# Interviewing a candidate using an interpreter

Job interviews are a critical part of recruitment in business, and the role of the interviewer in ensuring a fair and smooth process for all involved shouldn’t be underestimated.

If an applicant has notified you they’ll require a sign language interpreter at interview you may be unsure of what exactly their role will be and how to include them.

Our top tips have you covered! Here’s how to prepare before, and what to expect during the interview so that your candidate has the opportunity to shine, knowing they’re in a workplace that’s committed to inclusion.

## Before the interview

Ask the candidate if they have a preferred interpreting service and whether there’s a particular interpreter they like to work with. Most services will request the name of the candidate so that if they have a preferred interpreter on record, they can match them to the booking.

## Working together

Where possible, have a chat with the interpreter before the interview about how you can best work with their individual style. For example, some interpreters prefer people to speak one sentence at a time while others favour paragraphs. You can also use this time to fill them in on any jargon, names or acronyms that may be used in the interview, and provide them with a copy of the questions you’ll be asking.

## First impressions count

It’s not only the candidate who needs to be aware of first impressions. Make sure your receptionist and security staff know you’re expecting a visitor who is deaf or has hearing loss and give them some brief guidelines on how to welcome them. They should greet both the candidate and the interpreter with natural eye contact as they would any other guests.

## Get the room right

Make sure the interview room is well lit. Obviously candidates need to be able to see the interpreter but they may also be lip reading so they need to be able to see your faces clearly too. Have an extra seat for the interpreter and position it next to you/the panel so the candidate has a view of all of you.

## Direct questions to the candidate, not the interpreter

Probably the most important rule is to remember: you’re interviewing the candidate, not the interpreter. Always direct your questions at them and maintain natural eye contact, like you would with any candidate. Of course, they need to focus when the interpreter is signing on your behalf but see this as a normal part of your conversation.

## Panels

If you’re interviewing as a panel, make it a rule that you only speak one at a time. It’s impossible to interpret multiple people speaking at once. In a panel situation it’s also good idea to gesture towards the person asking the next question so the candidate knows who to look at.

## Technical jargon

Be aware that industry terms can get lost in translation, particularly if you haven’t had the opportunity to brief the interpreter beforehand. If what the candidate is speaking back to you suggests they don’t understand, make sure you ask for clarification before assuming they don’t know.

## Remember

The interpreter is there simply to interpret what is being said during the interview. It’s inappropriate to ask for their opinion on a candidate’s suitability for the job or to ask them to keep any of what is being said from the candidate.

## Relax

Having a good interpreter present can make for a smooth process for everyone, and ensure you get the best out of the interview of your potential new employee. Don’t forget to thank them at the end.

Guidelines. Where extra technical support is needed, there are many specialist accessibility consultancies in Australia that can provide expert advice.