

The Complete Interviewer's Toolkit:

Sample Questions, Checklists and Best Practices





This toolkit offers strategies, checklists and best practices that you can easily reference when preparing for interviews. No matter the interview type, use this toolkit to streamline your process and learn how to conduct effective interviews.

How to use this toolkit:

This toolkit is designed as a quick reference to guide you through the interview process. Use the pre-interview checklist to prepare, apply guidelines and best practices for different interview types and refer to the post-interview checklist when evaluating candidates after your meeting.

Pre-interview checklist

This checklist covers important steps for the pre-interview process. Before your interview, be sure to:

- **Research the candidate:** Review their resume, cover letter and any other requested hiring materials.
- **Note achievements or questions:** Record aspects from the hiring materials that need further clarification to help you when creating interview questions.
- **Prepare questions:** Include a mix of behavioral, situational and technical questions.
- **Set up the interview space:** Consider the interview type: phone, video, in-person or panel.
- **Validate logistics:** Confirm the time, date and location of the interview with the candidate. Send instructions for remote/virtual meetings if applicable.

Special considerations: Sometimes the interview may be a panel interview or involve multiple, back-to-back interviews with different people or departments. In this case, check that:

- Interviewers have the necessary hiring materials
- Interview questions are not repetitive or have too much overlap
- Everyone understands their role and timing in the interview process

Consider the [style and number of individuals](#) involved and the purpose of the interview. This will help you determine if a phone, video/virtual or in-person interview is best.

Read more:

[How to read an applicant's resume](#)

[Reasons to require a cover letter](#)

[Taking interview notes](#)

[How job seekers really feel about virtual interviews](#)



Prevent interview no-shows

Unfortunately, sometimes a candidate simply doesn't show up for their interview. While it may feel like something that is out of your control, there are **best practices you can follow to help prevent interview no-shows:**

- Schedule interviews promptly (ideally within 48 hours) to help maintain the candidate's enthusiasm for the job.
- Be transparent about the job's pay, benefits and expectations upfront. This helps build trust and lets the candidate decide if the job is a good fit for them before scheduling the interview.
- Offer flexible interview scheduling to help candidates work interviewing around their schedules. This can help prevent a conflict that would lead to a no-show.
- Use automated tools to update candidates and remind them of their upcoming interviews. This helps the candidate stay informed and engaged and reduces the likelihood of them missing the interview.

