

The goal of the interview is to collect accurate information in a uniform manner from all respondents. The candidates interviewed must be asked the same questions in the same way if that goal is to be reached. When conducting the interview, follow these tips:

- Base interview questions on job criteria.
- Ask the same questions of each candidate.
- Conduct the interview in a private location accessible to people with disabilities.
- Take notes to minimize interviewer bias or subjectivity.

Common Interviewing Biases

There are several problems that interviewers run into when they allow biases to get in the way. These include:

Stereotyping: Forming an opinion about how people of a given gender, religion, race, appearance, or other characteristic think, act, respond, or would perform the job — without any evidence that this is the case.

Inconsistency in questioning: Asking different questions of each candidate leads to a skewed assessment of who would best perform the job. Questions designed to get particular information about a specific candidate are only appropriate in the context of a core set of questions asked of all candidates.

First impressions: An interviewer might make a snap judgement about someone based on their first impression — positive or negative — that clouds the entire interview. For example, letting the fact that the candidate is wearing out-of-the-ordinary clothing or has a heavy regional accent take precedence over the applicant's knowledge, skills, or abilities.

Negative emphasis: This involves rejection of a candidate based on a small amount of negative information — a common occurrence. Research indicates that interviewers give unfavorable information about twice the weight of favorable information.

Halo/horn effect: The "halo" effect occurs when an interviewer allows one strong point about the candidate to overshadow or have an effect on everything else. For instance, knowing someone went to a particular university might be looked upon favorably. Everything the applicant says during the interview is seen in this light. ("Well, she left out an important part of the answer to that question, but, she must

know it, she went to XYZ University). The “horn” effect is just the opposite — allowing one weak point to influence everything else.

Cultural noise: Since the candidate wants the job, she or he will provide the words the interviewer wants to hear, even if those words are not entirely truthful. For example, an applicant might say that he has no problem reporting to someone younger, or working in a team setting, when this is not the case. Interviewers should prepare questions that probe for specific examples and stay away from questions that elicit “yes” or “no” answers.

Nonverbal bias: Undue emphasis might be placed on nonverbal cues that have nothing to do with the job, such as loudness or softness of voice, or the type of handshake given.

Contrast effect: Strong(er) candidates who interview after weak(er) ones may appear more qualified than they are because of the contrast between the two. Note taking during the interview and a reasonable period of time between interviews may alleviate this.

Adapted from Society for Human Resource Management, 1998

Do's and Don'ts of Interview Questions

	You may ask. . .	Questions and Statements to stay away from. . .
AGE	Are you 18 years of age or older?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How old are you? ▪ When did you graduate from high school? ▪ How do you feel about working for a person younger than you? ▪ You must be getting close to retirement age. . .
GENDER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Do you have responsibilities other than work that will prevent you from performing specific job requirements such as traveling? ▪ What hours and days can you work? ▪ Have you ever worked under a different name? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Do you have plans for having children? ▪ Childcare is so hard to get. Do you have any baby-sitting problems? ▪ What is your maiden name? ▪ How would you feel working for a man/woman? ▪ Our customers sometimes prefer to be served by men. I hope you don't have a problem with that. ▪ Do you think your women's intuition would come in handy on this job? ▪ Tell me. . .how did a man come to be interested in this kind of work?
DISABILITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Are you able to perform the duties of the job with or without accommodation? ▪ If the applicant indicates that she/he can perform the tasks with an accommodation, you may ask: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What accommodation would you need in order to perform the tasks? ▪ Now that you have heard the hours, leave policies, and other requirements of this position, do you feel you will be able to meet these requirements? ▪ How many days were you absent from work last year? ▪ An employer may make medical inquiries or require a medical 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Do you have any disabilities? ▪ Are you in good health? ▪ Do you have any physical defects that prevent you from performing certain kinds of work? ▪ That's a noticeable limp. . .Those are very thick glasses. . .How severe is your disability? ▪ What is the prognosis for your condition? ▪ Will you require a special leave because of your disability or its treatment? ▪ Please list any conditions or diseases you were treated for in the last 3 years. ▪ How many days were you absent last year because of illness? ▪ Have you ever been treated by a psychiatrist or counselor?

	examination of all candidates at the stage a conditional offer is made.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ You mentioned your daughter has multiple sclerosis. Will that have an affect on your attendance? ▪ Do you have any family members or relatives who are disabled?
RACE	None	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There aren't very many minorities in our department. Will that be a problem for you? ▪ You look like you have an interesting family history. How would you define your race?
SEXUAL ORIENTATION	Request the name of a person to contact only after the individual is employed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What is the name of a relative to be notified in case of emergency? ▪ Are you married? ▪ <i>You people</i> are so creative, you'd be just perfect for the job. ▪ This is a real family-oriented department. Is that okay with you?
NATIONAL ORIGIN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Are you legally eligible to work in the United States? ▪ After making a conditional offer, an employer may inform the applicant that he/she will have to produce documents for work eligibility. ▪ Inquiry into languages applicants speak fluently, if it is a requirement for the job. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Where were you born? ▪ Of what country are you a citizen? ▪ Yablonski, what kind of name is that? ▪ I see you speak Spanish. Did you learn that in your native country or in school?
RELIGION	Will you be available to work the required schedule?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What church do you attend? ▪ Will you need to take time off from work to observe (name of particular religious holiday)?
EDUCATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Do you have a high school diploma or equivalent? ▪ Do you have a university degree? 	When did you graduate from high school or college?
FINANCES	None	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Do you own your own home? ▪ How long have you lived at your present address? ▪ Have your wages ever been garnished?
MILITARY	What type of education, training, and experience did you receive in the military?	What type of discharge did you receive?

UNIONS	Inquiry into membership in organizations the applicant considers relevant to the job.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Are you a union member? ▪ List all clubs, societies, and lodges you belong to.
WORKER'S COMP	None	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Have you ever filed for worker's compensation? ▪ Have you had any prior work injuries?
ARRESTS	It is best to only ask about <i>convictions</i> for crimes related to the job.	Have you ever been arrested?