

Interview Guide



***Civilian Personnel Office
Dyess AFB TX
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Introduction

This guide has been prepared to help you develop and conduct employment interviews. The methods described in this guide, will ensure that job-related employee selection procedures are used as the basis for merit promotion decisions. The same criteria for developing interview questions and conducting interviews should be applied to selections from external recruitment sources. The personnelist working your position vacancies can provide assistance in developing, conducting and documenting employment interviews.

The Air Force has identified that the majority of grievances, both formal and informal, are associated with the selection process, whether through merit promotion or from external sources. A large number of these grievances involve the interview process. By using the information in this handout, we hope to significantly reduce the number of complaints and ensure valid documentation is maintained to provide equality in the interview process.

Any questions should be directed to the Civilian Personnel Office at 696-2393/4. We are here to provide you with advice and assistance.

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Interviews

The interview can be a very important part of the selection process and it can provide an evaluation of the quality of experience and training that a candidate has acquired. During the selection process, you are looking for evidence of whether or not a candidate possesses certain types of experience, training, etc. The interview process helps you to look at the type of experience, training, etc., that a candidate possesses.

Because of the importance of an interview, questions must be job related and well documented. All substantial documentation on the interview should be kept and, when appropriate, it may be submitted to the Civilian Personnel Office (CPO) for inclusion in either the merit promotion folder or the external recruitment folder. If an interview is used for one candidate, it is recommended it be used for all candidates. It is also recommended that all candidates on a merit promotion certificate be provided the opportunity to interview if additional information is needed to help in the selection process. Interviews can be conducted in a face-to-face meeting or over the phone. If candidates are located in the same commuting area, a personal interview is usually appropriate. If they are geographically separated from you, a telephone interview may be more appropriate. If repeated efforts to contact candidates are unsuccessful, you should document this fact. To the extent possible, the same questions should be asked of all candidates being interviewed.

If interviewing, it is best to prepare your questions in advance. The CPO is required to review questions to ensure they are job related and that you are soliciting relevant candidate qualification information that has not been addressed during the records review process and that no inappropriate questions are asked.

There are two types of interviews for evaluation purposes: the Selection Interview and the Ranking Interview. Do not confuse these with routine exchanges of information, which are limited to discussions of the job duties, TDY requirements and other factual matters. This type of exchange is for informational purposes only and does not necessarily address the candidates' qualifications.

Interview results are only one part of the overall evaluation process and are best used in combination with other evaluation criteria.

Exchange of Information Interview

The exchange of information interview is limited to discussion of the job duties, work schedules, TDY requirements and other factual matters about the position being filled. If you do not intend to ask any questions of the candidates, you may conduct an exchange. This could consist of letting candidates read the position description or coredoc; showing any special operating equipment; explaining any pressures unique to your position and giving the candidate the opportunity to ask *you* questions. You should be careful not to let this lead to a selection interview where questions are asked relating to the candidates' qualifications for the position. It is most common to conduct these exchanges over the telephone or in informal situations.

Ranking Interview

The ranking interview is used in combination with other known factors to determine the final ranking of candidates prior to referral to the selecting supervisor. These are conducted by a panel of qualified subject matter experts at or above the grade of the position being filled. The selecting supervisor should not be a panel member for ranking interviews, as he or she will make the final selection from the top (normally, five or less) ranked candidates. Interview results should not be given undue weight in determining the best-qualified candidate(s). Rather, they should be combined with the results of other instruments to determine a candidate's final ranking relative to other competitors. The CPO serves as advisors to the panel and often sit on the panel during the interview process.

The ranking interview is useful when there is a need to evaluate and reduce the number of candidates referred for promotion and/or placement. This type of interview is used in filling supervisory or managerial positions, filling highly specialized/technical positions and filling positions with growth potential under the Developmental Opportunity Program or other special employment programs. This type of interview is a step in determining who will be referred for consideration or other rank order purposes and is seldom used at Dyess Air Force Base.

Selection Interview

The selection interview is used to further evaluate candidates by providing the selecting official with additional information upon which to base the final selection. The majority of interviews are, in fact, selection interviews. Remember that any candidate certified at this point in the selection process is eligible and may be selected.

The purpose of the selection interview is to provide you with job-related information upon which a selection can be made. The selection interview is not for you to "look over" the candidates, "test" the candidates or see how the candidates react "under pressure."

The selection interview is usually less formal than the ranking interview. Usually, the selection interview is a one-on-one meeting: you and the candidate.

