Step 2: Screening

Assess how well candidates match the role requirements

- **Test the output of any automated resume screening and ranking tools. Do they advance an age-representative proportion of your applicant pool? If not, check the settings and filters and adjust them as needed.**

  I use this best practice: ☐ **Consistently** ☐ **Sometimes** ☐ **Not Yet**

  1. When determining keywords for automated resume screening, include terminologies that may have been common in the past 15 years, rather than only those that are the current workplace jargon for the core skill that will enable success in the role.

  2. If software or AI tools are used to screen or rank applicants, ask to see a report that shows the age distribution of all applicants compared to the age distribution of the candidates it recommends or ranks highly. If these are not similar, ask to see the top 10 applicants from each decade of age range in order to broaden the pool you are considering. These tools are helpful but can inadvertently encode age bias — or explicitly screen out candidates with more experience than the job description requires.

Communicate with all applicants in a clear, timely manner

- **Reach out to all candidates with updates on their status at each step of the hiring process, and provide a way to reach a team member if they have questions.**

  I use this best practice: ☐ **Consistently** ☐ **Sometimes** ☐ **Not Yet**

  1. Every candidate, but especially those from older generations, values prompt, clear communication about their application, and after each interaction they have with your organization or team. Older candidates in particular often appreciate specific feedback, which they can use to improve their continued candidacy or to allay concerns that they are being passed over because of their age.

  2. Older candidates are often especially comfortable with phone calls and are likely to be quickly responsive via email — so be sure to include an email that accepts replies.

Check qualifications of candidates who have applied

- **Set your hiring team up to make great decisions by broadening whom you invite to interview, and postponing triggers of unconscious bias for as late in the process as possible.**

I use this best practice: ☐ **Consistently** ☐ **Sometimes** ☐ **Not Yet**

1. **Insist on a group of qualified candidates** from a broad range of experiences and perspectives. Whether you are working with recruiters or doing the hiring yourself, make it clear from the outset that you want true diversity. Research shows that the odds of hiring a woman are 79 times as great if at least two women are in the finalist pool, while the odds of hiring a nonwhite candidate are 194 times as great with at least two finalist minority applicants.[30] This dynamic is also in play for older candidates.

2. **Use technology** to anonymize candidates for as long as possible. Research shows age bias starts as soon as the employer becomes aware of the candidate's age. It suggests that using online applications rather than in-person applications, and an online assessment of ability to meet specific job requirements that provides a numerical score to select interviewees, can delay the start of age bias.30 Software programs can help "blind" the resumes before you review them, so you won't have indicators of age, race or gender.[31] These technologies can be valuable in your selection of candidates to invite for interviews. "Batching" resumes using best practices can result in more diverse hires without any drop in candidate quality.[33]

3.**Resist the urge to look up candidates** on social media, which can trigger many different unconscious biases — wait and do that scan only for your top candidate after your final candidate interviews and before you make an offer if you really need to as part of their background check.[34]

4. **Interview candidates who may seem overqualified.** You can ask up front why they want the role, and what they hope to learn in the role. Candidates who appear "overqualified" are often older candidates. They can bring a "bonus" set of expertise (both functional and relational) that creates immense value for your whole team. They likely have personal reasons that make the role exciting — a chance to apply their expertise in a new industry, to work in a high-growth organization, to swap a long commute for a shorter one, or to work in a better culture. Don't assume — ask!

30 https://hbr.org/2019/11/how-the-best-bosses-interrupt-bias-on-their-teams
31 https://www.forbes.com/sites/patriciagbarnes/2020/01/06/age-discrimination-starts-when-an-employer-becomes-aware-of-an-older-workers-age/?sh=37b110d519ce 32 https://hbr.org/2017/06/7-practical-ways-to-reduce-bias-in-your-hiring-process
33 https://hbr.org/2020/07/research-a-method-for-overcoming-implicit-bias-when-considering-job-candidates
34 https://www.shrm.org/topics-tools/news/hr-magazine/hiring-age-ageism

Conduct candidate assessments

■ Use the results of candidate assessments carefully.

I use this best practice: ☐ **Consistently** ☐ **Sometimes** ☐ **Not Yet**

1. **If your organization uses aptitude or personality testing in screening applicants,** remember that these tools can inadvertently screen out highly qualified older candidates if they focus on skills that are perceived to be more common among younger workers, or assess skills that are not needed to succeed in the role.[35]

2. **To ensure you aren't missing out on highly qualified candidates in your interview pool,** you can ask to see the top 10 candidates from each age bracket and consider broadening your selection considerations. Remember that assessments can create legal risk for employers.[36]

35 https://xobin.com/blog/pre-employment-assessment-test-eeoc-compliance/#:~:text=3.,the%20role%20specifically%20requires%20it.
36 https://www.shrm.org/topics-tools/news/talent-acquisition/hiring-assessments-get-trouble