



Structured Interview: Food Service Front-of-House

Background

A Structured Interview provides a method of standardizing the interview process. The interviewees are assessed on common skills, called competencies, necessary to perform Front-of-House Food Service roles: host/hostess, server assistant, and server. A consistent process ensures there is no bias during the interview process, and candidates are compared on the same competencies enabling the identification of the best candidates for the position. Included in this guide is the competency model WLA developed for Front-of-House Food Service Roles. Then a description of the interview content and tips for the interview process are provided. For the best results we recommend following the process and tips below.

The interview questions included are designed to measure specific competencies deemed essential for performance to a specific job family. Because applicants may have differing levels of experience, there are options for applicants to respond to prompts regarding past behaviors or ***imagined scenarios***. Some questions to get to know the applicants are included as well.

Main Points

- **Consistency** across interviews is key. Asking each candidate the same questions promotes fairness and prevents bias from skewing interview results.
- The **competencies** measured by these interview questions are prepared specifically for the front of house full-service food service roles.
- **Preparation** for the interview process supports a good interviewing experience

Front of House Food Service

Performance Competencies

Communication

Effectively conveys ideas and information to others.

Listening

Effectively understands and attends to communication from others.

People Reading

Ability to identify the needs and feelings of others.

Position Knowledge

Possesses the information and procedural knowledge needed to complete the role well.



Hospitality

Shows genuine concern for the well-being of others.

Problem Anticipation

Effectively anticipates and recognizes problems when they arise.

Teamwork

Listens to and respects others; works collaboratively in a team environment to reach goals.

The Interview Process

Before

Review: Get familiar with the guide and structure of the interview.

Select Questions: Choose a question(s) to use for each competency. Keep in mind their level of experience.

Know what to expect: Take note of the follow up questions and the targeted responses for each question.

Writing Utensils: Ensure you have materials to write notes in the allotted spaces

During

Welcome and inform: Welcome the candidate and inform them that you will be conducting a structured interview. **Ask**

questions and use follow-ups if needed: Ask the selected questions and use follow-up prompts if a candidate does not provide adequate answers. **Indicate question:** Use the bolded parts to indicate if you are asking about an imagined scenario or past behavior.

Assign a score: Based on the answers provided, use the Behaviorally Anchored Rating Scales (BARS) ratings provided to assign a score that best fits their response.

Watch the time: Ensure you have enough time to cover all the competencies and necessary follow-ups.

After

Assess structure: Note any differences in questions that were used (i.e., past behavior or imagined scenario).

Combine scores: Sum the scores for all the competencies to create a final score.

Review candidates: Consider candidates with highest averages for role/further interviews, taking any comments into account.

Follow-up

During the interview, you may want to ask for further information from the applicants. Below are three follow-up questions you may want to ask with their corresponding purposes. Examples of how these questions can be used are also provided.

- **THOUGHT PROCESS:** What was/is the rationale for your actions?

Example: When a candidate shares the process they used to wait tables in a previous position/or their hypothetical process, you may ask this follow-up question to assess their reasoning in their behavior or thinking.

- **OUTCOMES:** What was/would be the result of your actions? What did you/do you think you would learn?

Example: When a candidate describes how they would handle a difficult situation, asking this follow-up can help you understand how they anticipate the outcomes of their actions. Alternatively, you can ask this question to understand what the employee hopes to learn in the position.

- **IMPLEMENTATION:** How did/would you use the knowledge you gained from this in other situations?

Example: After a candidate shares a formative experience in their previous work or life history, asking this question can help assess the degree to which they are able to adapt and implement change in their future behavior.



Interviewer: _____
Candidate: _____
Date: _____

Introduction

These questions are intended simply for getting to know the applicant. The recommended amount would be 2 questions from this section.

Structured Questions

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. What made you want to apply for this job?
3. What previous work experience do you have that you think prepares you well for this position?
4. Where do you see yourself in the next 5 years?
5. What qualities would you look for if you were hiring an applicant for this position?



Interviewer: _____
Candidate: _____
Date: _____

Competency: Position Knowledge

Possesses the information and procedural knowledge needed to complete the role well.

Structured Questions

Describe the typical steps of service that you have performed in the past/think you would perform to serve guests.

Describe the most important skills or experiences that you have found to be/think would be necessary to performing well as a server, host, bartender, service assistant, or cashier.

Behavior Rating Scale

<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Not Satisfactory Does not mention key steps or misses one of the key steps for their role as a host/hostess, server assistant, or server	Below Average	Average Mentions all the basic necessary components but does not go above and beyond in their duties or responsibilities as a host/hostess, server assistant, or server.	Above Average	Excellent Describes each and every duty or responsibility that they could complete in their role as a host/hostess, server assistant, or server. Includes additional duties or responsibilities that are not required but improve the experience of the guests.



Interviewer: _____
Candidate: _____
Date: _____

Competency: People Reading

Ability to identify the needs and feelings of others.

Structured Questions

Sometimes guests may feel a certain way about their food or service without explicitly stating it. How have you gauged/would you gauge whether a guest was truly satisfied or not?

In this industry, you may need to identify a guest's needs before they ask. How have you recognized/would you anticipate a guest's needs without interrupting their experience?

Behavior Rating Scale

<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Not Satisfactory Only mentions one tell or less when describing how they read a table or guest. Tell is obvious such as the content of what a guest says. Does not go into less obvious tells such as tone of voice. Cannot anticipate guest needs without being told.	Below Average	Average Mentions 2 of the basic tells when reading a table or guest such as facial expression and tone of voice or content of what guest says. Sometimes picks up on less obvious tells. Typically able to anticipate guest needs when they are obvious.	Above Average	Excellent Describes in depth how they would look at facial expressions and body language. Takes note of tone of voice in addition to the content. Monitors how guest is engaging with their meal and picks up on less obvious tells. Anticipates guest needs in advance.

[DOWNLOAD THE FULL VERSION HERE](#)