



Career Planning & Resources Interview Preparation

Common Interview Questions

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. What do you know about this position (or employer/organization)?
3. Why are you interested in this position? (or) Why did you decide to seek a position with this organization?
4. What are your strengths and weaknesses?
5. How do you think a friend who knows you well would describe you?
6. What is your leadership style? (or) Tell me about a time where you had to assume a leadership role and how you handled that situation.
7. What are your short/long-term goals?
8. What kind of role do you typically play in a team setting? (or) Describe the perfect work group.
9. Tell me about a time when you took initiative.
10. What do you see yourself doing five years from now? Ten years from now?
11. Tell me about the three accomplishments you're most proud of. Why?
12. In what ways do you think will contribute to our organization? (or) What is unique about how you will contribute to our organization?
13. What qualities do you look for in a supervisor?
14. Tell me about a time where you needed to meet several deadlines, but couldn't meet them all. How did you handle that situation?
15. What are your questions for me?

Questions to Ask the Employer

1. What kind of assignments might I expect during the first six months of the job?
2. What are your expectations for the candidate who fills this position to accomplish in the first six months he/she is working?
3. How do you evaluate performance and provide feedback to employees?
4. What do you (the interviewer) like best about your job/organization?
5. In researching the position, I discovered that your department has been working on _____ project. Can you tell me more about this? How might I be involved in the project if I were to be hired?
6. What qualities/characteristics are you looking for in the candidate who fills this position?
7. What types of professional development opportunities are available for employees?
8. What is your vision for this organization in the next five years?
9. What is your supervisory style?
10. Can you give me a sense of your hiring process? (Future interviews, timeline, decision)

Illegal Interview Questions

There are certain questions that are inappropriate and even illegal for employers to ask during interviews. Illegal questions may deal with issues of race, gender, sex, religion, sexual orientation, national origin, native language, age, disability status or prior arrests. Women are often illegally asked questions about family planning and marital status.

Personal questions regarding marital status, children, organizations you are affiliated with, etc., may be illegal depending on the way the question is framed and the duties affiliated with the position. For example, a religious organization hiring for a position which has religious responsibilities (i.e. teaching a religion class) can require candidates to be of a certain religious faith.

Here are some examples of illegal questions:

1. Are you married? What is your marital status? What's your maiden name?
2. How many children do you have? Do you plan to have children? When do you plan to start a family?
3. Will any religious obligations prevent you from working weekends or holidays?
4. Do you have any physical disabilities?
5. What is your native language? Were you born in the United States?
6. How old are you?

You can decide how you feel most comfortable responding to illegal questions. You control your response and the amount of information you are willing to provide. You can choose not to answer and tactfully indicate that the question is illegal, ask how the question is relevant to the position or answer to what you believe is the intent of the question.

Answering the intent of the question might look like this:

Question: “How many children do you have?”

The interviewer is probably less concerned with the number of children you have and more concerned about whether it will affect your ability to fulfill the job responsibilities.

Answer: “My childcare arrangements are stable and present no conflict with my ability to be a dependable employee.”

No matter how you choose respond to illegal questions, always remember to remain professional and respectful. Keep in mind that in most situations, the interviewer has not been trained in the legalities related to interviewing and may not even realize the question is illegal. Before you interview for a position, consider how you will respond if asked an illegal question. Planning your approach ahead of time will help you remain calm and professional.