

- Interviewers place weight on superficial background characteristics such as names and the presence of accents. One study found that when responding to actual employment ads in Boston and Chicago, fictitious applicants with the first names of Allison and Brad were twice as likely to receive interview invitations than individuals with the first names of Kenya and Hakim, even though the résumés were otherwise identical.
- Evaluations from unstructured interviews are particularly affected by applicant impression management and nonverbal behavior.
- Similarity effects—where applicants who are similar to the interviewer with respect to race, gender, or other characteristics receive higher ratings—also exist.
- Poor recall by interviewers often plagues unstructured interviews. One study demonstrated this by giving managers an exam based on factual information after watching a 20-minute videotaped interview. Some managers got all 20 questions correct, but the average manager got only half right.

Thus, the unstructured interview is not very valid, and research has identified the reasons why. So why is it so prevalent? Individuals often believe that they are better at “people-reading” than they actually are, and thus are unaware of the biases that distort evaluations during unstructured interviews. Interviewers also are often not trained. In addition, the unstructured interview requires little advance preparation or much work afterward—a conversation with an applicant takes place and an evaluation is made. Organizations can overcome these limitations by using a structured interview, which attempts to eliminate the biases inherent in unstructured formats by standardizing the process.

Characteristics of Structured Interviews

There are numerous hallmarks of structured interviews. Some of the more prominent characteristics are the following: (1) questions are based on job analysis, (2) the same questions are asked of each candidate, (3) the response to each question is numerically evaluated, (4) detailed anchored rating scales are used to score each response, and (5) detailed notes are taken, particularly focusing on interviewees’ behaviors.¹⁰⁹

There are two principal types of structured interviews: situational and experience based. Situational interviews assess an applicant’s ability to project what his or her behavior would be in future hypothetical situations.¹¹⁰ The assumption behind the use of the situational interview is that the goals or intentions individuals set for themselves are good predictors of what they will do in the future.

Experience-based or job-related interviews assess past behaviors that are linked to the prospective job. The assumption behind the use of experience-based interviews is the same as that for the use of biodata: past behavior is a good predictor of future behavior. It is assumed that applicants who are likely to succeed have demonstrated success with past job experiences similar to the experiences they