

Candidate Labor Standard

Ten practical boundaries for fair hiring exercises and paid candidate work.

A fair hiring process begins with the evidence a candidate already has. It asks for the smallest new test it needs and pays whenever the company could use the work.

01 Read what the candidate has already supplied.

Review relevant work, portfolio samples, earlier answers, and references before asking for something new.

02 Name the skill you still need to see. Tie the exercise to one stated requirement of the job.

03 Use the smallest fair test. A follow-up question, discussion of prior work, or reference may answer the question without another assignment.

04 Use a fictional or retired problem for unpaid work.

The company should not need the answer for current work. Remove customer data and confidential information from an old problem.

05 Keep unpaid work to 45 to 60 minutes. This is a practical guideline, not a legal threshold. It limits the task, not the time allowed for an accommodation. Pay when a sound exercise needs more work.

06 Explain the rules before the candidate begins. State how long it should take and what the candidate must submit. Name the allowed tools and the reviewer. Explain the scoring method and the accommodation route. Say what happens to the answer afterward.

07 Pay for work the company could use. A current audit, plan, design, code contribution, workshop, or brainstorming session is a paid project when the company could use the result.

08 Do not use unsolicited work without an agreement.

The company may decline work a candidate created without being asked. If it wants to use any part, agree on payment and permission in writing first.

09 Put ownership and permitted use in writing. State the payment, confidentiality terms, ownership, and any permission to reuse the work before the work begins.

10 Treat a paid trial as work. Put the maximum hours and fee in writing. State the payment date. Record the allowed use and ownership. Name the employer and any benefits. State how and when the permanent-job decision will be made.

These are practical boundaries for fair treatment, not a claim that every unpaid exercise violates the law. Legal duties depend on where the work occurs and the facts of the relationship.

If you receive an assignment, ask:

Save the instructions and the answers you receive. Keep the version you submit.

01 Which requirement of the job is this exercise meant to assess?

02 How much time does the employer expect you to spend?

03 Who will review the work? How will they judge it?

04 Does it concern current or planned company work, and what may the employer do with the answer afterward?

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