The questions used in the selection interview generally meet certain requirements. You should be well prepared. You should review the position description or coredoc and available information about the employee.

From the job analysis, the questions and rating scale should be developed. In the selection interview, questions about experience/training may be asked if the question is about the quality of experience. Questions must be directly related to the knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) of the position and must be approved by the CPO in advance.

It's useful to have a scale by which candidates' responses are evaluated. This scale might show: "best" response, "good" response, "minimum" response. This would be used to document how you evaluated each candidate. It may be easier to assign points to the responses; e.g., Best = 5 points; Good = 3 points; Minimum = 1 point.

The selection interview should be conducted using the following guidelines:

- Make the candidate comfortable
- Introduce yourself (tell a little about yourself)
- Clarify questions, if needed
- Spend equal amounts of time with each candidate
- Do not "test" the candidates
- Allow the candidates to ask questions
- Indicate when the candidates will know the results of the interview

You can get additional job-related experience information through a personal or telephone interview. You may interview all, none or only the top candidates. The local CPO recommends you interview all candidates, if you choose to interview.

If you choose to interview, use the following guidelines:

- determine the KSAs that are specific to the performance of your vacant position and develop interview questions based on these KSAs
- have the CPO validate your interview questions prior to the interview
- compare the qualifications of the candidates to the required KSAs

Documentation:

The selection interview is part of the selection process. It must be job related. There must be an "audit trail" of why one candidate was selected over another. The method the CPO uses to ensure selection interview questions are job related and that documentation is completed and maintained is a local decision. If you have any questions, please contact the CPO for information.

It is your responsibility to understand the role the selection interview has in the process. It is also important to understand the necessity for accurate documentation of every part of the selection process--including the interview.

Inappropriate Interview Questions

Interview questions should be concerned with the experience, training or some other concrete type of answer from the candidate. These answers should provide evidence of whether the candidate possesses the knowledge, skills or abilities you are looking for. For example, the KSA of "ability to give oral presentations to large groups" may be one to be examined in the interview. A good interview question might be: "What experience have you had in giving oral presentations to large groups?" In the questioning, you could ask what the size of the group addressed was, if audiences addressed were hostile and to what extent the candidate participated in preparing the presentation. This type of question is objective, it does not lead the candidate to an answer. Rather, it seeks to find enough information for you to make a decision and is job related. Incorrect questions for this KSA would be: "Do you have trouble speaking before large groups?" "Can you speak well?"

Do not formulate hypothetical cases and ask the candidate to provide possible solutions.

For example, typically found in supervisory positions is the KSA, the "ability to delegate work." A good interview question would be: "What experience do you have in delegating work; what was the workload, how many subordinates did you supervise, what were the situations?" Do not ask: "What would you do in the following situation: You have 1,000 cartons of widgets to deliver...your clerk is on leave; how do you get the cartons delivered?" This type of question is not objective and there are no right answers.

Do not ask questions that have an obvious answer and provide no means for distinguishing among candidates. The question, "Do you work well with people?" has an obvious response. A question such as, "What experience have you had that would show you can effectively deal with the public?" would be more appropriate.

Some questions have been included in so many interviews that candidates may expect them. An example of this type of question would be, "Why do you want this job?". There is no right answer. Candidates tend to have prepared answers for these kinds of questions aimed at what they think interviewers want to hear. This type of question adds nothing to the interview.

The vocabulary used in interview questions should be geared to the level of the candidates. Specialized terminology, organizational abbreviations and so forth, which may intimidate or confuse the candidate should not be used.

There are some areas that are sensitive and should not be part of the interview. There are legal and illegal subjects that you should be aware of. Legal areas may be addressed in the interview, but the questioning should be tactful and appropriate for the job to be filled.

