

# *Interviewing & Hiring Tips*

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Before reviewing applicants a selection procedure and guidelines should be set in place. This consists of defining what and how each applicant will be rated, interview questions, and reference check forms.

Departments may utilize a search committee or panel to execute the viewing of the most qualified applicants. If the department chooses to use a search committee, please be sure that each person who will be participating on the committee has reviewed and agrees to the established selection procedures.

## **Selecting Applicants to Interview**

In order for an applicant to be considered for the position, they must have submitted an application and been referred via the Texas Tech employment website. For an applicant to have been referred, they have indicated that they have met the minimum qualifications for the position posted.

Applicants in the pool must be given equal consideration for the position applied to without regard to:

- Age
- Disability
- National Origin
- Pregnancy
- Race/Color
- Religion
- Sex
- Veteran's Status
- Genetic Information

The pool should then be narrowed down to reflect the best qualified applicants that have displayed the skills and abilities necessary for the position. These skills and abilities can be displayed through their application and other **REQUIRED** supporting documents.

Examine the pool carefully to review each applicant's education information, employment history, and answers to your supplemental questions. Be sure to use the Hiring Matrix to indicate and determine which applicants would be a fit for the position.

It is highly recommended to interview at least three candidates from your pool. Depending on the number of qualified applicants, it may be more.

## Interview Fundamentals

### In Person or Phone Interviews

It is recommended to conduct an in person interview when possible. This allows the interviewer/s to gain a better understanding and sense of the candidate. However, when an applicant does not live in the area, or it is not feasible to conduct an in person interview, phone interviews are also acceptable.

### Prepare Ahead of Time

Be sure to develop your interview format and questions ahead of time. Remember, the interview begins the second the candidate comes through the door. Always be respectful of their time, and do your best to begin on time. Allow time for the candidate to ask questions at the end of the interview. At the end of the interview, always give a timeline of what the next steps will be in the process, i.e. when they may be able to receive a call, if and when there will be a second round of interviews, and the anticipated date to make the hire.

## Interview Questions

Always prepare interview questions ahead of time. Interviews should be consistent, asking each candidate the same basic, job related questions. The questions you ask may reveal important skills in the applicant. Be mindful because interview questions should be job related.

***Please contact the HR Talent Acquisition office if you have a question or are unsure of whether a question is appropriate or not.***

### Interview Question Basics:

- Avoid yes/no questions
- Ask questions that solicit actual examples (real life situations) as opposed to hypothetical examples
- Don't give away answers
- Do not just ask questions where the applicant has succeeded
- Avoid phrasing questions that will only obtain a "happy ending"
- Know that questions can have a dual purpose
- Listen to the answers and ask follow-up questions

## Here are some examples of what you may ask:

### Introductory Questions:

- Please spend a few minutes introducing yourself- highlighting your past work experience and education.
- What interested you in applying for this position?

### General Education and Past Job Performance Questions:

- Describe your responsibilities and duties in your current/last position.
- Why did you take your current/last job?
- I see that you have an employment gap from (date) to (date). Can you please explain this gap?
- I see that you were promoted at (company). Tell us about your promotion and how your responsibilities changed.
- When and why did you decide to leave this job? Did you give notice and how long?

### Recent Graduate Questions:

- Describe how the college experience has prepared you for this job.
- Why are you applying for a job in a field other than your major?

### Questions Assessing Skills, Abilities, and Knowledge:

- Can you tell me about a time when you have had to (fill in the blank with a job duty)? What steps did you take? What was the end result?
- Can you give an example of a successful project or team you were a part of? What was your role? Why was the project or team successful?
- Tell me about your most difficult customer/co-worker that you had to handle. What was the situation? What did you do? What was the outcome?
- Describe your (fill in the blank with job duty) experience in your current and/or past positions.

### Questions Assessing Motivation:

- Describe a situation where you failed to meet a deadline/made a mistake/a project was unsuccessful. How did you handle it?
- Tell me about a time when you thought something was feasible and others did not. What did you do that others didn't?
- What do you consider to be your most important accomplishment? How did you achieve this?

