



Interview Guide for Interviewers

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Interview purpose

What do you need to know?

By the end of the interview you should know the answer to the following questions:

1. Can the candidate technically do the job?
2. Will they fit in with your team/culture?
3. Do they have a high risk of leaving you in the short-term? In other words, are they interested in your *particular job* or just any job?

Establishing the purpose of an interview will help frame the structure and enable you to delve deeper until you find the answers you need.

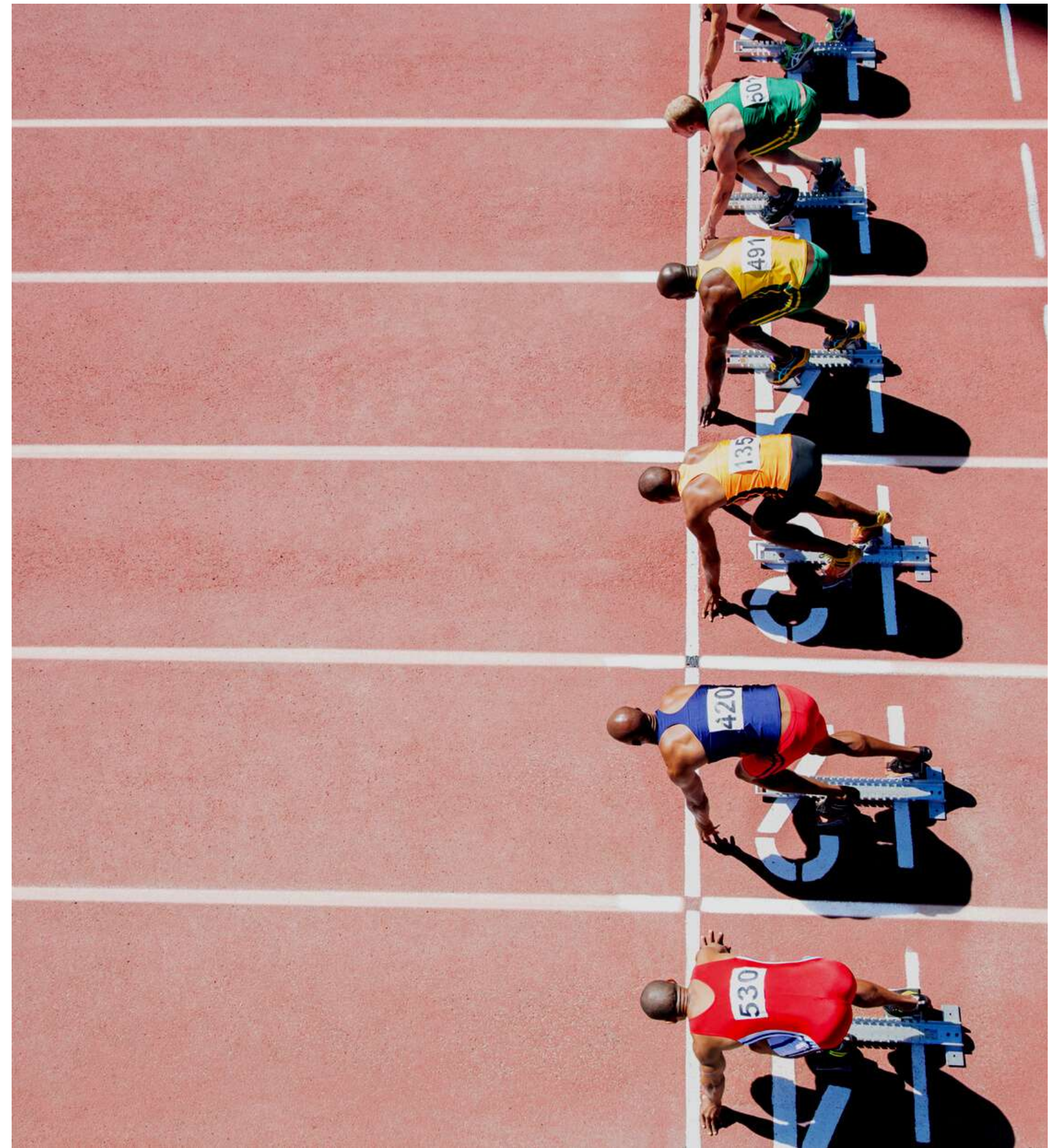


Beginning the interview

Begin with casual conversation to build rapport and provide an instant insight into the candidate's interpersonal skills.

