

Quick Guide: How To Question An Interview Candidate

You have a limited time, perhaps only an hour, to assess a candidate at an interview so you need a good set of questions to draw out the information you require. You will need to assess their knowledge, skills, attitude, ability to do the job and previous experience. Here are the top ten tips to help you conduct an effective interview in the time available.

- 1. Prepare questions** in relation to the job description that will find out and test their experience, knowledge, skills and qualities.
- 2. Have a checklist of questions** prepared that you will ask every candidate ensuring that you ask everybody the same questions and give them all a consistent, fair interview. You will of course have individual questions for each candidate as well.
- 3. Start the interview with easy questions** to help relax the candidate. You will want to test them later during the interview but build up to this.
- 4. Use the candidate's CV to generate more specific questions** on areas you wish to investigate further.
- 5. Ask 'open' questions** – that is, those which invite more than a simple 'yes' or 'no' answer. These questions are designed to open up the conversation and get the candidate talking about their ideas and feelings as well as facts.
- 6. Use 'closed' questions** only if you require a specific response, to check for understanding or to keep the conversation to a minimum!
- 7. Build on their answers** during the interview by asking probing questions to explore an area further.
- 8. 'Behavioural' questions** are another excellent tool that will tell you what the candidate has done in a specific situation in the past, which will often reflect what they would do in the future. These questions could start with 'tell me about a time when ...' or 'give me an example of ...'.
- 9. Beware of asking 'leading' questions** as they will only lead the candidate to the obvious answer. However, they could be useful at the beginning of the interview for relaxing the candidate.
- 10. Listen very carefully** to the answers. I know this Quick Guide is about asking questions but it is no use asking them if you don't listen to the answers. By preparing a checklist of questions to ask, though, you will now be able to concentrate on fully listening to the candidate. Good luck with your next interview!

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