General Principles for Interviews

Inappropriate Topics

Although it seems obvious, employers should ask only appropriate questions. Employers should consider applicants solely on the basis of their qualifications and on the likelihood that they will successfully perform duties of the job without regard to race, sex, marital status, physical handicap, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, veteran status, or any other unlawful criteria.

The following is a list of topics to avoid during the interview process:

- arrest record
- less-than-honorable military discharges
- gender and marital status
- maiden name
- number of children
- ages of children
- number of preschool children
- spouse's name
- spouse's education
- spouse's income
- form of birth control
- family plans
- child care arrangements
- conviction record
- car accidents
- lawsuits or legal complaints
- ownership of home or rental status
- length of residence
- ownership of car
- form of transportation to work
- loans
- wage assignments of garnishments
- bankruptcy
- credit cards
- insurance claims
- judgments
- citizenship
- place of birth
- proficiency in speaking, reading, and writing English (unless job related)
- other languages spoken
- disabilities
- handicap
- prior illness or accident
- hospitalization
- current or prior medication or treatment
- workers' compensation claims
- weight
- age
- date of high school graduation
- religion
- church affiliation
- social organizations
Questions to Ask and Not Ask

Following are questions that you "do ask" and "don't ask" during an interview

Liability and dependability

DON'T ASK:
What kind of child-care arrangements you have?
Does your husband expect you to be home to cook dinner?
What will you do if your children get sick?
How many children do you have?
Does your husband live with you or contribute to your support?
Do you own a home?
Do you own a car?
Do you have any debts?
Do you have any loans?

DO ASK:
What was your absentee record at your prior place of employment?
Do you know of any reason (for example, transportation, or any other reason) why you would not be able to get to work on time and on a regular basis?
Are you available to work overtime?
If so, are there any limitations or restrictions on your ability to work overtime (including weekend overtime, if required)?

Career and geographical commitment

DON'T ASK:
Do you plan to get married?
Do you plan to have children?
What sort of birth control do you use?
Are you likely to quit if you get married or have children?
Is your spouse likely to be transferred?
Is your spouse from this area?

DO ASK:
We are looking for employees with a commitment to this position. Are there any reasons why you might not stay with us?
What are your career objectives?
Do you intend to stay in the area?
Are you willing to relocate to this or any other area?
Where do you see yourself in five years?
Are you willing to relocate?
Are there any areas to which you would not relocate?
Do you foresee any reasons that you would not be able to travel for business reasons?
Are you willing to entertain clients on weekends and evenings?

**Miscellaneous**

**DON’T ASK:**
If your supervisor is white (or black), does that create any difficulties for you?
How do you feel about having to work with members of a different race?
Are you a militant?
Do you get along well with other women (or men)?
Will it bother you if the men swear?
What language does your mother speak?
Were you born in this country?
Do you have people in the "old country?"
That's an unusual name--what nationality are you?
Can you provide a photograph of yourself?
What is the lowest salary you will accept?
How old are you?

**Three Rules of Thumb**

When asking interview questions, you should consider three rules of thumb:

1. Ask only for information that you intend to use to make hiring decisions
2. Know how you will use the information to make that decision.
3. Recognize that it is difficult to defend the practice of seeking information that you do not use.