

Pre-Employment Interview Question Guidelines

Devising the Questions

Keep two rules in mind when framing the questions that will indicate whether or not an applicant meets the requirements you have established for the position.

Rule #1.

Ask questions that concentrate on the applicant's past performance. An applicant's past will offer you tangible facts upon which you can make reliable assumptions. Avoid hypothetical questions or questions that address the applicant's personal lifestyle or habits; these will only provide you with information that is either unreliable or irrelevant to the position itself.

Rule #2.

Ask questions that relate directly to at least one of your listed requirements. If you maintain a one-to-one correspondence between questions and requirements, you will be able to gain the most information possible in the time allotted for the interview.

Acceptable and Unacceptable Questions

There are practical reasons to avoid certain kinds of questions. Even if the answer to an unacceptable question is not used as part of a hire/no hire decision, the fact that it was asked, and that the applicant was not hired, can be grounds for filing a complaint. Asking these questions is rarely worth the trouble if an applicant chooses to complain. If a discrimination complaint is filed, the employer is responsible for providing a legally permissible business justification for the questions asked and it is usually very difficult to meet the standards of acceptability.

SUBJECT: NAME

Acceptable: Have you ever used another name?
Do I need any additional information relative to change of name, use of an assumed name or nickname to enable me to check on your work and education record? If yes, please explain.

Unacceptable: What is your maiden name?

SUBJECT: RESIDENCE

Acceptable: What is your home address?
How long have you lived in the Los Angeles area?

Unacceptable: Do you rent or own your home?



SUBJECT: AGE

Acceptable: Statement that being hired is subject to verification that applicant meets legal age requirements.
If hired, can you show proof of age? Are you over eighteen years of age?
If under eighteen, after employment, can you submit a work permit?

Unacceptable: How old are you? What is your age?
What is your date of birth?
When did you complete or attend elementary or high school?
Questions which tend to identify applicants over age 40.

SUBJECT: BIRTHPLACE, CITIZENSHIP

Acceptable: Can you, after employment, submit verification of right to work in the US?

Unacceptable: Birthplace of applicant, applicant's parents, spouse or other relatives.
Are you a U.S. citizen?
What is the citizenship of parents, spouse or other relatives?
Requirement that applicant furnish naturalization papers or alien card prior to employment.

SUBJECT: NATIONAL ORIGIN

Acceptable: If use of a language other than English is relevant to the job for which the applicant is applying, you may ask if the applicant reads, speaks or writes the other language.

Unacceptable: Questions as to lineage, ancestry, national origin, nationality, descent or parentage of applicant, applicant's parents or spouse.
"What is your mother tongue? What language do you commonly use?"
"Kowalski? ... that's Polish, isn't it?"
"Have you had your name changed by court order?"
"How did you learn to speak a foreign language?"

SUBJECT: SEX, MARITAL STATUS, FAMILY

Acceptable: Name and address of parent or guardian if applicant is a minor.
Statement of company policy regarding work assignment of employees who are related.

Unacceptable: Questions which indicate applicant's sex.
Questions which indicate applicant's marital status. "Is it Miss or Mrs.?"
"Are you married?"
"How many children do you have?"
"Who takes care of your children while you're working?"



“What does your husband think about your working outside the home?” “Are you living with your husband/wife?”
Number and/or ages of children or dependents.
Questions regarding pregnancy, child bearing or birth control.
Name or address of relative, spouse of children of adult applicant.
Do you live with your parents?

SUBJECT: RACE, COLOR

Acceptable: None.

Unacceptable: Any questions regarding applicant’s race, color, complexion, color of hair, eyes or skin.

SUBJECT: PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION, PHOTOGRAPH

Acceptable: Statement that photograph may be required after employment.

Unacceptable: Questions about an applicant’s height and weight.
Request that an applicant affix photograph.
Request applicant, at his or her option, to submit a photograph.
Request a photo after interview but before employment.

SUBJECT: PHYSICAL CONDITION, DISABILITY

Acceptable: Statement that offer of employment may be made subject to applicant passing a job related physical examination.
Are you able to perform the functions of the job for which you applied?
If no, what reasonable accommodations can be made?

Unacceptable: Questions regarding applicant’s general medical condition, state of health or illnesses.
Questions regarding receipt of Worker’s Compensation. Do you have any handicap or physical disabilities?

SUBJECT: RELIGION

Acceptable: This location is part of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Los Angeles and reserves the right to make employment decisions based on principles of Catholic moral teaching, religious preferences and other religious needs, criteria and policies. All persons involved with the Archdiocese are expected to model, teach and promote behavior in conformity to the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church. Are you willing and able to comply with these policies?



SUBJECT: ARREST, CRIMINAL RECORD

Acceptable: The Archdiocese makes job offers conditional on being fingerprinted and passing a background check.
No questions about arrests or criminal record may be asked during a job interview.

SUBJECT: MILITARY SERVICE

Acceptable: Questions regarding relevant skills acquired during applicant's U.S. military service.

Unacceptable: General questions regarding military service such as date and type of discharge.
Questions regarding service in a foreign military.

SUBJECT: COMPENSATION HISTORY AND ECONOMIC STATUS

Acceptable: None.

Unacceptable: Questions regarding applicant's current or past wages, assets, liabilities or credit rating, including bankruptcy or garnishment.

SUBJECT: ORGANIZATIONS, ACTIVITIES

Acceptable: Please list job related organizations, clubs, professional societies or other associations to which you belong – you may omit those which indicate your race, color, national origin, ancestry, sex or age.

Unacceptable: List all organizations, clubs, societies, and lodges to which you belong.

SUBJECT: REFERENCES

Acceptable: By whom were you referred for a position here?
Names of persons willing to provide professional and/or character references for you.

Unacceptable: Questions of applicant's former employers or acquaintance which elicit information specifying the applicant's race, color, national origin, ancestry, sex, age, physical handicap, medical condition or marital status.

SUBJECT: NOTICE IN CASE OF EMERGENCY

Acceptable: Name and address of person to be notified in case of accident or emergency.

Unacceptable: Name and address of relative to be notified in case of accident or emergency.

