



Tips for Avoiding Unconscious Bias in Interviewing

1) Multiple People Interview Candidates

Each interviewer should provide a unique perspective on the ideal candidate. All organizations are encouraged to involve cadets, faculty, and staff in their selection process. Engage these individuals in crafting standardized questions, so there isn't a temptation to insert new questions for some, but not all candidates.

2) Use Standardized Questions

As the individual or team preparing to interview cadets, put time into developing a standard list of questions that will be addressed to all candidates. This is one way to ensure consistency in questions and minimize the possibility of ruling out a candidate because they didn't discuss a crucial skill addressed by another candidate.

3) Take Notes in the Interview

Candidates understand their answers are being evaluated and it's appropriate to take notes – while being attentive to their answers – with them present. If you take notes after the interview and don't recall details, your memory can sometimes provide false impressions, tending towards some form of bias, whether positive or negative. Create a standardized sheet with the interview questions and spaces for you to take notes. This will provide specificity to discussion when reviewing each candidate's interview performance.

4) Grade Candidates on a Rubric

After you have concluded your interview and taken notes, rate each candidate's skill on a standard rubric that addresses essential skills for the role. In an ideal world, we eliminate subjective criteria from the selection process, but that's never fully possible; a standardized rubric reinforces that all interviewers are looking for similar qualifications. Review the job description and build a rubric that emphasizes skills and abilities, rather than individual characteristics.

5) Reduce Idle Conversation in Interview

This doesn't mean to be impersonal; welcome the interviewee and thank them for their time, but then turn to your questions. As a practical matter, you don't have much time with each candidate. As a matter of equity, personal conversation leads to questions about what you share in common or how your experiences in the world have been different, which in turn can lead to bias or stereotypes.

6) Don't Rely on "Fit" or Your "Gut"

It is not uncommon for people to refer to their gut instinct or how someone would "fit" in their organization. This speaks to what you share in common or how they are similar to you. It is natural to share an affinity for someone with whom you have a shared identity, but it is not a qualifying factor for leadership selection. The diversity of experiences offered by candidates from different backgrounds and identities strengthen organizations and should not be dismissed or identified as disqualifying, consciously or unconsciously.