

You've sorted through resumes, narrowed the field, completed your phone screens (or maybe [we have!](#)), and determined your top candidates. Now, you're ready to interview! Or are you?

Interviewing is a skill, and if you haven't practiced it much, you might find the process intimidating. First impressions carry a lot of weight, after all, and the candidate is evaluating you and your company as well. If you're nervous or unprepared, you might forget to ask key questions or let your unconscious bias lead you astray.

To make sure you **cover your bases, set your candidate at ease, and learn the information you really need to know**, we're here to help you elevate your interview game.

Set the Tone and Introduce Your Agenda

Start by making the candidate feel comfortable—**don't jump into questions right away!** Even the most prepared candidates can be thrown off their game if the transition into the interview is too abrupt. You don't want it to feel like an interrogation, after all.

(You should also think about how many people you bring to a first round interview. Your candidates should meet the team, of course, but facing five interviewers at once can be overwhelming)

Begin by thanking the candidate for coming in, offering them a glass of water, and making small talk. Establishing a friendly, professional tone from the start will help both you and the candidate get in the right mental space for the interview.

Being clear about your agenda will also help everyone feel comfortable. Interviews are nerve-racking enough, but they can be a bit easier to handle when you know what you're

expecting.

Here's the basic agenda that we suggest:

Go over the candidate's work experience and job history

Cover some behavioural questions (we ask these of everyone, regardless of role)

Finally, offer the candidate an opportunity to ask questions

Work Experience and Job History

Plan for this section to take 20 to 30 minutes.

Start by asking them to tell you their story as it relates to their career, starting with their education or the first job listed on their resume. Follow along in their resume chronologically, asking questions for each position about:

the nature of the company, including what it did, industry, size, and more

their responsibilities

who they reported to and if they had any direct reports

their reason for leaving each job

any unusual gaps between positions

Conclude with what they're currently doing and why they're looking for a new job now. If you find anything else interesting on their resume, just ask!

Behavioural Questions

Plan for this section to take 30 to 45 minutes.

Behavioural questions help you understand how a candidate has handled real-world situations, which will give you an idea of their future performance. Group your questions under a few broad categories that centre around skills that will be crucial for the job, and ask questions that will help you determine their fit.

Here are some of the categories that we use, with a few suggested questions for each. You might find it helpful to come up with your own, based on your company's values and vision.

Multitasking, Planning & Organization

How do you prioritize projects and tasks when scheduling your time? Give me some examples.

Think of a time when you had to react quickly to a situation or "think on your feet." How did you react and what was the end result?

Communication & Interpersonal Skills

What obstacles or difficulties have you ever faced in communicating your ideas to a manager?

Tell me about the last time you were frustrated on the job because you or others lacked a certain skill or knowledge. What did you do?

Passion

Tell me about a time when you set out to achieve an ambitious goal – work or personal – that was challenging, complex, required some time to complete and had to work with others.

What was your last failure? Why was it a failure and how did you deal with it?

Creativity

What's the most interesting thing about you that's not on your resume?

General Information

What's important to you in a company culture?

What do you expect from your manager?

If the candidate strays into the hypothetical, guide them back to the question, and remind them that you're looking for specifics.

Candidate Questions

A prepared candidate will likely have questions for you. After all, candidates are interviewing you for fit too!

Expect questions about your culture, workload expectations, or how success will be measured.

Wrap It Up

Thank the candidate for their time, and make sure that no one (you, the candidate, or your fellow interviewers) has any lingering questions. Conclude the interview by being as transparent as possible about the process and the next steps you'll take. Are there other candidates interviewing? Do you have a timeline for the hiring process?

Show respect for their time by letting them know when you'll be able to get back to them—**be realistic with your deadline, and stick to it!**

Need help elevating *your* interview game?
[Get in touch with us now!](#)