**What is a structured interview?**

A structured interview is a conversation where an interviewer asks an interviewee set questions in a standardized order. The interviewee collects the responses of the candidate and grades them against a scoring system. Asking the same questions in the same order helps interviewers collect similar types of information delivered in a uniform context from interviewees. A structured interview has several advantages over an unstructured interview, including:

* The interview experience is more consistent and less prone to errors.
* The interview experience is more effective as questions are formulated in advance to collect the most important and relevant information.
* The interview experience is less likely to be biased as interviewers work from a script.
* Interview responses are easier to compare.
* Interviews and evaluations are more efficient as the interviewer asks set questions designed to collect useful information and evaluate the same question responses for each interviewee.

Structured interviews were originally developed for qualitative research but they are becoming more common during the hiring process.

As structured interviews are more efficient and effective they can benefit businesses experiencing rapid growth. They can also help businesses find the best candidates by reducing bias. As structured interviews become more common, human resources employees and other professionals involved in their employers' hiring processes should learn how to conduct and evaluate these interviews.

**How to prepare a structured interview**

Following a clear series of steps can help you prepare structured interviews. You can scale these steps for large and small hiring operations.

1. Determine important hard and soft skills for the role.
2. Write behavioral and situational questions for evaluating relevant hard and soft skills.
3. Add job-specific interview questions.
4. Create a candidate rating system.
5. Train hiring managers on structured interview procedures.
6. Distribute structured interview questions and a rating system.
7. Schedule feedback meetings with hiring managers.

**1. Determine important hard and soft skills for the role**

Compiling a list of the hard and soft skills your ideal candidate should possess can help guide your interview questions. Consider the hard and soft skills required to work in the vacant position and fit in with the workplace culture. You may also like to consider abilities that could help your new hire advance within your organization.

For example, if you were hiring a chef, you should look for someone who has strong culinary skills and business aptitude. In addition to these hard skills, soft skills including creativity, organizational and a motivational management style are also beneficial.

**Related:** [**Top Questions to Expect During a Sales Interview**](https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/interviewing/sales-interview-questions?from=careeradvice-US)

**2. Write behavioral and situational questions for evaluating relevant hard and soft skills**

Once you know the relevant hard and soft skills for your position, write questions that test whether your applicants have these qualities. Writing behavioral and situational questions will give you insight into your applicants' experiences and their problem-solving skills.

For example, you could ask applicants for your chef role what business software they are familiar with, to test their business aptitude. You could ask them what they would do to motivate an unmotivated sous chef to test their management style.

**3. Add job-specific interview questions**

Adding job-specific questions to your structured interview can help you determine whether your candidates have the experience and skills required for the specific vacant position.

For example, if the open position is in an Italian kitchen, you might ask candidates what their favorite Italian dish to cook is and why. Their answer will provide insight into their experience with Italian food.

**4. Create a candidate rating system**

A candidate rating system will help you score each applicant based on their answer to each question. Totaling the scores can help you find the best applicant for the position. A five-point scale, which awards candidates between one and five points based on the quality of each answer, is a simple system that works for many hiring managers. However, you could use any rating system that makes sense to you.

**5. Train hiring managers on structured interview procedures**

Training hiring managers on structured interviews helps you get consistent results for all hiring processes. Consider conducting a group training session, rather than one-on-one training to ensure all hiring managers get the same information. Encourage your hiring managers to ask questions if they are unclear about any part of the process.

**6. Distribute structured interview questions and rating system**

Before your interviews, distribute your questions and rating system to your hiring managers. Distributing these documents a few days before the interviews lets your managers familiarize themselves with the questions and ratings.

**7. Schedule feedback meetings with hiring managers**

Scheduling feedback meetings before beginning interviews ensures all parties can discuss the candidates in a timely fashion. Scheduling meetings for a day or two after the interviews when candidates are still fresh in the minds of managers, is ideal.

**How to conduct a structured interview**

Conducting a structured interview also requires a methodical approach to ensure consistency. Take the following steps when conducting a structured interview:

**1. Greet your applicant verbally and with a handshake**

A warm greeting helps put your candidate at ease and builds a rapport, making them more likely to offer genuine responses.

**2. Ask each question on your list in order as written**

Asking each question as it is written makes sure each interview is standardized.

**3. Give your applicant time to answer**

Giving your candidate time to answer each question ensures they can get the maximum points they are capable of. Continue to the next question once you are sure your applicant has finished speaking.

**4. Score each answer immediately**

Scoring each answer before moving on to the next question gives the most accurate result, as it allows you to grade based on your immediate reaction rather than trying to recall their response later.

**5. Close the interview**

Once your candidate has responded to your questions, say goodbye and offer another handshake. You may also tell the candidate when they should expect to hear from you regarding the next steps.

### Advantages and disadvantages of structured interviews

**Advantages of a structured interview**

Since in structured interviews all the candidates are asked the same questions, it’s easy to compare their answers and [hire the right job candidate](https://www.talentlyft.com/en/blog/article/73/how-do-recruiters-find-the-right-job-candidates). You can evaluate candidates in the most **objective** and **fair** way, which also makes structured interviews more **legally defensible**.

**Disadvantages of a structured interview**

On the other hand, structured interviews are harder and **more complicated** **to develop**. You have to write them, test them and make sure interviewers stick to them.

You also risk your interview **questions leaking out**, which means future candidates can come prepared.

Finally, this type of one-size-fits-all interview can seem a bit**cold and unpersonalized**, making it harder to provide an excellent [candidate experience](https://www.talentlyft.com/en/resources/what-is-candidate-experience).

This process has allowed us to successfully hire top performing salespeople for our clients.” — [Taylor Dumouchel](http://www.peaksalesrecruiting.com/), Executive Recruiter, Peak Sales Recruiting