



# THE 50 BEST JOB INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR EMPLOYERS

(AND THE 10 WORST)

## ABOUT THIS GUIDE

It's no secret that job interviews can make even qualified job candidates nervous. Frankly, they should make the interviewer a little nervous, too—In addition to getting the information you need to make a smart hire, you must avoid the legal liability pitfalls that have cost companies millions of dollars in penalties and settlements.

How can we accomplish both goals? By asking the right questions and avoiding the wrong ones. Use this guide to create a job interview outline for each candidate. Remember that consistency between candidates is key to reducing potential liability.

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# THE 50 BEST JOB INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR EMPLOYERS

1. Are you willing to fail?
2. What did you dislike about your last job/boss/team?
3. Why are you interested in working for [insert company name here]?
4. What was it like working with your last supervisor?
5. Where else are you interviewing?
6. Describe the ideal work environment for you.
7. What can you offer us that someone else cannot?
8. What are three things your former manager would like you to improve on?
9. Tell me about the worst boss you ever had.
10. If you could change one thing about your last (current) job, what would it be?
11. Tell me about an accomplishment you are most proud of.
12. Tell me about a time you made a mistake.
13. What is your dream job?
14. In prior performance reviews, what were your opportunities for improvement?
15. What would you look to accomplish in the first 30 days/60 days/90 days on the job?
16. What are your greatest accomplishments so far?
17. Describe yourself in three words.
18. Are you interested more in managing or being part of a team?
19. How do you define success?
20. Why should we hire you?
21. Why are you looking for a new job?
22. Besides money, what do you value or need most if you are to have job satisfaction?
23. Have you ever been fired or laid off?
24. How would you fire someone?
25. How do you feel about psychological tests?
26. Who are our competitors?
27. How do you feel about drug tests?
28. Do you prefer to work for a man or a woman? Why?
29. How do you feel about working in a diverse workplace?
30. Who's your mentor?
31. Tell me about a time when you disagreed with your boss.
32. If you could change three things about yourself, what would they be?
33. What is the name of our CEO?
34. What have you learned from your mistakes?
35. What gets you up in the morning?
36. What do people often criticize you about?
37. What's the worst thing you have gotten away with?
38. If I called your boss right now and asked him/her what is an area that you could improve on, what would he/she say?
39. Are you a leader or a follower?
40. What was the last book you've read for fun?
41. What are your co-worker pet peeves?
42. What are your hobbies?
43. What is your favorite website?
44. What makes you uncomfortable?
45. What are some of your leadership experiences?
46. Describe an ethical dilemma you faced at work, and how did you deal with it?
47. What do you like the most and least about working in this industry?
48. What is the last thing you did to improve yourself professionally?
49. Do you prefer a job with clearly defined tasks, or one that is more self-directed?
50. Do you have any role models?

# THE 10 WORST JOB INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR EMPLOYERS

## 1. HOW OLD ARE YOU?

Age-based inquiries should be avoided because state law prohibits discrimination against persons age 40 and older. An age inquiry may be made to ensure a person is “old enough” to work for the job being filled, or if the job is among the few where age discrimination is permitted such as physically dangerous or hazardous work or driving a school bus.

**Possible alternative:** Are you over the age of 18?

## 2. ARE YOU MARRIED?

The purpose of these “family” inquiries is to explore what some employers believe is a common source of absenteeism and tardiness. Typically, these questions are asked only of women making the inquiry clearly unlawful. However, even if such inquiries are made of both men and women, the questions may still be suspect.

**Possible alternative:** Is there anything that would interfere with regular attendance at work?

## 3. HOW MUCH DO YOU WEIGH?

Minimum height and weight requirements are unlawful if they screen out a disproportionate number of women or minorities. Unless the employer can show that a height or weight requirement is essential for job performance, such inquiries should be avoided.

**Possible alternative:** Are you able to lift a 50-pound weight and carry it 100 yards, as that is part of the job?

## 4. HOW IS YOUR HEALTH?

Inquiries about a person’s disability, health or worker’s compensation histories are unlawful if they imply or express a limitation based on disability. Under the federal Americans with Disabilities Act, any inquiry at the pre-employment stage, which would likely require an applicant to disclose a disability, is unlawful.

**Possible alternative:** Are you able to perform the essential functions of this job with or without reasonable accommodations?

## 5. WHERE WERE YOU BORN?

Inquiries about a person’s citizenship or country of birth are unlawful and imply discrimination on the basis of national origin.

**Possible alternative:** Are you authorized to work in the United States?

## 6. HAVE YOU EVER BEEN ARRESTED?

An employer may not refuse to employ or discharge a person with a conviction record unless the circumstances of the conviction substantially relate to the circumstances of the job. If an inquiry about convictions is made, the employer should add a clarifier, “A conviction will not necessarily disqualify you from employment. It will be considered only as it may relate to the job you are seeking.”

**Possible alternative:** Have you ever been convicted of a specific crime relevant to this business?

## 7. ARE YOU IN THE NATIONAL GUARD OR A FEDERAL RESERVE UNIT?

It is unlawful to discriminate against someone because of membership in the National Guard, a state defense force or another state or Federal Reserve unit.

**Possible alternative:** What type of training or education did you receive in the military?

## 8. WHAT RACE/ETHNICITY/RELIGION ARE YOU?

These questions are prohibited by federal law.

**Possible alternative:** Are you available to work on Saturdays and Sundays?

## 9. WHAT SALARY DID YOU MAKE AT YOUR LAST JOB?

In many cities it is unlawful to seek wage or salary history of a prospective employee.

**Possible alternative:** What are your salary goals for this position?

## 10. WHO DID YOU VOTE FOR?

Although currently there are no federal laws that prohibit private employers from asking political affiliation questions, such questions could potentially trigger a discrimination claim.