### Questions Assessing Interests:

- In your current position, what are your favorite tasks? And what are your least favorite?
- Out of all of the jobs you've had, which was your favorite? Why?
- If you could change one thing about your last job, what would it be? Do you have a plan to implement?

### Questions Assessing Strengths, Weaknesses, and Goals:

- If I was to ask your supervisor, what would they say your three strongest points are? Your weakest?
- On your last performance evaluation, which three areas were you rated highest? Lowest?
- What have you done to improve upon your weaknesses?
- Tell me about your career goals for the next two to five years. What steps have you taken toward reaching these goals?

## **Here are some examples of questions you may NEVER ask:**

### **Never ask questions on age:**

- How old are you?
- When did you graduate from high school? College?

### **Never ask questions on sex or gender:**

- Are you married?
- Do you intend to get married?
- Why are you interested in this job which is traditionally male/female?
- Are you pregnant? Do you plan on becoming pregnant?

### **Never ask questions on ethnic origin or race:**

- What's your nationality?
- Are you bilingual? (unless job related and necessary for the job)
- Where are your parents from?

### **Never ask questions on religion/political beliefs:**

- What church are you a member of?
- Can you work on Sundays? Saturdays?
- What political party are you affiliated with?
- What social clubs, societies, lodges and/or groups do you belong to?

### **Never ask questions on Disability:**

- Do you have a disability? How severe?
- Have you had any recent or past surgeries?
- What medical issues do you have?
- Have you ever filed a workers compensation claim?

### **And never ask general questions such as:**

- Do you have a babysitter?
- Are you the head of the household?
- Do you have transportation to and from work?
- Have you ever been arrested for a crime?
- What is your Veteran status?
- Do you have less than honorable military service?
- What is your weight? Height?
- Do you own a home?
- What is your rental status?
- Have you ever filed for bankruptcy?
- How many loans/Credit Cards do you have?
- Any questions pertaining to wage garnishments.

## Conducting Work Reference Checks

Work References should be checked to avoid negligent hiring. They should be conducted by the individual making the hiring decision and questions should relate to the specific position that the applicant is being considered for. Usually reference checks are conducted only on the final candidates.

***If the applicant is currently employed double check the application before contacting a current employer.***

The Texas Tech University employment application obtains written permission from applicants to check references when they certify the signature block at the end of the application; which states the following:

*I authorize Texas Tech to make reference checks relating to my employment and I also authorize all prior employers to provide full details concerning my past employment. I release all such parties from all liabilities from any damages which may result from furnishing such information. I understand that this application and all attachments are the property of Texas Tech.*

## Reference Check Tips

Use the Employment History Verification Form to check facts about the candidates previous work experience, including job titles, dates of employment, job duties, etc. Try to contact the candidate's former supervisors or colleagues that will be able to give you the most accurate information. Some employers may not provide further information regarding the candidate's performance.

If you find that you would like additional information about the candidate's performance, please consider asking the candidate for professional and personal references and use the Professional/Personal Reference Check form.

## The DO's and DON'Ts of Reference Checking

DO's	DON'Ts
Do contact at least two (2) prior employers, including the most current before making a job offer	Don't let letters of reference substitute for phone call or e-mail inquiries
Do make sure that each reference is asked the same questions.	Don't forget that email messages become part of the documentation
Do consider whether the performance evaluation given by the previous employer is in areas that may affect performance for the positions you are filling	Don't accept employment history verification references from friends, relatives or individuals not in a supervisory role other than a representative from the organization's human resource office
Do ask the applicant to provide reference information if it is missing from the application	Don't eliminate one candidate because of a poor reference and then not solicit references on the remaining candidates.

## Current TTU Employees and Reference Checking

Hiring managers may contact the Human Resources Employee Services Center to arrange a viewing of the current employee's Performance Management and Evaluation records.