

Skills assessment request email template

Ask a candidate to complete a skills test or work sample, with a clear scope, deadline, and purpose.

Updated October 15, 2026. Written and reviewed by the HRTally Research Team.

When to use this template

Use this when a candidate is moving to a stage that includes a skills test, a work sample, a writing exercise, or a take-home project. Assessments are useful when they mirror real work, and frustrating when they feel like free consulting or an endless hoop. The email sets the tone for which one it feels like.

Explain what you are asking for, how long it should take, how it will be used, and when it is due. Be honest about the time. If you say an hour and it takes a full evening, the candidate notices, and so do the people they tell. Our guide to AI in recruiting covers assessments that use automated scoring.

Version 1: Take-home work sample

SUBJECT Next step for the [Job title] role: a short exercise

Hi [Candidate first name],

Thank you for your time with [Interviewer name] on [Day]. We would like to move you to the next stage, which is a short work sample.

What we are asking: [One or two sentences describing the task].

Time needed: about [Number] hours. Please don't spend more than that. We are looking at your approach, not polish.

Due: [Day, Date] at [Time] [Time zone]. If that deadline doesn't work, tell me and we will find one that does.

How we use it: [Interviewer names] will review it, and you will walk us through your thinking in the next interview.

The materials are attached [or at this link]. If you need an accommodation, or if anything is unclear, reply here.

[Recruiter name]
[Title], [Company]

Version 2: Online skills test

SUBJECT Your [Company] skills assessment for [Job title]

Hi [Candidate first name],

The next step for the [Job title] role is an online assessment covering [Skills, such as data entry speed or Excel basics].

Link: [Assessment link]

Time: about [Number] minutes, in one sitting

Complete by: [Date]

You can take it on a computer at any time before the deadline. [Note whether a webcam, browser, or quiet room is needed.]

If you need extra time or another accommodation because of a disability, reply to this email before you start and we will arrange it.

[Recruiter name]

[Company]

Subject lines to try

- Next step for the [Job title] role: a short exercise
- Your [Company] skills assessment
- [Candidate first name], here is your work sample
- Assessment for [Job title]: due [Date]
- One more step before your final interview

How to personalize it

- Give a realistic time estimate and tell the candidate to stop when they reach it.
- Explain how the work will be used in the next round.
- For longer projects, consider paying candidates for their time. Some employers do, and candidates remember it.
- Say who will review the work so the candidate knows their effort reaches a real person.

Mistakes to avoid

- Assigning real client work or anything you might use commercially.
- Setting a deadline over a holiday weekend without asking.

- Giving no feedback at all after a multi-hour exercise.
- Using a test that hasn't been checked for adverse impact on protected groups.

Legal and compliance notes

Tests used in hiring must be job related and consistent with business necessity if they screen out a protected group at a higher rate, under Title VII and the Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures. Offer accommodations under the ADA, such as extra time or a screen reader. If an AI tool scores the assessment and you hire in New York City, Local Law 144 requires a bias audit and advance notice to candidates. Illinois and Colorado have also passed laws on AI in employment decisions, so check what applies before you deploy one.

When to send it

Send it within a day of the interview that precedes it, while the role is fresh in the candidate's mind. Give at least three to five days for take-home work, and include a weekend only if the candidate agrees.

Before you hit send

- The job title, pay range, and dates match what is in your applicant tracking system.
- Every placeholder in brackets has been replaced or deleted.
- Candidates who will be interviewed or assessed are told how to request an accommodation.
- Nothing in the message comments on age, family, health, or other protected characteristics.
- A real person is named as the contact, with a reply address someone checks.

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