



# Beat the Buzzer Best Practices

So, you've successfully built an applicant pool with a wide range of ages and experiences. Now, the challenge is to screen applicants using best practices that help you select the most highly qualified candidates to interview-- regardless of their age.

How many of these best practices are you already using? Which could you start using?

01. **I should remember to check the results of our automated resume screening tools to see if they are filtering out groups of candidates.**

Bias can be amplified by automated screening tools, so it is important that HR periodically looks for patterns in who is screened out.

02. **When choosing keywords for automated resume screening, we should include similar terms that have been common in the past 15 years.**

Keywords have an outsized impact in who is selected to advance; you don't want to lose out on a great candidate.

03. **I should ask to see the top 10 ranked candidates from each decade of age range to find more candidates who are highly qualified.**

This is a great way to ensure you are seeing a wide range of highly qualified candidates of all ages.

04. **We should not make assumptions about a person's age based on their method of communication.**

It is valuable to consider candidates who proactively communicate, regardless of method.

05. **Research shows that age bias is likely to start as soon as I can estimate a candidate's age.**

It's important to avoid knowing the age of your candidates for as long as possible because ageism is often unconscious.

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06. **Social media is not a great place to look up candidates to ensure they'll be a good fit.**  
Social media profiles can trigger bias of all types, including ageism.
07. **It's not a waste of time to interview candidates who seem overqualified.**  
These candidates often have well-considered reasons for valuing the role.
08. **I should review applicants only once they are "blinded" to remove any information about age.**  
Many applicant tracking systems can do this automatically.
09. **I can ask my Human Resources team to run a report about the age breakdown of all applicants compared to the age breakdown of the top 10% of auto-ranked candidates.**  
Checking this data periodically can help you determine if a disproportionate number of any age group is being consistently auto-ranked lower than other groups.
10. **I should not select only applicants who have already proven they can do this job.**  
Doing this can disadvantage younger candidates who may excel in the role and successfully learn as they go.
11. **When screening candidates, I can think about whether I'm worried about managing someone older than I am.**  
Being aware of our own anxieties can help us make the best hire regardless of our relative ages.
12. **I should be highly selective with what are truly "required" criteria when screening candidates.**  
The "required" criteria may disadvantage both the youngest and oldest candidates, so try to shift criteria from "required" to "preferred" when possible.
13. **I should not consider an employment gap as a red flag and subsequently pass on that candidate.**  
Ask the candidate about the pause in their employment, which can exist for many reasons such as breaks for caregiving or education.
14. **I should not use video-on virtual interviews to screen candidates.**  
To delay triggering age bias by seeing the candidate in person, conduct your screening interviews with the video off.

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15. **I can screen out resumes with grammar, formatting or spelling errors.**

These elements often show the level of attention to detail the candidate will extend to their work.

16. **Skills assessments can be a valuable part of my screening strategy, but they can create legal risk if they screen out specific candidate groups.**

Skills assessments that specifically assess the skills defined as critical to succeed in the role can be very valuable. However, watch out for problematic patterns in who is screened out.

17. **Personality assessments can create significant legal risk when used to screen candidates.**

Because it is hard to make a case that personality traits are relevant for success in a role, these tools can create significant legal risk if they consistently screen out similar candidates.

18. **A referral from another employee should not automatically advance the candidate to the next round.**

Referred candidates should be held to the same screening criteria as all others, especially because referrals can exacerbate affinity bias.