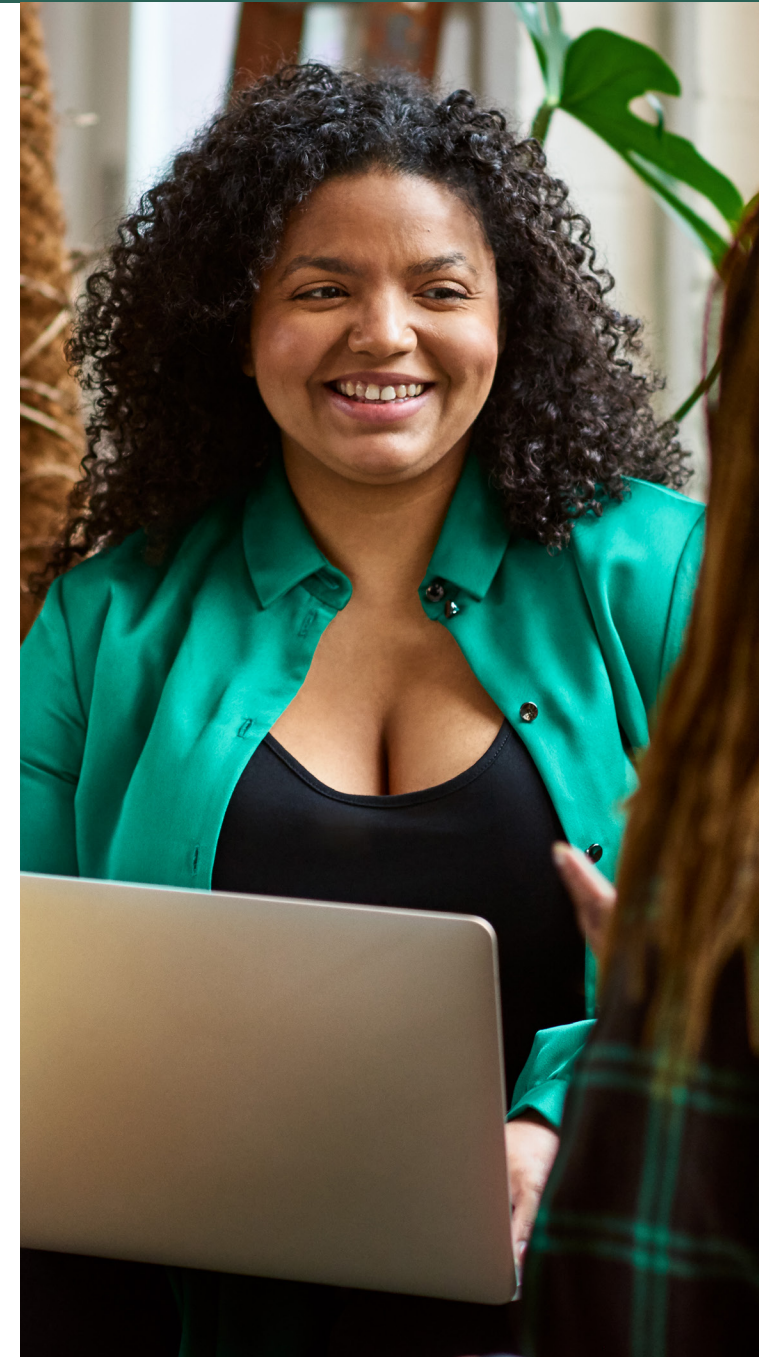
Interview Best Practices

Consider the following best practices to improve the interview experience for both you and the candidates:

- Determine the right type of interview. Common types include:
 - In-person
 - Phone
 - Virtual
 - Panel
 - Group Interviews

These types may overlap. For example, an interview process may have multiple rounds and have phone, in-person or virtual interviews.

- Determine the right location for the interview. This will depend on the type of interview you choose. In general, you want the interview space to be private, quiet and comfortable for the applicant.
- Prepare your interview questions based on the job requirements and the hiring materials from the applicant. As a best practice, be sure to ask all candidates the same set of questions.



- Depending on your open position, try a [skills-based](#) approach. [Skills-first interviewing](#) shifts focus toward skills and aptitude rather than sources that may carry bias like degrees, prior positions or years of industry experience.
- If multiple people are involved in the interview process, clearly delegate which individuals are responsible for which questions and during which rounds.
- Communicate your expectations to the job seeker. This could include telling them what to expect during the hiring process, such as steps and timelines.
- Consider the quality of the interviewee's experience. For example, if you're conducting multiple on-site interviews, factor in things like bathroom breaks, time to eat and hydrate and a chance for the candidate to rest between rounds.
- After the interview, follow up with the candidates whether they're selected or not. Inform them of their status and any possible next steps in the hiring process.



Interview types and considerations

Let's review each type of interview, discuss the set-up and share tips for interviewing someone regardless of the location.

Phone interviews

[Phone interviews](#) are often used as a quick way of pre-screening candidates. Using a phone interview can give both you and the applicant a chance to see if there's a good fit before setting aside time for a more in-depth interview.

Technical setup

Ensure a quiet, distraction-free area and a reliable phone connection. If calling over Wi-Fi, check that you have a strong signal. Confirm the time with the applicant in advance, and consider hosting the [phone interview on Indeed](#) to streamline the process.

Phone interview best practices

To increase your chances of having an [effective phone interview](#), consider these best practices:

- **Don't forget to pause**
Because of the lack of nonverbal cues
- **Be upbeat**
Be enthusiastic and upbeat. During phone interviews, candidates cannot read your body language, so your tone of voice and energy can help keep the candidate engaged and demonstrate your interest in them.
- **Avoid multitasking during calls**
While it may be tempting to check your email or send a quick text, the candidate deserves your full attention during the interview. Stay focused and present during the interview and avoid multitasking.

