

INTERVIEW TIPS

1. Prepare.

This may seem obvious, but many hiring managers neglect to review a candidate's paperwork prior to the interview. Reviewing a résumé in front of the interviewee is not only rude but smacks of disorganization and poor preparation.

2. Set the tone.

Let your candidates know that you're glad to meet them. Also, express your appreciation for the time they've taken to come in. Explain how the interview will proceed and then try to follow that format as closely as possible.

3. Prepare a script.

Don't underestimate the value of preparing several questions beforehand. Your human resources department may even have a set of prepared questions to use as a guide. Too often, busy managers forget until it's too late what they wanted to ask. Ask open-ended questions as well as ones that might elicit a more detailed response. For example, you may say, "Tell me what led you to apply for this position." Later, you could ask, "We're very deadline oriented here; could you tell me about experiences during which a deadline might have been difficult to meet?" And then listen carefully to the responses. Try to ask a good mix of questions — those that give insight into behaviour, elicit opinion, demonstrate experience, and reveal background. When the interview is over you should have a fairly good sense of the person's likes and dislikes, along with their strengths and weaknesses.

4. Listen to your instincts.

If a candidate seems too good to be true or seems to lack the skills you need, be honest with yourself as you assess the meeting. In some cases, you may need to pose more pointed questions. On the other hand, no amount of questioning can change a person's ability to do a job.

5. Know what you want.

If you don't know the skill set required for the open position, chances are you might not ask the right questions, which may confuse the candidate. Make a list of what you're looking for and then ask pointed questions so that when the candidate walks out the door you know whether or not he or she is a viable choice.

6. Manage your time.

If you've set aside an hour for an interview, do your best to stick with that schedule. But be prepared, too, to cut the meeting short and jump to the more concluding questions. Don't waste your time or the candidate's by stretching the meeting out. If there's no match, no amount of conversation is going to change that.



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7. Write it down.

Forget about remembering everything that transpires during an interview. You'll want to take notes so that you can review the meeting at a later time. This will be especially important if you're interviewing many people for the same position.

Don't forget that the candidate is also interviewing you. In addition to being skilled at asking appropriate questions, ones that will elicit a candidate's strengths and talents, you must be conscious of the impressions you are making as well. Just as the interviewee is selling him- or herself to you and your company, you are basically trying to achieve the same result. Make sure, for example, that you know as much as possible about your company; the interviewee will be looking to you to provide that information.

Types of Topics in Questions

1. Behaviours - about what a person has done or is doing
2. Opinions/values - about what a person thinks about a topic
3. Feelings - note that respondents sometimes respond with "I think ..." so be careful to note that you're looking for feelings
4. Knowledge - to get facts about a topic
5. Sensory - about what people have seen, touched, heard, tasted or smelled
6. Background/demographics - standard background questions, such as work history, education, etc.

Wording of Questions

1. Wording should be open-ended. Respondents should be able to choose their own terms when answering questions.
2. Questions should be as neutral as possible. Avoid wording that might influence answers, e.g., evocative, judgmental wording.
3. Questions should be asked one at a time.
4. Questions should be worded clearly. This includes knowing any terms particular to the program or the respondents' culture.
5. Be careful asking "why" questions. This type of question infers a cause-effect relationship that may not truly exist. These questions may also cause respondents to feel defensive, e.g., that they have to justify their response, which may inhibit their responses to this and future questions.

