

### Structuring Interviews

Practical and legal problems can be avoided by structuring interviews. The following suggestions for structuring selection interviews will help in planning and preparation:

1. Develop a set of core questions in advance. While completely scripting the interview would obviously reduce spontaneity and valuable individualized discussion, having some questions to ask of all applicants makes comparative evaluations easier and more meaningful, especially when more than one interviewer is involved.
2. Have most of the questions relate directly to job duties and performance requirements. Use different types of questions to find out about the various qualifications you want in the new hire. *Situational questions* usually begin, "What would you do if..." and continue with a description of some problem situation likely to occur on the job. *Knowledge questions* are direct requests for information that an applicant ought to already have if qualified for the job. In *role-plays*, the applicant is asked to contend, as if holding the job, with the interviewer playing the part of coworker, subordinate, customer, etc. *Worker requirement questions* explore the applicant's willingness to go along with such job demands such as overtime work, travel, relocation, and infrequent supervision.
3. Use a consistent interview format and context (as well as core content) for all applicants. Unless each candidate gets about the same amount of time under the same conditions, interview responses are not likely to be comparable.
4. Note important responses during the interview and document your impressions as soon as possible afterward. Documentation and comparison are easier when some classification or numerical scoring scheme is used to evaluate responses to key inquiries and to summarize ratings of each applicant. The scheme can be quite simple such as a 1=lowest to 5=highest scale. If candidates are rated according to certain attributes, those dimensions ought to correspond to qualifications specified on the job description.
5. Understand the common rater biases and consciously fight them. Careful listening to what the applicant says goes hand in hand with waiting to make overall judgments until the interview is over. Having multiple interviewer/raters in a single or sequential set of interviews for each applicant is a good way of reducing the impact of any individual's bias.



### Sample flow of interview at a ranch

**Greeting:**

A friendly welcome. (1 min.)

**Small talk:**

Putting the applicant at ease, showing personal interest, offering coffee. (2 min.)

**Job description:**

Clarifying what the job entails and how it fits into the organization. (5 min.)

**Housekeeping details:**

Covering basic terms of employment — wages, hours, housing, or other special conditions. (2 min.)

**Applicant questions:**

Fielding the candidate's questions. What does he or she want to know about the organization and the position? The questions themselves may reveal important information. (5 - 10 min.)

**Questions for the applicant:**

Getting to know the applicant's qualifications for the job, with guidance of a prepared question list. (5 - 20 min.)

**Continuation or cut-off:**

Further selling of the job if the applicant is of interest, or a dignified close if not. Informing about expected decision time or next steps in the process. (5 - 10 min.)



### Interview Context and Conduct

Some managers feel uncomfortable when it comes time to conduct an interview. By taking the experience out of “uncharted territory,” structuring usually raises their comfort level and ability to obtain, as well as provide, useful information. The interviewer is in a position to take control of the conversation to benefit both the applicant and the ranch. Even so, the applicant is also interviewing the interviewer. Part of management's task may be to present the business well and sell the job so that the first-choice applicant will accept an offer.

Consider these guidelines for successful communication during the interview:

- Pre-test your interview questions and techniques with a trusted employee or a family member, especially if this is your first interview.
- Choose a quiet, comfortable place in which to conduct the interview.