

RESOURCES

Appropriate and Inappropriate Interview Questions

Reproduced, with minor adaptations, from the University of Wisconsin–Madison Office of Human Resources (<http://go.wisc.edu/54sqgx>)

Rules to Remember

1. Ask only what you need to know, not what you would like to know.
 - Need to know: affects the day-to-day requirements of the job.
 - Like to know: does not pertain to the job, usually personal in nature.
2. If you have any questions about the appropriateness of the question, don't ask it.
3. If you ask a question to one candidate, you must ask the question to ALL candidates.

SUBJECT	INAPPROPRIATE	APPROPRIATE
AGE	Questions about age, dates of attending school, dates of military service, request for birth certificate.	Questions about age are only permitted to ensure that a person is legally old enough to do the job.
ADDRESS	Examples: Do you own or rent your home? How long have you lived at your current address?	What is your address?
ARREST RECORD and CONVICTIONS	Questions about arrests, pending charges and convictions that do not relate substantially to the job. Example: Have you ever been arrested?	Varies by state. Some states permit questions that relate substantially to the particular job if they are asked of all candidates. Check with the Legal Affairs or Equal Opportunity Office of your institution.
CREDIT RATINGS or GARNISHMENTS	Questions that have no relation to job performance. Refusing to hire someone based on a poor credit rating is a civil rights violation.	Questions may be appropriate if the job requires significant financial responsibility. In most cases, no question is acceptable.
CITIZENSHIP	Any question about citizenship. Examples: Are you a US citizen? Where were you born? Are you an American? What kind of name is that?	May ask about legal authorization to work in a specific position, if all applicants are asked.
DISABILITY	Questions about disability are not appropriate. Examples: Do you have a disability? What is the nature or severity of your disability? Do you have a health condition? Do you require accommodations?	Questions about ability are appropriate. Example: Are you able to perform the essential functions of this job, with or without accommodations?

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SUBJECT	INAPPROPRIATE	APPROPRIATE
EDUCATION	Questions about education that are not related to the job being applied for.	Inquiries about degrees or equivalent experience related to the job being applied for.
FAMILY or MARITAL STATUS	Any inquiry about marital status, pregnancy, children, or child care plans.	Questions about whether an applicant can meet work schedules or job requirements if asked of all candidates, both men and women.
HEALTH	Any question about health. Examples: How is your health? How is your family's health?	None.
MILITARY SERVICE	Any question about type of discharge or registration status. Example: Were you honorably discharged from military service?	Questions about education and experience acquired in the military that relate to a particular job.
NAME	Questions about national origin, ancestry, or prior marital status. Examples: What kind of a name is that? Is that your maiden name?	May ask about current legal name. Example: Is additional information, such as a different name or nickname necessary in order to check job references?
NATIONAL ORIGIN	Any questions about national origin or citizenship. Examples: Are you legally eligible to work in the U.S.A.? Where were you or your parents born? What is your native language?	May ask if legally authorized to work in this specific position, if all applicants are asked this question.
ORGANIZATIONS	Inquiries about membership in organizations that might indicate race, sex, religion, or national origin.	Inquiries about membership in professional organizations related to the position.
RACE, COLOR, HEIGHT, WEIGHT	Questions about complexion, color, height, or weight.	None.
SEXUAL ORIENTATION	Any question about sexual orientation. Examples: Are you gay? Why do you wear an earring?	None.
WORK EXPERIENCE	Inquiries posed to members of minority groups based on generalizations or stereotypes of the group. Examples: Questions about use of sick leave, or worker's compensation	Questions about applicants' previous employment experience.