Read more:

[Phone Interview Script Sample Questions for Hiring Managers](#)
[A Comprehensive Guide to Phone Screen Questions \(With Template\)](#)



Phone interview sample questions

During phone interviews, ask questions that help you determine whether or not the candidate should move to the next interview stage.

Here are some basic pre-screening questions for a phone interview to consider:

- What are your salary expectations for this role?
- Why did you apply for this position?
- What interests you about our organization?



Virtual interviews

Virtual interviews, sometimes referred to as video interviews, work well when a candidate is in another location or when [schedules are limited or difficult to align](#). While you may hold a virtual interview because the candidate will be working remotely, this is not always the case.

In fact, Job Seekers are 20% more likely to accept video interview invitations than in-person or phone.

Technical setup

Check your lighting and that your [background](#) isn't distracting. [Test your tech](#) to make sure your camera and mic are working and that you have a strong Wi-Fi connection. Make sure the candidate has the relevant platform details (Zoom, Google Meet, etc.) and consider using [Indeed Interview](#) to streamline the process.

Virtual interview best practices

To increase your chances of having an effective interview, consider the following [virtual interview best practices](#):

- **Offer alternatives**
To make the [virtual interview more inclusive](#), offer phone interviews or video calls without the video for those who may not have the equipment or are uncomfortable with video technology.
- **Prepare for glitches**
Have a contingency plan where you can switch to a phone or backup computer if something goes wrong with your tech or Wi-Fi. Give the candidates time to respond to account for any possible audio or video delays.
- **Use real-time note-taking**
Using a note-taking app can help you stay more present while the candidate is speaking. Do not record the interview without your organization's and the candidate's consent.

Indeed Data (worldwide)

Virtual interview sample questions

You can treat a virtual interview like an in-person one by asking basic questions to assess the candidate.

Here are some basic interview questions for a virtual interview:

- What do you look for in an employer?
- Tell me about your career goals.
- What qualities have helped you when working with a team?

In-person interviews

There are many different types of in-person interviews, including one-on-one, panel and group interviews. They may be short or involve a large part of the day and may include a tour and/or meeting key members of your organization.

Interview set up

Choose a comfortable and quiet room. Communicate with other team members when the interview will take place to minimize the risk of disruptions.

Arrange the seating to ease conversation, especially if the interview will involve multiple people.

In-person interview best practices

To increase your chances of having an effective interview, consider the following in-person interview best practices:

- **Provide clear directions**
Let the candidate know where to meet for the interview (i.e., the front desk or on a certain floor) and include parking or building access details.

- **Outline the interview schedule**
Let the candidate know what to expect when they arrive. If the interview process will take some time, outline a clear schedule detailing the structure and timing of each component.
- **Check the office environment**
The candidate will also be observing the space where they may work, so keep this in mind when preparing for the interview. Have a welcoming space that reflects the company culture.



In-person interview sample questions

In-person interviews cover the essentials just like any other interview, but you may want to ask some casual questions to help the candidate transition from arrival and introductions to the interview itself.

Here are some casual interview questions for an in-person interview:

- How's your week going?
- Did you have any trouble finding the office?
 - Is the office what you expected?



Panel interviews

Panel interviews involve multiple people interviewing a single candidate at the same time. They may be beneficial in many ways, including:

- Offering a diverse perspective
- Providing a well-rounded skills analysis
- Reducing bias
- Developing current employees

Panel interviews can be in-person or virtual and may be part of a larger interview process involving multiple interview types.

Interview setup

Consider whether the interview will be in-person or virtual. For in-person interviews, arrange the room with the candidate's comfort in mind, for example: position chairs so they can introduce themselves to people easily as they enter and ensure they know where the restrooms are located.

For virtual interviews, make sure all participants have details regarding which

platform will be used and check their tech before the interview.

Panel interview best practices

To increase your chances of having an effective interview, consider the following [panel interview best practices](#):

- **Outline clear roles**
To minimize confusion, clarify the specific roles for each panelist. This could include who leads the panel, who asks which questions and whether or not there is a designated note-taker.
- **Debrief immediately after each interview**
If possible, have panel members stick around immediately after each interview to discuss impressions and compare notes. After all the interview rounds, meet again for a more in-depth discussion.
- **Inform the candidate**
Let the candidate know that their interview will be with a panel and what to expect. This can help them prepare and reduce any potential anxiety.

