

28 Tips for Selection Interviewing

1. Decide on the overall structure of the interview process.
2. Follow the process uniformly for all candidates, even those who are from your own department or otherwise “known” to the interviewer(s).
3. When interviewing in a team, one person should be designated as the team leader. Interview teams should have three to six members that may include customer or constituent representatives and/or Staff HR personnel.
4. Interview teams can also, if desired, be involved in the initial resume screening phase and any other screening techniques, such as telephone interviews.
5. You may want to ask candidates to be prepared to perform a “work sample” test – to operate relevant machinery or to answer questions on paper.
6. Know what you are looking for in a candidate before the interview. Especially when conducting group interviews, decide on your selection criteria up front. Selection criteria should be developed and reviewed before interview questions are written.
7. Try to make candidates feel comfortable at the beginning of the interview. Make small talk and offer them coffee or water. Describe the position briefly and outline the selection process. Compliment the candidate on making it thus far into the selection process.
8. You can describe how the job in question fits into the department but avoid giving too much information about the job duties at this point.
9. Give the candidates information as to the structure of the interview.
10. Interview questions should be scripted ahead of time so that you cover the same ground with each candidate. It is important that all candidates be asked uniform questions, even though you may have varying follow-up and probing questions.
11. All questions should be job-related and legal. Make sure you know appropriate and inappropriate questions to ensure that you are not asking ones that are potentially discriminatory.
12. You can fit 15 to 20 fairly “meaty” questions into the average one-hour interview. Prepare interview sheets for each team member, listing the questions and providing a space for recording candidate responses.
13. Introduce the interview team and tell the candidate a little bit about their various roles and responsibilities.
14. Tell candidates that you are going to take notes as they talk so that you will have accurate information to refer to later. It is important to record actual answers to questions as opposed to evaluative or conclusive comments. You may record observations of non-verbal signals as long as they are recorded factually and not as conclusions. [See Documenting Interview Notes.](#)
15. Proceed to ask your interview questions. Be sure to ask follow-up questions if answers are not to the point, are incomplete, or if you simply want clarification or expansion of an answer.
16. Listen to your candidates! Concentrate on their answers, not on your questions. The more you speak, the less they talk, so beware of talking too much! Experts agree that the candidate should do at least 75 to 80 percent of the talking during an interview.

17. Use short, open-ended questions. Beware of asking questions that can be answered “yes” or “no.” For example, rather than asking a person if they’ve worked in an empowered work environment, ask “How do you define the term ‘empowerment’ and what have been your experiences working in an empowered climate?”
18. Develop a high tolerance for silence. Give candidates a chance to think and develop thoughtful answers to your questions.
19. It is usually a good idea to ask one final question which is “Is there anything we haven’t asked that you’d like to tell us?”
20. Give the candidate information about the job duties and responsibilities, stressing the things you think are the most important for them to know.
21. Give the candidates an idea of what stage the search is in, what the next steps will be, and when they can expect to hear from you. If delays occur, you should call candidates and let them know where things stand.
22. Give the candidate a chance to ask questions of you and the interview team. A candidate who asks only “what’s in it for me” questions may be very different from a candidate who asks more substantive questions.
23. Thanks the candidate for coming to the interview and go on to the next step of the process – a tour of the work area, if this is appropriate, moving to the location at which a test will be taken, etc.
24. Complete your [notes](#) on the interview.
25. If a team is interviewing candidates, and there is time, debrief with your teammates. It is best to save definitive evaluations of candidates until you have seen them all, but it often helps in the consensus building process to compare notes as to reactions to particular candidate responses, behaviors, etc., immediately after the interview.
26. Selection should be made and discussed with Unit HR, HR Representative/HR Consultant or the Employment Process Coordinator before making any offers or promises.
27. Letters can be sent to those interviewed but not selected.
28. Allow yourself adequate time.

Remember: Probably the most important thing a supervisor does is decide whom to hire. Your performance will be measured as much on what your employees do as what you do yourself. Since most supervisors make their selections based on interviews, it follows that selection interviewing is one of the most important skills you can develop as a supervisor and especially as a manager!

Adapted from “Foundations of Supervision Employee Selection Process,” Human Resource Development, University of Michigan