



When interviews become invasive.

Questions are asked in an interview for one reason: To help employers determine how well you match what they're looking for in a potential employee. However, this does not give them the right to freely interrogate you on any subject they choose.

Certain interview questions are off-limits due to federal, state, and local laws. Your answers could potentially be used against you by dishonest employers, or they could even put the employer in jeopardy of public lawsuits if you're not hired.

Interview questions must be relevant to the specific job position and company. They are asked to evaluate your qualifications and ability to perform job functions.

What to know.

Illegal questions are those that try to gather private information about age, race, religion, beliefs, citizenship, ancestry, gender, height, weight, sexual orientation, marital/family status, disabilities, medical history, affiliations, arrest records, and military obligations.

Handling illegal questions during interviews can be difficult. Some employers knowingly ask inappropriate questions, but many others aren't aware of possible legal repercussions and ask out of naiveté.

This creates a problem for you: Do you risk offending the interviewer and endanger your chances of being hired

by not answering, or do you answer and risk facing even more inappropriate questions? The choice is yours – use your judgment because, in the end, your purpose in the meeting has two purposes: 1) convince the employer you're the one for the position, and 2) determine if the job is right for you.

Try to familiarize yourself with illegal questions so you're prepared. Then when it comes time, you can figure out the objective behind the question so you respond fittingly.

What are your options?

Here's a list of some choices to consider when asked illegal questions:

- Answer the question if you feel comfortable doing so, knowing it's inappropriate, and hope for the best outcome.
- Inquire as to why they ask and then decide whether to answer.
- Try to subtly change the topic.
- Determine the intent behind the question and go from there. This will avoid embarrassing the interviewer and still provide pertinent information without invading your privacy.
- Decline to answer and risk putting yourself at the bottom of the candidacy pool. If you think the offense was deliberate, think about if you'd prefer to work elsewhere. You can always leave.

Examples of illegal questions and sample responses.

Q: How old are you?

Simply put:

How to be prepared for illegal questions:

- Be aware of possible illegal questions that may get asked.
- Think. Determine the intent of the question and then respond.
- Answer if you're comfortable.
- Use humor to try to diffuse the situation.
- Say you're not comfortable answering.
- Practice answers to illegal questions that get your point across without directly answering the initial question.

A: I'm over the age of 18.

Q: Are you a U.S. citizen?

A: I am eligible to work in this country.

Q: Are you currently in a relationship?

A: I am a hard worker, so I prefer keeping my personal life separate from professional life to ensure I do the best job that I can.

Q: Do you have any disabilities?

A: I understand your concern, but I have reviewed the job requirements and assure you I am capable of fulfilling them.

Q: Do you have trouble working with older workers?

A: My abilities allow me to work with a variety of people.

Q: What kind of car do you drive?

A: I drive a very dependable vehicle that gets me from point A to point B safely.

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