in mind that it is better to have five or six good questions than 10 or more vague questions. Additionally, it is ideal to keep the interview length to one-hour maximum and leave room at the end for the candidate to ask questions as well. The information obtained from a single question may allow the interviewer to assess multiple areas being explored in the interview. [Refer to this extensive list of interview questions organized by competency.](#) Choose a combination of questions that will allow the interviewers to assess whether the individual has the work experience, skills, characteristics, abilities, and subject matter knowledge required to do the job. Remember, these can include leadership qualities, management style, ability to work under pressure, etc.