Panel interview sample questions

For this list of sample interview questions, let's look at a sample scenario. Imagine you assemble a panel to interview candidates for a new junior software engineer position.

To include a variety of perspectives and expertise, the panel is comprised of a hiring manager, a senior software engineer and a project manager. Each person on the panel has a different role when asking questions.

The hiring manager is responsible for behavioral interview questions and might ask something like:

Tell me about a time when you faced a challenge while working on a team. How did you handle it?

The senior software engineer is responsible for technical interview questions, and might ask something like:

Can you explain what a function is and why you might use one your code?

The project manager is responsible for situational interview questions and might ask something like:

Let's say you are working on a project and have a tight deadline. You discover a bug the day before the release. Outline the steps you would take to handle this situation.

Interviewing for remote workers

Remote work is common in many organizations, and there are special considerations to be made when interviewing [remote candidates](#). **Keep the following best practices in mind when interviewing a remote candidate:**

- Follow the best practices for virtual interviews by choosing reliable video conferencing tools and checking that both the interviewers and the candidate can use the tools.
- Consider using automated calendar invites and notifications to make sure everyone involved in the interview process is up-to-date and aware of when they are expected to take part.
- Provide the candidate with important details regarding what to expect from the interview process. Tell them how many rounds to expect and whether or not they will be interviewing with panels or with individuals.

Here are some sample interview questions you could use during a remote interview:

- How can you deliver quality customer service remotely?
- What are your strategies for communicating with coworkers in different time zones?
- How do you build relationships with your coworkers?

Tips for structuring your interview, choosing questions and taking notes

When it comes to creating and structuring the actual interview, it can help to follow some basic guidelines regarding how many and which types of questions to include, how many rounds there should be and how to take notes and score the candidates.

Choose how many questions to include

In general, choose quality over quantity. Asking 5-10 well-thought-out questions per round is generally a good metric to aim for.

The [number of interview questions](#) you ask may depend on the length of the interview and the number of rounds.

Determine the number of interview rounds

Most jobs only require [two to three rounds](#) of interviews. This number gives enough opportunity to assess a candidate thoroughly while avoiding interview fatigue. However, the number you choose will often depend on the position you're hiring for.

Include diverse question types

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Behavioral interview questions

evaluate how a candidate has handled past situations. This can help the interviewer understand how the candidate may behave in similar situations in the future.

Sample question:

Describe a challenge you faced in a previous role and how you handled it.

Situational interview questions

ask the candidate what they would do in a hypothetical situation that may occur in the open role. This lets the interviewer evaluate the candidate's critical thinking and decision-making skills and general character.

Sample question:

What would you do if you disagreed with your boss on a project?

Technical interview questions

check the candidate's specific knowledge and proficiency in key hard skills needed for the job. Interviewers can determine how well the candidates are suited for the technical demands of the open position.

Sample question:

What steps do you take to diagnose engine problems effectively?

Strategic interview questions

allow the candidate to demonstrate how they would approach different scenarios using strategic thinking. This can give you insight into how the candidate evaluates risk and what factors they consider before taking action.

Sample question:

Can you tell me about a time when you were able to anticipate and prepare for risks during a project?

Consider also including [opening and closing interview questions](#).

This can help you and the candidate feel at ease at the start of the interview and contribute to ensuring the interview ends with a positive last impression.

Sample opening question:

Tell me about yourself.

Sample opening question:

Was there anything from this interview that you wanted to revisit?

Sample interview questions to ask candidates

Below we have listed some of the best interview questions to ask candidates. This list may help you understand how to start an interview, what strategic interview questions to ask candidates and how to plan for creating your own questions.

