

## Interviewing Tips

- Ask each of the candidates the same set of questions. Asking different questions may lead to a skewed assessment of the candidate.
- Only ask questions that relate to the job the person is being considered for.
- Do not ask any questions relating to age, family, marital status, pregnancy, gender, national origin or religion.
- Include others in the interview process to reduce or balance your biases. By involving others you seek out different perceptions and opinions about the candidate.

And, even though we shouldn't completely ignore our first impressions of a candidate, it shouldn't be our only criteria. As difficult as it may be, try to suspend your judgments. Instead test your conclusions. Reference checks are vitally important because they provide a great way to do this. Perhaps a candidate arrived late to the interview and this has you concerned that tardiness will be an issue for him on the job. Reference checking can provide you with the reassurance or confirmation that it will or won't be an issue.

**Implicit Association Test:** A final action you can take is to learn more about your biases. The implicit association test can provide insight into your potential blind spots and help you uncover your hidden biases. For more information visit: [implicit.harvard.edu](http://implicit.harvard.edu).

Increasing your self-awareness about your hidden biases can help you reduce the likelihood that you make a hiring decision based on a preconceived notion about a candidate. We may never completely rid ourselves of our unconscious biases but we can work at minimizing their negative effect.

## Additional Resources

George A. Smathers Libraries' Search and Selection Guidelines for Faculty  
[http://cms.uflib.ufl.edu/Portals/cdh/docs/Search\\_and\\_Selection\\_Guidelines\\_for\\_Faculty.pdf](http://cms.uflib.ufl.edu/Portals/cdh/docs/Search_and_Selection_Guidelines_for_Faculty.pdf)

TEAMS Recruitment  
<http://library.ufl.edu/pers/TEAMS.htm>

UF Human Resource Services  
<http://hr.ufl.edu/manager-resources/recruitment-staffing/>

## References

Banaji, Mahzarin R., Bazerman Max H., Chugh, Dolly. 2003. How Unethical Are You? In *On Managing Yourself*, 157-173. Boston, MA: Harvard Business Review Press.

Otting, Laura G. "Put substance before style during hiring interviews", taken from [www.shrm.org/publications/managingSMART/spring04/documents/story1.doc](http://www.shrm.org/publications/managingSMART/spring04/documents/story1.doc)

<http://hr.ufl.edu/learn-grow/training-organizational-development/>

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# IDENTIFYING & AVOIDING INTERVIEW BIASES

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Most of us consider ourselves to be objective fair-minded individuals. But the truth is we are all influenced by our unconscious biases.

**Unconscious biases** come from direct experiences we've had with people, events, and situations as well as through indirect experiences learned through stories, books, media and culture.

These **hidden biases** can impact us in a variety of ways, especially when it comes to interviewing and hiring. At times as interviewers we will make subtle assumptions about a candidate and it's these subtleties that may influence us, either positively or negatively. And, because of our biases we may make some inappropriate or even bad selection choices.

Research has shown that many hiring decisions are made within the first five to ten minutes of an interview. These decisions are not made on whether or not the person is qualified or capable of performing the job but rather on first impressions. Referred to as social categorization, we routinely and quickly sort people into groups. The problem with this is that the categories we use to sort people are not necessarily accurate, logical or legal.

Four common biases that may occur in an interview include:

1. **Stereotyping**. This is forming an opinion about how people of a given race, gender, religion or other characteristics will think, act or respond.

For example: Women with children will miss a lot of work. A veteran won't be able to adjust to working in an office. A male candidate will make a better leader than a female candidate.

2. **Halo/pitchfork effect**. The **halo** effect occurs when one positive characteristic or strong point influences the entire interview. For instance, a candidate has a degree from a prestigious university so we think she must be highly competent and is looked upon favorably. The opposite of this is known as the **pitchfork** effect, when one negative characteristic or point overshadows the interview. For example, a candidate answers the first two questions of the interview poorly which leads us to believe he is not qualified for the job.
3. **Nonverbal bias** occurs when a positive or negative evaluation is made of someone based on their body language or personal appearance. Examples include hair length, tattoos, weight, the way someone speaks, mannerisms, or how a candidate is dressed.
4. **"Like me" syndrome**. This occurs when we interview a candidate with a similar personality, style, interests, experience, educational background or area of research, and as a result we may feel they are the best candidate and base our decision on personal characteristics rather than job related criteria.

To minimize our hidden biases we should conduct a structured search by planning in advance and understanding the responsibilities of the position we are recruiting for, including:

- The technical skills or academic credentials desired in a candidate.
- The qualities, skills, behaviors or experiences the ideal candidate should possess.

- The type of candidate that fits in our workplace culture.

Interview questions should be developed to assess whether the candidate possesses the competencies required and preferred.

**Behavioral based interviewing** will help you avoid making selections based on assumptions or intuitions or solely on credentials. Behavioral based interviewing and reference questions rest on the premise that one of the best predictors of a candidate's future job performance is their past job behavior. Examples of behavioral based and reference questions:

- "Using examples from your own experience, please tell us how you deal with and create solutions to respond to difficult work related issues."
- "The position requires considerable collaborative efforts. In your experience, and using specific examples, please evaluate the candidate's ability to work in a collaborative environment."

By gaining insight into not only the candidate's credentials and knowledge, but also their past experiences, you'll develop a more reliable perspective of how that individual will perform in the future.

