

The hiring plan for one engineering role

Six steps in the order a small team runs them. Fill in the brackets before the job ad goes out, and the loop follows from page 1.

1. The bar for the level

Role: [title] · **Level:** [level] · **Manager:** [name]

Owns alone: [what this person decides without asking]

Still escalates: [what they bring to someone else]

CRITERION	STRONG	MIXED	WEAK	ROUND
[1]				
[2]				
[3]				
[4]				
[5, optional]				

Every criterion has exactly one round that measures it.

2. The ad and the range

- **The problem:** [what the team is building, in one sentence]
- **The first 3 months:** [the first project, by name]
- **The team:** [size, who they report to]
- **The range:** [published salary range]
- **Referrals:** ask each engineer for 2 names. Referred candidates take the same loop.

3. The 4 rounds

ROUND	LENGTH	MEASURES	INTERVIEWER	DATE
Screen	30 min	Motivation, level, logistics	Hiring manager	
Pairing	60 min	[criterion]		
Design	60 min	[criterion]		
Working together	45 min	[criterion]		

Book rounds 2 to 4 in the same week the candidate passes the screen.

4. Scores before the debrief

- Each interviewer submits evidence and a score for their own criterion.
- Nobody reads the other scores first.
- The debrief covers disagreements only, usually 30 minutes.

5. The decision

Decision sent within 2 working days of the last round: [date].

For comparison, Ashby's 2026 data puts the median technical hire at 40 days, and a quarter of technical roles take longer than 57.

6. Day 1, planned before the contract is signed

ITEM	OWNER	DONE
Laptop ordered		
Accounts and access		
Buddy named		
First small change picked		
What they own by week 4, written down		

smarthiring.tech · Source for hiring times: Ashby, Recruiter Productivity, 2026 Talent Trends Report.

SmartHiring by Elman Huseynov · the post behind this file: smarthiring.tech/how-to-hire-software-engineers/ · Use it inside your company as you like; please link the post rather than re-hosting the file.