

## Interviewing Tips and Traps

Prepare for the interview by reviewing the job description, determining the needs of the department, and carefully reviewing resumes and applications. Create a list of questions that you will utilize for every candidate, as using a consistent set of questions will help you better evaluate the applicants. While you may explore slightly different areas in any given interview, having a list of basic questions written down, with room for comments, will allow you to focus on the interview rather than thinking about what to ask next. Keep the questions focused on the position, and give note to the second table in this overview, as it covers questions that relate to legally protected areas.

Ask open-ended questions, yes/no questions usually have limited use in an interview setting. Let the applicant take some time to answer a question, a several second pause will allow time for the individual to collect his/her thoughts and organize an answer.

### Possible General Questions

The questions below may assist you in creating your own set, applicable to the specific position.

<b>Initiative</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Give me an example of something you suggested which was adopted. Why? What happened?</li> <li>-Give me an example of something that you recommended which was not adopted. Why? What could you have done differently?</li> <li>-Tell me about a time you had to complete a project without sufficient guidelines or information. What did you do?</li> <li>-If you could acquire one more skill or bit of job knowledge, what would it be? What do you need to do in order to acquire it?</li> </ul>
<b>Stress</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-In your current job, when did you feel pressured and why?</li> <li>-What creates stress for you in a work environment? Why?</li> <li>-What happens when you begin to feel pressured at work? How do you know if stress is affecting your work?</li> </ul>
<b>Motivation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Why did you choose this profession? What rewards does it give you?</li> <li>-What is your definition of success? How are you measuring up? What will you do to achieve this goal?</li> <li>-When has your morale been the highest at work? Why?</li> <li>-How do you monitor the progress of assignments and projects?</li> <li>-How have your past jobs prepared you for this one?</li> <li>-In what area would you like to develop further?</li> </ul>
<b>Creativity/ Innovation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-If you could change one thing that is inefficient at your current job, what would it be?</li> <li>-What is the most creative thing you have done in a past job? How did it occur?</li> <li>-How do you keep up with the changes in your field?</li> </ul>
<b>Problem Solving</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Tell me about a time when you had to juggle priorities or projects? How did you decide which to do first?</li> <li>-What has been a stubborn or recurring problem which you would have liked to solve in your current job – but haven't yet?</li> <li>-What kinds of decisions did you have authority over? Which ones did you have to check with your manager before making?</li> <li>-What has been your biggest error in judgment in a previous job? Why did you make it? How did you recover?</li> <li>-Tell me about a time when you felt that others knew more than you. How did you close the gap?</li> </ul>

<b>Communication Skills/ Interpersonal Relationships</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-What type of coworker/student/customer do you find difficult to work with? Why? What do you do when you must interact with a person like this?</li> <li>-What kind of feedback do you want from a manager?</li> <li>-How do you gain cooperation when you've had to take the lead on a project?</li> <li>-Do you prefer working with a team or working alone?</li> <li>-What type of people at your current job do you get along with best?</li> <li>-What types of situations make you angry at work? How do you resolve them?</li> <li>-When a coworker/student/customer makes you angry, how do you react?</li> <li>-Tell me about a time when you felt a coworker or your manager made you look bad. How did you deal with it?</li> </ul>
<b>Supervisory/ Managerial</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Describe your approach to making decisions and solving problems. Why do you do it this way?</li> <li>-Tell me about a decision you had to make quickly or under pressure. How did you go about reaching the decision, and how did it work out?</li> <li>-Tell me what you do when you hear about a problem in your area.</li> <li>-How do you monitor and control your areas of responsibility?</li> <li>-What responsibility do you have for budgeting?</li> <li>-How would you describe your management style? How would your employees describe it?</li> <li>-Give me an example of a time you had to "sell" a decision or policy to your employees when you didn't agree with it.</li> </ul>

Although federal Equal Employment Opportunity laws do not specifically prohibit any pre-employment questions, the EEOC does look with "extreme disfavor" on questions about age, color, disability, national origin, race, religion, gender or veteran status. Following is a representative list of unacceptable and acceptable questions. It is NOT all-inclusive.

TOPIC	UNACCEPTABLE	ACCEPTABLE
<b>Reliability/ Attendance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Number of children?</li> <li>-Who is going to baby-sit?</li> <li>-What religion are you?</li> <li>-Do you have pre-school age children at home?</li> <li>-Do you have a car?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-What hours and days can you work?</li> <li>-Are there specific times that you cannot work?</li> <li>-Do you have responsibilities other than work that will interfere with specific job requirements such as traveling?</li> <li>-Do you have access to a vehicle (if travel is a requirement of the position)</li> </ul>
<b>Citizenship/ National Origin</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-What is your national origin?</li> <li>-Where are your parents from?</li> <li>-What is your maiden name?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Are you legally eligible for Employment in the United States?</li> <li>- Same as above</li> <li>-Have you ever worked under a different name?</li> </ul>
<b>Arrest/ Conviction</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Have you ever been arrested?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Have you ever been convicted of a crime? If so, when, where and what was the disposition of the case?</li> </ul>

<b>Disabilities</b>	-Do you have any job disabilities? -How is your physical/mental health? -Is your family healthy? -Will you need to take leave for personal treatment or the health care of someone in the family - Do you have, or have you had a drug or alcohol problem?	-Can you perform the essential duties of the job you are applying for? -Are there specific times that you cannot work? -Do you have responsibilities other than work that will interfere with specific job requirements such as traveling? -None
<b>Credit Record</b>	-Do you own your own home? -Have your wages ever been garnished? -Have you ever declared bankruptcy?	-None -Credit references may be used if in compliance with the Fair Credit Reporting Act of 1970 and the Consumer Credit Reporting Reform Act Of 1996. -None
<b>Military Record</b>	-What type of discharge did you receive?	-What type of education, training, Work experience did you receive while in the military?
<b>Language</b>	-What is your native language? Inquiry into use of how applicant acquired ability to read, write or speak a foreign language.	-Inquiry into languages applicant speaks and writes fluently. (If the job requires additional languages)
<b>Organizations</b>	-List all clubs, societies and lodges to which you belong	-Inquiry into applicant's membership in organizations that the applicant considers relevant to his or her ability to perform job.
<b>Worker's Compensation</b>	-Have you ever filed for worker's compensation? -Have you had any prior work injuries?	-None -None
<b>Religion or Creed</b>	-Inquiry into applicant's religious denomination, religious affiliations, church, parish, pastor or religious holidays observed.	-None
<b>Gender</b>	-Do you wish to be addressed as Mr.?, Mrs.?, Miss?, or Ms.?	-None
<b>Addresses</b>	-What was your previous address? -How long did you reside there? -How long have you lived at your current address? -Do you own your own home?	-None -None -None -None
<b>Education</b>	-When did you graduate from high school or College?	-Do you have a high school diploma or equivalent? -Do you have a university or college degree?

This handout adapted from two Society for Human Resource Management Whitepapers:  
**"GUIDELINES ON INTERVIEW AND EMPLOYMENT APPLICATION QUESTIONS"** By Thomas H. Nail, SPHR and Dale Scharinger, PhD. January 1998, Reviewed May 1999 and May 2002. Copyright © 2002, Society for Human Resource Management

**"ADA JOB INTERVIEW CHECKLIST FOR SUPERVISORS"** By Kenneth H. Pritchard, CCP . August 1992, Reviewed July 1999 and May 2002. Copyright © 2002, Society for Human Resource Management

And from:  
**"333 Interviewing Questions"** Borgman Associates, 1993.