

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Human Resource Office
Washington

Introduction

This guide was designed to assist selecting officials and supervisors in developing and conducting job interviews. The methods described will help ensure that employee selection procedures are job specific. The Human Resource Office-Washington will provide further guidance on developing, conducting, and documenting, interviews.

"Why all the fuss about interviews?" The interview is the most vulnerable part of the selection process. Because it is part of the selection process, the interview is subject to validation requirements. Therefore, interview objectives should be job related and well documented.

Since interviews are such an important part of the selection process, there are some "basic guides that we recommend:

- All candidates should be asked the same questions.
- All questions must be job-related.
- All interviews should be well documented.

The techniques and procedures included in this guide were selected for their flexibility and adaptability to a wide variety of positions. It is critical that the interview be well planned in terms of the behaviors and responses to be observed, the evaluation standards to be applied, and the procedures for conducting the interview session. It is particularly important to pay careful attention to objectivity. The interview should be structured so that the information to be obtained is well defined and recorded in a standard manner. Selecting officials and responsible management officials must take special care as all parts of the interview are subject to review for their impartiality, objectivity and job relatedness.

Interviews

The job interview has been defined as a conversation with a purpose. Job interviews are used to further evaluate candidates referred for selection. It is normally a one-on-one meeting between the selecting official and the candidates. The interview's purpose is to receive job-related information to structure a selection decision. Only questions that relate to the knowledge, skills and abilities identified should be used in the interview. The interview questions must be developed in conjunction with or approved by the Civilian Personnel Advisor. Documentation of the interview is maintained by the selecting officials(s). A copy of the documentation must be submitted to the Civilian Personnel Advisor with the completed referral certificate.

You should be aware that there is **no requirement** for you to interview candidates on the certificate. You may make your selection through a record review, supplemental questionnaire or contact with previous supervisors or the results of interviews. If you interview you may interview all, some or none of the eligible candidates as your needs and time require.

REMEMBER!

No questions can be asked that are not job related, valid and documented. In any interview, don't ask about marital status, children and/or childcare, religion, politics, residence, spouse's occupation, etc. Attached are examples of prohibited and acceptable questions.

Developing Questions and Anchors

Only those questions, which concern the knowledge's, skills and abilities (KSAs) required in the vacant job, may be used in the interview.

Generally, interview questions should:

- Strive to provide evidence of the KSAs
- Not have a "Yes" or "no" answer
- Be objective, allowing the candidate to provide sufficient information
- Be job-related
- Not have "obvious" answers.
- Use appropriate vocabulary
- Not deal with sensitive or potentially embarrassing subjects.
- Not be a "test"

Do not formulate hypothetical cases and ask the candidate to provide possible solutions. This is a test! For example, a KSA that is typically found in supervisory jobs is the "Ability to delegate work". A good interview question for this KSA would be: "What experience do you have in delegating work - how many subordinates do you have?" Do not ask "What would you do in the following situation: You must have 1,000 cartons of widgets to Big Blue Navy Base in 2 days; your supply clerk is on leave - how do you get the cartons delivered?" *This type of question is not objective and there are no right answers.*

KSAs such as "the ability to communicate" can be directly observed during the entire interview. For KSAs involving interpersonal relations, questions should not automatically trigger a socially acceptable response (i.e., "Do you like working with people?")

Follow-up questions may be needed to get additional information pertinent to the KSA. It is the interviewer's responsibility to assure there is sufficient data for making a "documented" rating decision before proceeding to the next KSA.

Style & Format

Most questions should be open-ended, encouraging the candidate to talk and discouraging pat answers. Avoid the following types of questions:

Standard questions - Some questions have been included in so many interviews that candidates have come to expect them (e.g., "Why do you want this job?"). This type of question adds little to the interview and generally proves to be a waste of time.

Multi-questions - Questions that ask for several responses are confusing for both the applicant and the interviewer. In most cases, questions should be asked one at a time.

Leading question - Questions, which suggest a desired answer, do not elicit an objective response and should be avoided in an interview (e.g., "You do like working with people, don't you?").

