

ASKING ACCEPTABLE QUESTIONS

So what should and shouldn't you ask? The Society for Human Resource Management offers these tips for avoiding some interviewing and hiring pitfalls:

- Unacceptable:** Are you a US citizen?
Acceptable: Are you lawfully employable in the United States either by virtue of citizenship or by having authorization of the INS and the US Labor Department?
- Unacceptable:** How old are you?
Acceptable: Are you over the age of 18?
- Unacceptable:** Do you have any children? What are your child-care arrangements?
Acceptable: Would you be willing to relocate? Or: Would you be available to travel? (Ask only if the position requires travel.)
- Unacceptable:** When did you graduate from high school?
Acceptable: What schools have you attended?
- Unacceptable:** What is your maiden name?
Acceptable: Have you ever been known by another name? (Only ask this question if you need to contact a former employer, because a legal liability may exist if an applicant claims that you were trying to determine his/her ethnic background and consequently didn't hire him/her because of it.)
- Unacceptable:** Do you smoke?
Acceptable: Our smoking policy is such----can you adhere to it? (Be aware of your state law, which could prohibit an employer from excluding applicants for off-the-job smoking.)
- Unacceptable:** Do you have AIDS or are you HIV-positive? (There is no acceptable way to inquire about this.)

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- **Programs may not ask what other programs you are interviewing with or have applied to, or pressure you to drop those programs or interviews.**

EMPLOYMENT INTERVIEWING GUIDELINES

- An interviewer may not ask about your religion, church, synagogue, parish, the religious holidays you observe or your political beliefs or affiliations. He or she may not ask, “Does your religion allow you to work on Saturdays?” But, the interviewer may ask something like, “The job requires you to work on Saturday. Is that a problem?”
- An interviewer may not ask about your ancestry, national origin, parentage; the naturalization status of your parents, spouse or children; or your birthplace. But, the interviewer may ask (and probably will, considering the new immigration laws) whether you are a US citizen or resident alien with the right to work in the US.
- An interviewer may not ask about your native language, the language you speak at home or how you acquired the ability to read, write or speak a foreign language. But, he or she may ask about the languages in which you are fluent, if knowledge of these languages is pertinent to the job.
- An interviewer may not ask about your age, your date of birth or the ages of your children. But, he or she may ask you whether you are over 18 years old.
- An interviewer may not ask about maiden names or whether you have changed your name; your marital status, number of children or dependents or your spouse’s occupation; whether you wish to be addressed as Miss, Mrs. or Ms. But, he or she may ask about how you like to be addressed and whether you have ever worked for the company under a different name. (You may want to mention anyway that you have worked in other companies under a different name. That becomes important when the time comes to verify educational background, other employers and so forth.)