

University of Minnesota

THE DO'S AND DON'TS OF INTERVIEWING

An employment interview is conducted for several reasons; the main reason is to learn more about the applicants under consideration for a particular job. Your responsibilities as an interviewer are to:

- Verify answers that the prospective employee has given on the application form.
- Ask questions designed to find out if the applicant is an appropriate candidate for the job opening.
- Acquaint the applicant with UMD and your department.
- Provide the applicant with the opportunity to ask questions about the job and UMD.

Prepare carefully for each interview. Be sure that you are interviewing applicants without violating affirmative action and [Equal Employment Opportunity \(EEO\)](#) rules and regulations.

EEO and other laws require you to ask only specifically job-related questions. You may not ask questions about the following:

CATEGORY

race	color
creed	religion
age	sex (including pregnancy, child birth, number of children)
national origin	citizenship status
Marital Status	disability (physical or mental)
height	weight
arrest record	availability of child care
birthplace	birthdate
sexual orientation/preference	sources of income
availability of transportation	workers' compensation claims
status regarding public assistance	
union membership	

Category	May ask	May Discriminate by Asking
Sex and family arrangements	If applicant has relatives already employed by the organization	*Sex of Applicant *Number of Children *Marital Status *Spouse's occupation *Child care arrangements *Health care coverage through spouse
Race		Applicant's race or color of skin Photo to be affixed to application form
National origin or ancestry	*Whether Applicant has a legal right to be employed in the U.S. *Ability to speak/write English fluently (if job related) *Other languages spoken (if job related)	*Ethnic association of a surname *Birthplace of applicant or applicant's parents *Nationality, lineage, national origin *Nationality of Applicant's spouse *Whether Applicant is a citizen of another country *Applicant's native tongue/English proficiency *Maiden name (of married woman)
Religion		*Religious affiliation/Availability for weekend work *Religious holidays observed

Age		*If Applicant is over age 18 or if applicant is over 21, if job related i.e., bartender) * Date of Birth * Date of high school graduation *Age
Disability	Whether applicant can perform the essential job-related functions	If Applicant has a disability Nature or severity of a disability Whether Applicant has ever filed a workers' compensation claim Recent or past surgeries and dates Past medical problems>
Other	*Convictions if job related * Academic, vocational, or professional schooling-Training received in the military * Membership in any trade or professional association * Job References	*Number and kinds of arrests *Height and weight except if a bona fide occupational qualification * Veteran status, discharge status, branch of service *Contact in case of an emergency (at application or interview stage)

MORE INFORMATION ON DO'S AND DONT'S

As stated above, the following topics should be avoided in an interview (or on an application for employment):

- Age is irrelevant unless you are concerned about child labor violations under the Fair Labor Standards Act, in which case you can ask for proof that the applicant is old enough to work.
- Arrest record do not ask at all-you may ask about convictions, but even then it would have to be relevant to the position to lead to immediate rejection.
- Association with present employees-this information is not relevant to an applicant's ability to perform successfully in a particular job, and the tendency to either encourage or prohibit the employment of friends or relatives of existing employees may create an adverse impact on members of protected classes. (Your state may have anti-nepotism laws.)
- Bankruptcy and credit affairs-never ask about bankruptcy since it is illegal to discriminate on this basis under the Federal Bankruptcy Act-all credit inquiries must comply with the Fair Credit Reporting Act.
- Citizenship-unless required by law or regulation, you may not ask applicants if they are U.S. citizens since it is considered discriminatory under the Immigration Reform and Control Act. You may ask if candidates are authorized to work in the United States.
- Disability-the Americans with Disabilities Act makes it illegal to ask questions about an applicant's disability or perceived disability-it is crucial to focus on the job, not on the disability.
- Driver's license-avoid asking about it unless the job requires one since it could statistically screen out females, minorities and/or individuals with disabilities.
- Educational attainment-relevant if it is directly related to successful job performance-if not, avoid it because it could potentially screen out minorities.
- Emergency contact information-unnecessary at the application stage-and it can be discriminatory if it reveals information about the applicant's membership in a protected class.
- English language skills-only ask if it is a requirement of the job (e.g., an English teacher)-otherwise it could be construed as national origin discrimination.
- Height and weight-can be discriminatory against females, Hispanics, and/or Asians-it is important to focus on what the job requires, not the person's physical characteristics.
- Marital status/name changes/spouse/children-any questions relating to these issues may be construed as discriminatory, especially against women-none are job related.
- Organization or club membership-this might reveal protected class information and it is irrelevant (i.e., Knights of Columbus, NAACP or Diabetes Association).
- Race, color, religion, sex, or national origin-[Equal Employment Opportunity Commission \(EEOC\)](#) guidelines prohibit asking questions that may reveal this information; rejected applicants could have grounds for a discrimination suit if any of these questions were part of the application process.
- Union affiliation-could be considered an unfair labor practice under the National Labor Relations Act if the

applicant claims he or she was not hired because of the union affiliation.

- Veteran status/military records-general questions about a person's background in the military should only be asked if based on business necessity or job-related reasons. If requested, such information should include a statement that general or dishonorable discharge will not be an absolute bar to employment but that other factors will be taken into consideration.
- Weekend work/shift changes-unless required for the job, the applicant should not have to state whether or not they can work on the weekends-this could screen out applicants who cannot work on some weekend days because of their religious beliefs.

You should be aware that when you inquire into any of these factors, there is a risk of encouraging charges of unlawful discrimination and of providing evidence that might be used by complainants in proving charges of discrimination. Please call the UMD Department of Human Resources with questions.

WARNING! If [discriminatory questions](#) are used in pre-employment screening, the burden of proof that the questions are not being used to discriminate rests with the employer.

So what you may wonder is, what is left to ask? Following is a list of possible questions. Not all of them will be appropriate for the positions you are trying to fill. First, decide what you need to know for each position for which you interview. Second, if you have a list of questions ready and use the same one each time for each position, it will save you time. In addition, it will help you stay on track in asking only the "right" questions. Whatever questions you do ask, make sure to ask them of every applicant for the same position.

It is acceptable to ask the following questions:

- Is there anything else you think I should know that will help me make my decision?
- Why are you interested in this job?
- Describe your education and training.
- What kinds of machines can you run, and what tools can you use?
- What experiences have you had that will qualify you for this position?
- Where have you worked before?
- Why did you leave there?
- What parts of the job did you like best?
- What parts of your job gave you the most trouble?
- Do you have the necessary licenses/certifications to do the job?
- What are your salary expectations?
- Are you willing to travel if required?
- We occasionally require overtime/evening/weekend work. Is that a problem for you?
- Our work hours are ___ to ___. Will you have any trouble being here at that time?
- Our work site is located at _____. Will you have any problem getting there on time each day?
- What would be your ideal job?
- What kinds of things do you think your former bosses will say about your work with them?

When Interviewing People with Disabilities

DO Do ensure that the interview facility is accessible to people with disabilities. Do inform the applicant of any special parking available. Do allow the applicant at least a full day to prepare for your interview. Do identify the essential functions on the job. Do make eye contact with the person. Do talk directly to the applicant-not to an interpreter. Do after the initial greeting, sit down so that a person who uses a wheelchair can easily make eye contact. Do ask about the person's ability to perform the job.

DON'T Don't assume the person is able to shake your hand. Don't lean on an applicant's wheelchair. Don't shout or raise your voice to a person who is hearing impaired. Don't touch or talk to a seeing-eye dog. Don't ask about a person's disability history. Don't ask about prior workers' compensation claims. Don't ask how the person became disabled. Don't ask how a person is going to get to work.