



Assessment methods

The following table lists a variety of methods that can help you to assess and select new employees.

Method	How it works	Works best
Written application (Use in conjunction with other methods for best effect.)	<p>Gives you an understanding of what a person has done in the past, in written form.</p> <p>Can be good if you need an in-depth look at what the candidate has done in the past and if writing skills are important for the role, assuming the applicant wrote the application.</p> <p>Don't be tied to this method as it can be misleading and time consuming.</p>	<p>When you have time to read applications.</p> <p>When you need to compare a number of candidates.</p> <p>When you would like to keep details on file for next time.</p> <p>When there is a need to assess written communication for the job.</p>
Informal chat (Use in conjunction with other methods for best effect.)	<p>Allows you to talk to the person to get to know them.</p> <p>Can be less daunting than formal methods.</p> <p>Not suitable when you need to compare multiple candidates.</p> <p>Can be a very unreliable method.</p> <p>Not recommended unless part of a wider assessment process.</p>	<p>When recruiting for upper-level jobs.</p> <p>When used in conjunction with other methods such as a structured interview or practical demonstration.</p> <p>When you need to assess for skills other than practical competence such as management.</p>
Structured interview (Recommended over informal chats or unstructured interviews.)	<p>An interview where the questions or areas for questioning are pre-determined in line with the selection criteria. The same questions are put to all candidates. Consider giving the questions to all candidates a short time prior to the interview.</p> <p>This type of interview is a more reliable way to rate and compare interviewees as they all have the opportunity to answer the same questions.</p>	<p>When you need to compare several candidates.</p>



Method	How it works	Works best
Work sample test (Use in conjunction with other methods for best effect.)	This tests the ability of the applicant to do an actual task required for the job, for example answering a phone, pouring a beer or changing a tyre. Work tests can be really useful if the job is task orientated and the candidate needs to have a certain level of proficiency from day one.	If you need to hire someone with certain skills. Can be used to determine how much training or support a candidate will need if selected. Best avoided where the job has other dimensions such as high-level decision making or managerial aspects.
Written test	Multiple choice, true/false, short answer.	Where you need to determine a level of knowledge or understanding of certain aspects of the job. Useful where a level of language and literacy is a prime concern. Be careful not to eliminate people for reasons not related to the job.
Presentation	Candidates prepare a presentation on a set topic for an interview panel.	When public speaking or presentations are part of the job, such as a salesperson or trainer.
Examples of previous work	If it's relevant to the position, an applicant may be asked to bring in a sample of their work. For example, graphic artists or photographers may provide a portfolio of work. Furniture makers may provide photos or actual pieces of work for consideration.	Where practical skill needs to be demonstrated in a tangible format.



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Reference checks	<p>Always conduct reference checks (verbal as well as written) and check qualifications to ensure authenticity.</p> <p>Preferably, ask to see the original certificates.</p> <p>Ask for the names and numbers of people who will confirm the candidate's claims.</p> <p>Ask the referee for concrete evidence, not just opinions. Give an example of what the job entails and ask him or her to recall a time when the applicant undertook similar tasks.</p> <p>Like any question asked of the candidate, questions to referees should relate only to the candidate's ability to do the job. Do not ask personal questions.</p>	<p>When attempting to decide between closely rated candidates.</p>



Interviews

If you choose to use the interview method you may like to consider two styles of questioning: behavioural-style and situational-style questions.

Questioning to aid reliability of interviews		
Behavioural-style questions	<p>Designed to give you examples of the candidate's behaviour as opposed to just their knowledge or opinions.</p> <p>These questions allow you to describe situations, or the type of work involved in the job, and allows candidates to provide examples of how they have approached similar situations or work.</p> <p>Example: 'This job requires someone to prioritise varied tasks during the day. Tell me how you have managed competing priorities in your previous roles'.</p>	<p>When you need to determine how the candidate may have behaved in the past, and if that behaviour would suit your business.</p>
Situational-style questions	<p>A hypothetical situation based on challenging job related occurrences is presented to the candidate and he or she is asked to describe how they would handle it. Examples: "Tell me how you would deal with an angry customer". "Describe how you might manage deliveries at peak delivery times".</p>	<p>Where the applicant may not have enough work experience to be able to draw on past experiences, for example school leavers or graduates. Also good for internal applicants applying for a job different from their current position.</p>