Establish a brief agenda, for example:

- An overview of your career and role within the organisation
- A summary of the organisation and the job
- Why the vacancy exists
- What the candidate has been doing in their past roles
- What they are hoping for in the future



Non-verbal communications

While it may seem obvious, be aware of your non-verbal signals: eye contact, flicking through documents whilst the candidate is speaking, folded arms, fiddling with pens etc. In a video interview situation, these can be more obvious, as can tone of voice, which should be friendly and professional.

Please have your phone on silent and resist the temptation to check for messages throughout the interview. This can often be difficult in your profession, so if you will need to look at your phone or expect the interview to be interrupted, please state that at the beginning of the interview.

Humour and moments of connection are important so take advantage of the lighter moments during the interview when you may have a laugh or share something amusing with the candidate.



Illegal questions to avoid

Topics you cannot directly ask about include age, race, ethnicity, gender, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, disability, marital status, and pregnancy.

Candidates can choose to divulge this information if they want but you cannot directly address these topics. If this makes your job as an interviewer more difficult, remember it is the law.

The focus should be on whether the candidate can do the job, the candidate's personality, their fit in the team, their desire to do the role, and helping them get to know you, the job and the organisation.



Unconscious bias

Unknowingly favouring a particular candidate over another based on a personal preference that may be unrelated to the candidate's ability to perform the role.

An effective way to limit your own bias is to know the competencies you are seeking and ensure the selection criteria is clear and documented. Pay particular attention to important topics and make sure you dive into them with every candidate.

Overly-structured, rigid interviews can sometimes hinder building a personal connection with a candidate but setting out an interview purpose gives you a chance to make a fair and educated comparison on candidates, which is beneficial for everyone.

Johnson Recruitment has written more on this subject, [click here to read our guide](#).



Examples of topics to discuss

All interviews should form a basic understanding of the candidate's motivations, skill set and particular interest in your organisation's opportunity. Don't expect them to know everything about you as their knowledge will be shaped by publicly accessible information. However, they should be able to offer what sparked their interest in working with you.



Technical

Seek examples of technically complex work and when the candidate learnt something new.



Motivations

What makes them tick and what are their motivations for joining you?



Firm & role knowledge

Find out how much the candidate knows about your organisation and the role to gauge their level of interview preparation and interest.



Working style

Ask for examples of when the candidate worked particularly hard or when they helped someone else.

Don't undersell your opportunity

Interviewers can unknowingly undersell their opportunity when aiming to speak honestly. This is similar to candidates who talk down their experience for fear of being caught overselling, and miss out on jobs because of it. Being honest and underselling are two very different things!

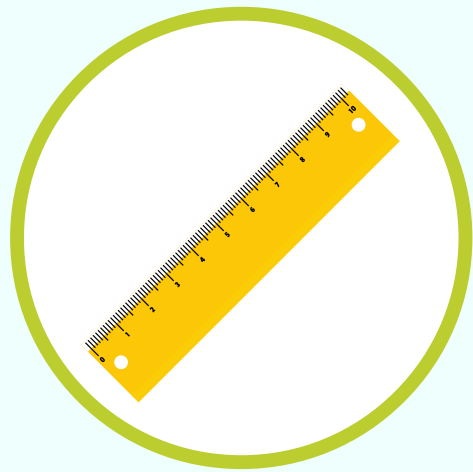
Honesty is always the right approach but opportunities can be 'dressed up or down' to sound impressive or unimpressive. Just in the way that you will be literally dressed up for the interview, it is expected that both sides of the table show their 'best, truthful hand'. Dishonesty is a deal-breaker but if you are not portraying your organisation and opportunity with the justice they deserve, it could be a deal-breaker too.

Make your opportunity sound great whilst firmly staying within the walls of the truth, in the way that we would expect a candidate to.