Too-Complex questions - Vocabulary used in questions should be geared to the level of the interviewees. Avoid jargon or acronyms, which may intimidate candidates.

Developing Anchors

Remember, all points on a behaviorally anchored rating scale don't have to be defined by an anchor. It is important that the difference between each two levels of performance be constant through the scale. Listed below are examples of beginning phrases that may be used to develop anchors:

5 Points: Candidate has a thorough understanding of

3 Points: Candidate has a moderate understanding of

1 Point: Candidate has limited understanding of

5 Points: Candidate demonstrates high degree of ability to

3 Points: Candidate demonstrates acceptable degree of ability to

1 Point: Candidate demonstrates marginal degree of ability to

Conducting the Interview

To the extent possible, interviews are to be scheduled in equal time intervals to allow each candidate the same amount of interviewing time. This also allows interviewers the time to finish rating a candidate before the next interview begins.

The interviewers should complete individual rating sheets on each candidate using locally developed Interview Worksheets. Key responses are noted during the interview but no actual ratings are completed until the candidate leaves.

When the questioning is completed, the interviewers should thank the candidate, summarize what will happen next and answer any questions the candidate may have. After the candidate has left, each interviewer will mark each KSA individually noting what he or she observed and learned about the candidate. This information is either checked or written on the forms and the corresponding rating score assigned for each KSA. Either by checking documented observations or by noting other reasons, enough information is included on each form to substantiate the rating and allow the interviewer to recall reasons for the rating assigned.

While all ratings are completed individually by each interviewer, it may be helpful during an interview, especially to inexperienced raters, to discuss the rating assigned after all interviewing is completed. Any discussions of this nature do not occur while the person being interviewed is present. Each interviewer justifies ratings assigned each candidate on the KSA by describing behavior observed and other supporting information. This is not extensive, but enough to provide a trail of reasoning. Ratings normally are not to be changed at this point unless some interviewers recognize critical factors were overlooked. If a rater has overlooked some important behaviors or were concentrating on less important information, the rater should be allowed, but not coerced to change their ratings. If, after discussion there is still little agreement on some ratings, the factor may have been poorly defined. At this point, it may be best to discard the ratings and work on better questions or rating scales.

Interview do's and don'ts

The following suggestions are provided to assist interviewers in developing sound interviewing skills by being familiar with the DO's and DON'Ts of conducting interviews.

DO

- Allow equal interview time for each candidate
- Make sure the seating arrangement allows the candidate to feel comfortable.
- Secure an interview room free from interruptions and distractions
- Explain the purpose of the interview
- Acquire sufficient information for making a documented rating decision
- Ask follow-up questions when a candidate's initial response is inadequate
- to rate
- Complete an interview worksheet on each candidate before interviewing
- the next
- Prepare for the interview - be familiar with the KSAs to be measured.
- Avoid common rating errors
- Express appreciation for the candidate's participation and time away
- from work
- Conclude the interview by summarizing what will happen next in the
- rating process.

DON'T

It is very important that interviewers do not violate EEO laws and regulations. Since many discrimination charges frequently involve the interview process, there is a need to increase awareness of areas to be avoided. Listed below are some areas that shouldn't be part of the interview as well as other areas that may be addressed tactfully, if related to the job:

Subject	Legal, if Job Related	Illegal
Marital Status/Family	None. The Civilian Personnel Office may verify if other family members work at the installation to fulfill requirements.	Are you married/divorced/separated/widowed? With whom do you live? Do your children live with you? What ages are your children? Is your husband/wife in the military?
Education	Questions related to the job to be filled and how the applicant's academic, vocation, or professional education may fulfill KSA(s).	Any questions asking specifically the nationality, racial or religious affiliation of a school. Any question asking for education level in general, not relating specifically to the job to be filled-
Organizational Affiliation	Questions related to the job to be filled and how the candidates' participation in the organization may fulfill KSA(s).	To what organization, societies, and clubs do you belong? Do not include any whose name or character indicates the race, religion, creed, color, national origin, or ancestry of its members.
Police Record	None.	Have you ever been arrested? Would you have trouble getting a security clearance?
Work Schedule/Travel	If the job to be filled has special requirements such as travel, overtime work, unusual hours, etc. these conditions may be stated. Example: In this job, you would have to travel one week in every month. Does this present a problem to you?	Any questions related to childcare, ages of children, or other non job-related areas.
Age	None. The Civilian Personnel Office will verify age requirements, if they exist, for the job to be filled.	Any questions which tends to identify applicant's age. Examples: "Do you remember the 1940 election?" " It is necessary to ensure that legally set minimum age limits are met, what year were you born?"
Citizenship	None. The Civilian Personnel Office will verify this if there is a requirement to do	Are you a citizen of the United States? Are your parents/spouse U. S. citizens?