Subject	Illegal	Legal, if Job Related
AGE	Any question which tends to identify applicants between 40-64 years of age is illegal. EXAMPLE: Do you remember the 1940 election?	There is no legal question you can ask regarding this subject. The CPF may verify age, if necessary, to ensure legally set minimum age limits are met.
CITIZENSHIP	Any of the following questions cannot be asked: Are you a citizen of the United States? Are your parents/spouse US citizens? When did you acquire US citizenship? Are you/spouse/parent native born or naturalized?	There is no legal question you can ask regarding this subject. The CPF may verify citizenship requirements, if they exist for the job being filled.
NATIONAL ORIGIN	Any of the following questions cannot be asked: What is your national origin? What language is spoken in your home? What is your native language?	There is no legal question you can ask regarding this subject.
RACE/COLOR	You may not ask any question that directly or indirectly relates to race or color.	There is no legal question you can ask regarding this subject.
RELIGION	The following questions cannot be asked: What church do you attend? What religious holidays do you observe?	There is no legal question you can ask regarding this subject.
SEX	You may not ask any question which inquires as to one's gender. For example: What are your plans regarding having children in the near future? Do you mind having a male/female supervisor? Can you work with a group of men/women?	There is no legal question you can ask regarding this subject.
MARITAL STATUS/FAMILY	Any of the following questions cannot be asked: Are you married? Divorced? Widowed? With whom do you live? What ages are your children? Is your husband/wife in the military?	There is no legal question you can ask regarding this subject. The CPF may verify if other family members work at the installation to fulfill OPM requirements.
EDUCATION	You may not ask questions that specifically ask the nationality, racial or religious affiliation of a school; the candidates' education level in general, if not related to the job being filled.	You may ask questions concerning a candidate's academic, vocation or professional education as long as it pertains to KSAs related to the position being filled.
ORGANIZATIONAL AFFILIATION	You may not ask the following question: To what organization, societies and clubs do you belong?	You may ask questions related to this subject if they are related to the job being filled and how the candidate's participation in the organization may fulfill the KSAs.
POLICE RECORD	Do not ask: Have you ever been arrested?	If the job being filled has special requirements (i.e., bonding), you may ask a question such as: In order to fill

		this job, you must be bonded. Is there any problem that this presents?
WORK SCHEDULE/ TRAVEL	Do not ask any questions that relate to child care, ages of children or other non job-related areas.	If the job being filled has special requirements (i.e., travel, overtime, unusual hours, etc.), these conditions may be stated. For example: In this job you would have to travel 1 week every month. Does this present a problem to you?
MILITARY DISCHARGE	The following question may not be asked: Were you honorably discharged from military service?	There is no legal question you can ask regarding this subject. The CPF may verify this information if there is a requirement to do so.
ECONOMIC STATUS	The following questions may not be asked: Do you have a good credit rating? Do you have any trouble with bills/collection agencies?	There is no legal question you can ask regarding this subject.
SECURITY CLEARANCE	The following question may not be asked: Do you have a secret/top secret/other security clearance?	If the job to be filled requires a certain type of security clearance, this condition may be stated: This job requires a top secret clearance. Does this requirement present any problem?
PERSONAL PLANS	The following question may not be asked: Do you have plans to live in the area long?	There is no legal question you can ask regarding this subject.
PARTICIPATION IN CERTAIN ACTIVITIES	Do not ask the following questions: Do you plan to take savings bonds/contribute to the Combined Federal Campaign/join the coffee club/join the Air Force Association?	There is no legal question you can ask regarding this subject.
MISC	You should not ask any question that is not job related or necessary for determining a candidate's possession of required KSAs.	You may notify the candidate that statements, misstatements or omissions of significant facts may be cause for nonselection.

Diversity in Today's Work Force

We, as supervisors, are not here to define perfect management style or to establish the profile of the perfect employee--because there isn't one. What we must do is to capitalize on our own strengths while at the same time learn to recognize and develop the strengths of all employees.

As supervisors, we must value and recognize that individuals are different and that diversity is an advantage if it is valued and well managed. Diversity is not to be simply tolerated, but encouraged, supported and nurtured.

Managers and supervisors must provide an understanding of the human dynamics that cause problems among people who are different. To convey this message, you might ask yourself to recall two types of experiences. Remember when you were with a group very similar to yourself. It may have been at work, school or church. How did you feel? What did you accomplish? The memories are more than likely happy ones. They felt good. They were productive. They succeeded. Now imagine you are "the only one"--the only young person, the only engineer, the only black, the only white. Almost without exception, the experiences people describe are negative. They felt bad, resentful, and clumsy and did not succeed. Another example: if all your co-workers are serious fishermen and you aren't, you'll be an outsider. And, being an outsider affects the way you do your job. We need to generate sensitivity to cultural gender and other differences. As a manager and supervisor in the diversified work force, you need to remove the organizational and interpersonal barriers that get in the way of managing, supervising and working among people who are different. Remember, through our differences, many creative ideas can be accomplished; thus, creating productivity.

As supervisors, if we took the time to develop all our employees, we would have a highly efficient team. By accepting employees and encouraging them, we can help them reach their full potential. It is very important to create a climate where everyone can do his or her best.