Reasons for leaving previous roles

Consider the context and don't make assumptions



Reason > length

Shorts stints at previous roles doesn't always mean they won't stick at your organisation.



Know the facts

If you're not given enough information about a move, ask for more rather than making assumptions.



Empathy helps

Showing empathy often leads to more detailed and accurate answers whilst creating a trusted environment.



Mind the gap

Many candidates won't speak negatively about previous employers which may impact how much they share, but empathy helps.



New to Interviewing?

The art of conversation

If you feel any pressure in having to keep coming up with new questions, remember interviews are a two way conversation.

Authenticity is key

You are both there to get to know one another. Keep it conversational, be yourself, be authentic, and let it flow. Showing authenticity is often reciprocated.

Need more to discuss?

You could ask for more detail on topics already covered, ask the candidate what they would also like to discuss, introduce them to someone else in the team, or wrap it up.

Relax

Don't worry about your next question. Remember the purpose of the meeting and you will more than likely know what to ask without experiencing a blank.

Salary

Discussing salary is optional in a first interview as it often pays to give the candidate a good reflection of the opportunity first. Candidates can be more flexible when they are certain that they are interested in the role.

To interview alone or with a colleague?

If you are new to interviewing and would prefer to have another interviewer with you, it can have positive outcomes!

- The candidate can benefit from meeting more people in the office as it helps them get a 'feel' for the organisation
- Ask another colleague to have a couple of minutes with the candidate at the end of a meeting to make it more personal
- Actively showing rapport and support between colleagues in an interview can speak volumes
- Do bear in mind that if there are too many interviewers at one time, it can come across as impersonal and will only benefit one side of the table





Interviewing solo

Keep your style simple and effective

If you prefer to be one-on-one, no problem. The important part of an interview is that people get to know each other and find out the *information they need* from one another.

Building a connection with the candidate is one of the most effective things you can do to gain the interest of the candidate you want. Give examples that show how you will look after them, and offer development and support for best results.

Candidate questions



Detail counts

Candidates' questions can give you an insight into what is important to them. Aim to provide them with detailed answers and information.



Motivations

Find out what motivates the candidate. Feel free to ask why a question is important to them to fully understand what makes them tick.



Actively listen

Don't be the person who asks about something that's already been directly answered. This is important for both sides of the table.

Next steps

Transparency

Explain that you will speak with the appropriate people internally, who the candidate may meet next and what the following stages of the hiring process are.

Timeframe

Lay out a clear timeframe within which the candidate can expect feedback. This also helps to prevent too many follow up calls.

Too much detail

There is no need to give specifics regarding how many others are in the interview process. Remember, if you say that there are lots of candidates interviewing, it doesn't make them feel special and will encourage them to explore elsewhere.



Feedback is vital

The best employers realise how important feedback is and how damaging a lack of feedback can be to a brand.

Relevant, clear and timely feedback is an asset to your brand, even when delivering bad news. You may not feel as though doing this well will have a big impact, but it does to both the candidate and your organisation.

Feedback can help an individual move forward in their career and will reflect well on how your business is considered in the sector.



Elevate your hiring process

Consistency

Create a hiring plan to ensure that your organisation is presented the same every time, no matter who the interviewer is. How do you want your organisation described?

Technical tests

Do you value technical assessments and at what stage of the process? Plan so that they don't slow your process and make you miss out on a spectacular candidate.

Assessments

Personality or behavioural assessments are viewed as either essential or nice-to-have, depending on the organisation. They can be a critical part of a process or help you know how to best work with a new hire.

Video interviews

If the interview is on video chat, ensure your camera and sound is clear and you have given the necessary information to the candidate, as well as a back up plan.

Make time

Make time to speak with candidates of interest to you as they could make your organisation better and your job easier. Don't wait too long as you may miss out!

Flexibility

If you only offer interview times in working hours, you could deter candidates who are already juggling a full time job. Mornings and evenings work best for a lot of candidates.

Prepare

Be prepared for the meeting just as you expect the candidate to be too. Know the CV and who you are about to meet.

Remote working

Consider updating policies and risk assessment processes so that you can give candidates definitive answers regarding remote working.



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