



ANSWERING IMPROPER INTERVIEW

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This post was provided by Claudia Allen, writer and editor at the [National Association of Colleges and Employers \(NACE\)](#). NACE connects campus recruiting and career services professionals, and provides best practices, trends, research, professional development, and conferences.

When you interview for a job, your prospective employer will ask questions—on the job application, during the interview, and as part of the testing process. While federal, state, and local laws prohibit discrimination in employment based on certain characteristics protected by law—race, sex, disability, or age—the focus of questions you are asked should be: What does the employer need to know to decide whether you can perform the functions of the job. Here are some examples of legal and illegal questions:

Inquiry	Illegal Questions	Legal Questions
National origin/citizenship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are you a U.S. citizen? Where were you born? What is your “native tongue?” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are you authorized to work in the United States? What languages do you read, speak, or write fluently? (This is okay as long as the ability is relevant to the job.)
Age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How old are you? When did you graduate from college? What’s your birth date? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are you over the age of 18?
Marital/family status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What’s your marital status? Do you plan to have a family? How many kids do you have? What are your childcare arrangements? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Would you be willing to relocate if necessary? Travel is an important part of the job, are you able and willing to travel? (This is okay if all applicants for this job are asked it.) This job requires occasional overtime. Will you be willing to work overtime as necessary? (This is okay if all applicants for this job are asked it.)
Affiliations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What clubs or social organizations do you belong to? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> List any professional or trade groups or organizations that you belong to you’d consider relevant to your ability to perform the job.
Personal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How tall are you? How much do you weigh? <p>(Questions about height and weight are not acceptable unless minimum standards are essential to the safe performance of the job.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are you able to lift a 50-pound weight and carry it 100 yards? (If necessary to the job.)



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Disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you have any disabilities? • How's your family's health? • Do you have any genetic diseases? • Please complete a medical history. • Are you colorblind? • Do you see a psychiatrist for stress? • Are you an alcoholic? • What is wrong with your leg? • Do you take prescription drugs? • Have you ever been in rehab? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are you able to perform the essential functions of this job with or without reasonable accommodations? • Can you demonstrate how you would perform the following job-related function? • Do you have 20/20 vision (If this is a job requirement.) • What was your attendance record? • Will you need an accommodation to participate in the recruiting process?
Arrest/conviction record	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you ever been arrested? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you ever been convicted of ___? (The crime named should be related to the performance of the job.)
Military	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Were you honorably discharged? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What branch of the Armed Forces did you serve? • What type of training or education did you receive? • Describe relevant work experience you acquired from U.S. Armed Forces as it relates to this position.
Religion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you go to church? • What is your religious affiliation? • What religious holidays will you take off from work? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can you work on Saturdays/Sundays? (If relevant to the job.)

If a potential employer asks a question that relates to protected characteristics, you have a few options:

- **You can answer the question.** However, if you provide this information, you may jeopardize your chances of getting hired.
- **You can refuse to answer the question.** Unfortunately, you may appear uncooperative or confrontational, and lose the job.
- **You can listen the question for its intent and respond with an answer as it might apply to the job.** For example, if the interviewer asks, "Are you a U.S. citizen?" or "What country are you from?" you could say: "I am authorized to work in the United States." If the interviewer asks, "What are your childcare arrangements for when you travel?" you could say: "I can meet the travel and work schedule that this job requires."

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