



Entry-Level Firefighter Structured Oral Assessment

Candidate Orientation Guide

The Structured Oral Assessment

The oral assessment consists of a series of questions that will assess the skills and abilities necessary to perform the job of a firefighter in Tulsa. These questions can range from hypothetical scenarios to specific questions about how you tend to deal with situations. Your answers will be scored by a panel of assessors.

During the oral interview, a panel member will read a question to you. You will be provided with a copy of each question before it is read to you. You may read along silently while the question is presented. You may refer to your copy of the question while providing your response. You will also be allowed to make notes and organize your response prior to responding.

You will be allowed five minutes to answer each question that is posed. If you have completed your response before the panel indicates that your time is up for that question, you can verbally announce that you are finished with that question. On the other hand, if you have not completed your response in the allotted time, the panel will tell you that your time is up. At that time you will be presented with the next question. This format will continue until you have responded to all of the interview questions. After you have completed all interview questions and left the room, the panel will discuss your performance and provide a rating for each question.

The Assessors

As stated previously, your performance during the assessment process will be evaluated by a panel of assessors, who all will be acquainted with the essential duties, skills and abilities of firefighters in the Tulsa Fire Department. Assessors have been thoroughly trained before participating in the assessment. You can therefore be confident that these assessors will be fair and competent judges of your behavior and your abilities.

Areas of Measurement

The oral assessment is designed to assess the most critical, job-related skills and abilities. Some of the dimensions that may be assessed in the oral assessment include the following: interpersonal skills, teamwork, judgment, problem-solving, community orientation, stress tolerance and flexibility. Though some questions will require you to respond to hypothetical scenarios, at no time will you be assessed on your knowledge of department procedures, firefighting tactics or any other specific job knowledge.

Preparation

Here are a few steps you can take to prepare for the structured oral assessment:

- Practice listening to questions with multiple parts, taking a few notes about the questions being asked and then answering all parts of the questions.
- Make an audio and/or video tape of your practice session or watch yourself practice in a mirror. Identify any distracting mannerisms that you may have and try to correct them.
- Conversely, you might conduct an interview session with a study partner. Each individual can prepare questions, and you can practice by answering your partner's questions.

Suggestions for Responding to the Oral Interview Questions

- After listening to the interview question, take some time to formulate an organized response. Do not be afraid to pause for a period of time to carefully consider your answer and to organize it in a way that is meaningful and will ultimately make sense to those individuals who are rating your response. The more organized and well thought out your answers, the more favorably they will be viewed by assessors. You will be provided with paper and a pen if you want to write down your thoughts to better organize them.

- Answer the question as it is asked. It is common for interview candidates to answer a question other than the one posed. Interviews are stressful and it is not uncommon for a candidate to misunderstand or misinterpret the question and then provide an answer that is completely off-base. Be sure to listen carefully to the question and provide an answer for that specific question. Do not go outside the bounds of the question or ramble on about unrelated issues.
- Questions are provided on paper for each candidate. Review the question to ensure you have answered all parts of the question.
- Provide a complete response to each question. It is common for a candidate to answer a question and repeat the same answer over and over. Offer an answer that is complete but do not reiterate your response multiple times. Keep your answer concise but ensure that you provide a comprehensive response to the question that is posed.
- Ensure that you answer each question fully within the time limit.
- Speak clearly. Oral communication skills are obviously paramount in an oral interview. Oral communication is usually rated separately from your answers to the questions in the interview. Thus, if you communicate poorly, the assessors will not penalize you on your answers to each question. That said, the rating of oral communication and presentation is an important element of the oral assessment. Convey a professional demeanor by speaking clearly and demonstrating good posture and appearance. Good communication skills will only accentuate your response to a question.
- Provide an honest answer to each question and be yourself throughout the assessment.

Assessment-Day Instructions and Tips

The following are instructions and advice that will help you on the day of the assessment :

- Be on time for the SOA. Allow yourself plenty of time to get to the site as this will give you one less thing to worry about that day.
- Do not bring **personal** cellular phones or paging devices.
- Bring a photo identification.
- Dispose of any gum, candy or mints. You do not want this to interfere with your speech or cause an unnecessary distraction.

- Dress and prepare appropriately for this professional job interview.
- It is natural to be nervous. Be sure to keep a positive attitude and an open mind as you participate in the assessment so that the assessors can see you perform to the best of your ability.

Security Issues

You will be competing with a number of other candidates for a job as an entry-level firefighter. Any information you divulge about the structure of the assessment, specific questions or otherwise will provide another candidate with an unfair advantage. Keep the content and structure of the oral assessment confidential. By participating in this process, you agree not to divulge information about the nature of the questions or the manner in which they are administered.