- Tell me something about yourself that isn't on your resume. (opening)
- How do you prioritize tasks? (strategic)
- Tell me about your process for (technical task). (technical)
- Which programming languages are you comfortable with? (technical)
- Describe a time when you had to learn something new. In what ways did you approach the learning process? (behavioral)

- How do you handle conflicting deadlines? (strategic, situational)
- Describe a time you led your team through a tricky assignment. (behavioral, strategic)
- What would you do if you disagreed with a team member? (situational)
- What are your long-term career goals? (strategic)
- If hired, what would you need from me to succeed in this position? (closing)
- What questions do you have for me? (closing, strategic)

Read more: [Interview Questions and Answers](#)

Practice good note-taking

Good notes help you detail key points and give you a record to refer to when it comes time to score or compare the candidates. Consider the following **best note-taking practices**:

- Use abbreviations and codes to help you write key details quickly
- Expand on shorthand notes immediately after the interview to incorporate important details
- Try to stay engaged and make eye contact with the candidate
- Let the candidate know if you're taking notes so any pauses aren't a distraction but instead show you're engaged in what they're saying
- Do not note personal or subjective observations or information that does not pertain to the role



Use interview rubrics and scoring sheets to evaluate the candidate

Interview rubrics and scoring sheets provide a standardized framework for assessing candidates. When implemented correctly, using the same evaluation system for each candidate can reduce bias and help reviewers stay objective when determining who best fits the role.

[Interview rubrics](#) bring structure to the interview process and provide a standardized framework for evaluating candidates. This could include questions, rating scales and performance descriptions.

[Scoring sheets](#) are similar to interview rubrics and focus on using scores or ratings for a candidate based on their responses to questions.

Interview rubrics and scoring sheets are often used in [structured interviews](#), though not exclusively. Organizations may use structured interviews to reduce bias and improve hiring decisions.



Diversity and inclusion in interviews

Your hiring process can impact the inclusivity and [diversity of your workforce](#), so it is important to consider whether your practices minimize bias and are inclusive.

During the interview process, consider whether the candidate is a [culture add](#) [instead of a culture fit](#). Seek to recognize how candidates can bring fresh, new perspectives and ideas to the team rather than simply fitting in.

Consider the following **best practices for creating inclusive interviews**:

- Use [inclusive language](#) in your recruiting process. Avoid gender- or age-specific wording in your job description and interview questions.
- Have a diverse interview panel. Create a team of interviewers with varied backgrounds and perspectives. Consider including individuals from different levels of management or roles that would support the open position.
- Standardize the interview process to [reduce bias](#). Use the same set of

questions for all candidates and focus more on [skills-based hiring](#) which places emphasis on experience vs formal degrees or work experience. For example, people who taught themselves how to code may not have formal education in coding or a previous job in the field, but they may have the right skill set to fit the role's requirements.

- Make the interview experience more equitable by offering a range of interview formats for the candidate to choose from. Make sure that the materials or tech needed for an interview are accessible to the candidate.
- Recognize that candidates may downplay their skills in interviews due to cultural or societal norms. To account for this, use additional methods of assessing the candidate such as skills



Here is an example of a biased interview question and how it can be reframed to reduce bias:

Question with bias to avoid:

As a recent graduate, how do you think your age will help you fit in with our younger team?

Reframed question:

What previous experience/skills do you think will contribute most to our team?

The first question assumes that the candidate's age affects their ability to fit in. It also implies that the organization prefers youth and degrees over experience. The second question focuses on experience and skill and working with a team without the implications of the first question.

Post-interview checklist:

This checklist covers important steps in the post-interview process. After your interview, be sure to:

Follow-up with all candidates: Reach out immediately after the interview to thank them for their time and outline when they can expect to hear their status.

Use a standardized method: Evaluate and compare all candidates using the same standardized scoring sheets or rubrics.

Follow the timeframe: Let candidates know if they will or won't be moving forward within the timeframe you gave them after the interview.

Evaluate and reflect: Look back on the interview process and discuss how it could be improved. Think about the experience for the candidate, how organized the hiring team was and whether the questions provided the answers you were looking for.





Keep this toolkit handy

Your organization's interview process may go through several iterations while you work to make it as efficient, fair and effective as possible. Regularly review and assess the process to ensure it continues to meet your organization's evolving needs and standards. Use this toolkit to help you craft interviews that support your organization's hiring goals.