By dealing with and accepting our diversified work force, we can accomplish self-awareness, sensitivity and numerous skills needed to reach our mission as a diversified work force. The ultimate result is the team as a whole can attain full performance levels and accomplish the mission efficiently and effectively.

The Interview Setting:

Allow applicants time to read the core document or position description before the interview. This saves time for the selecting official and avoids any appearance of administering a speed-reading test. Discuss any unusual working conditions or conditions of employment; e.g., shift work, on-call, excessive travel, etc. with the candidate before the actual interview. State these as conditions of employment. The same interview method should be used, if possible (in person, by telephone, etc.). Schedule the same amount of time for each interview. Allow yourself time between interviews to record ratings and complete notes. Establish a friendly, but business-like atmosphere. Put the applicant at ease. Welcome the candidate and explain the interview process. Tell the applicant about the job, duties and performance requirements, place of work, etc. Don't use terms such as girl, gal, honey, dear, boy or any other derogatory names when addressing the interviewee. Never indicate you have already made a selection before all interviews are completed. Do not make promises of promotion or other privileges that may not happen. Don't interview or promise to interview anyone who isn't listed on the referral certificate. Do not interview with a negative attitude. Do not solicit declinations from certain candidates. Do not assume an accent to be a liability.

Interview Questions:

Have your questions prepared in advance and in writing. The same questions should be asked, in the same order, of all candidates. Only interview questions related to the knowledges, skills and abilities (KSAs) required to perform the duties of the position should be used in the interview. Questions should be concerned with experience or training and require some concrete type of answer from the applicant. Ask for detailed information about particular phases of the applicant's experience or training. Avoid asking leading questions or questions that can be answered yes or no. Do not use specialized terminology, acronyms or organizational abbreviations in questions. Do not waste time asking questions on information already available through records or application review. Do not ask "test" questions--and never ask an applicant to prove his or her skill by giving a test. Use a straightforward, honest approach--avoid trick questions. Don't ask hypothetical questions such as, "What would you do if....?". Allow enough time for the candidates to ask any questions relating to the job.

The Documentation:

Interviews must be well documented. Selecting officials must maintain this documentation for at least 90 days. Retain all questions and responses in the same area you keep other Privacy Act documents. Record the number of candidates interviewed. If less than all the candidates were interviewed, annotate the names of those not interviewed and the justification for NOT interviewing. If interviews are not conducted, document the selection package.

The Selection:

Avoid the "halo effect." Don't weigh your decision based on a single accomplishment, association with a particular group, the college attended, etc. Avoid stereotyping candidates. Compare all candidates on the same basis. Review the total picture once you complete all interviews. Talking with or questioning an applicant's present or former supervisor is not considered an interview. You can gather information on the applicant through a review of records, application or discussion with current or former supervisors. Remember that interview results are only a part of the overall evaluation process and must be used in conjunction with other evaluation criteria.

Important Items That Should Influence Your Selection:

Is this a good worker who will give you a good day's work? Is this a person who will work on the team? Is the individual capable of growth? During the interview, evaluate if the applicant will be compatible with the other employees in the organization and with the operation. Evaluate whether the candidate will have potential for advancement.

SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND RATINGS GUIDE

1. Describe your experience, education or training that demonstrates your ability to perform stenographic duties such as those including taking dictation in person, by phone, from recordings at meetings and transcribing them into final form.

KSA: (1) (2) (4) (5) (7)

_____ (15 Points) Candidate has experience in performing all of the stenographic duties listed above.

_____ (10 Points) Candidate has experience in the stenographic duties listed above with the exception of taking dictation at meetings.

_____ (5 Points) Candidate has experience in the stenographic duties listed above with the exception of taking dictation at meetings and from recordings.

_____ (1 Point) Candidate has experience in taking dictation confined mainly to in-person and one-on-one dictation sessions for brief correspondence.

2. Describe your experience, education or training which demonstrates your ability to use automated software such as Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint to produce documents such as letters, reports and memos.

KSA: (1) (3) (4) (5)

_____ (Best Qualified) Candidate has experience in using all of the automated programs listed above.

_____ (Better Qualified) Candidate has experience using the automated programs listed above with the exception of PowerPoint.

_____ (Qualified) Candidate has experience using Word only.

3. Describe your experience, education or training which demonstrates your knowledge of budgeting for data automation requirements.

KSA: (1) (2) (3) (6) (7)

_____ (15 Points) Candidate has responsibility for developing and submitting budget requirements for data automation projects.

_____ (12 Points) Candidate assisted in the submission of budget requirements for data automation projects.