	so.	When did you acquire U. S. citizenship? Are you/spouse/parents native born or naturalized?
National Origin	None.	What is your national origin? What language is spoken in your home? What is your native language?
Race/Color	None.	There is no proper race/color question.
Religion	None.	What church do you attend? What religious holidays do you observe?
Sex	None.	Any inquiry as to gender. What are your plans regarding having children in the future? Do you mind having a male/female supervisor? Can you work with a group of men/women?
Military Discharge	None.	Were you honorably discharged from military service?
Economic Status	If the job to be filled has special requirements, such as bonding, the following may be stated: In order to fill this job, you must be bonded. Does this present any problem?	Do you have a good credit rating? Do you have any trouble with bills/collection agencies? Will this be enough money for you to live on?
Security Clearance	If the job to be filled requires a certain type of security clearance, this condition may be stated. Example: "This job requires a top secret clearance; does this requirement present any problem for you?"	Do you have a security clearance?
Personal Plans	None.	Do you like this area? Did you buy a house here? Don't question participation in certain activities. Do you plan to take savings bonds/ contribute to the Combined Federal Campaign?
Miscellaneous	Statement or notice that any misstatements or omissions of significant facts may be cause for nonselection.	Any inquiry that is not job related or necessary for determining a candidate's possession of KSAS.

Suggestions for Self-Evaluation

All of the following questions reflect not only good interviewing techniques, but they also reflect how important the interviewer personality is to the success of the interview.

- Did I refrain from making a judgment about the candidate during the first minutes of the interview?
- When the applicant seemingly finished a remark, did I pause to give him/her a chance to talk further?
- Did I occasionally repeat parts of the key sentences to the candidate to allow him/her to elaborate?
- Did I ask one question at a time?
- Did I appear interested in the candidate and did I give him/her my full attention?
- Did I avoid expressing approval and disapproval of the candidates?
- Did I avoid indicating my own attitude?
- Did I use language appropriate to the candidate?
- Did I talk the minimum amount?
- Did I control the direction of the interview?
- Did I obtain maximum information on all relevant points?
- Did I take notes to document ratings on critical behaviors?
- Did I give the applicant an opportunity to ask questions?
- Did I cover the necessary points on closing the interview?

Common Rating Errors

The following guidance is furnished to assist interviewers in identifying and avoiding common errors:

Halo Error - The tendency of raters to generalize either positively or negatively an overall impression of a candidate (job-related or otherwise) to the ratings on individual KSAs. Common stereotypes are examples of halo error. Assumption that some nationalities are more disciplined, some are slow, some are more verbal, etc. can affect evaluations of an individual member's performance on KSAs and contribute significant error to the ratings.

Contrast Error - Occurs when an interviewer's rating of one candidate is influenced positively or negatively by comparison with an immediately preceding candidate's performance. This error results in lower ratings for a candidate who immediately follows a strong candidate and higher ratings for one who immediately follows a weak candidate. This error usually has more effect on the middle group of applicants than on the very high or very low performers. The design of the rating form should emphasize individual performance on specific interview questions. To the degree possible, behavioral examples should be given depicting levels of performance on the KSAs so that the candidates are rated against objective criteria rather than against each other.

INTERVIEW WORKSHEET

-Referral Certificate No.

Name of Candidate:

Vacancy Title, Series & Grade:

Questions

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Signature Interviewing Official

Date