



Guide to Unacceptable Interview Questions

All members of a search committee should be aware of these guidelines and follow them in both spirit and letter. It is best to avoid any direct or indirect questions that touch on material that may not be asked. This information about an applicant should never be discussed with regard to his or her candidacy for a position.

Subject	What may NOT be asked	What may be asked
Name	Taken name of spouse. Inquiry about the name that would seek to elicit information about the candidate's ancestry or racial or ethnic background.	Whether the applicant has worked for the University under another name. Whether any other information, such as a nickname or initials, is needed to check the candidate's work and educational record
Race, Ethnicity or Ancestry	Inquiry into an applicant's racial or ethnic background. Questions that may indirectly elicit information about an applicant's race or ethnicity.	No questions.
Age	Inquiry into the date of birth or age of an applicant	Discussion should be kept to questions about the applicant's career stage.
Gender	Inquiry into an applicant's taken spousal name or any question that pertains to only one sex. Inquiry regarding pregnancy.	No questions.
Gender Identity	Inquiry into an applicant's gender identity or transgender status.	No questions.



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Sexual Orientation	Inquiry into an applicant's sexuality	No questions.
Religion	Inquiry into an applicant's religious denomination, affiliation, church, parish, pastor, or religious holidays observed. Avoid any questions regarding organizations and/or affiliations that would identify religion.	No questions.
Birthplace	Birthplace of an applicant. Birthplace of applicant's parents, spouse, or other close relatives.	No questions.
Relatives	Names, addresses, ages, number, or other information concerning applicant's children or other relatives not employed by Yale.	Name of an applicant's relatives already employed by Yale.
Citizenship or National Origin	Any inquiries about an applicant's citizenship or whether the applicant intends to become a U.S. citizen.	"Are you legally authorized to work in the United States?"
Language	Inquiries into how applicant acquired the ability to read, write, or speak a foreign language.	What languages do you read fluently? Write fluently? Speak fluently?
Disability	Inquiry into whether the applicant has a physical or mental disability/handicap or about the nature or	You can ask an applicant about his or her ability to perform essential job-related functions, as long



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	<p>severity of the disability/handicap. Inquiry into whether an applicant has ever been addicted to illegal drugs or treated for drug abuse/alcoholism. Inquiry into whether an applicant has AIDS.</p> <p>Inquiry into whether an applicant has ever received worker’s compensation.</p> <p>Inquiry into whether an applicant has ever been absent from work due to illness.</p> <p>An employer may not inquire as to the nature, severity, treatment, or prognosis of an obvious handicap or disability or of a hidden disability or handicap voluntarily disclosed by the applicant.</p>	<p>as the questions are not phrased in terms which would elicit whether the applicant has a disability.</p>
Marital Status	<p>Are you married? Are you divorced? Where does your spouse work? What are the ages of your children, if any? What was your taken married name? What do you do for childcare?</p>	<p>No questions.</p>
Address	<p>Do you rent or own your</p>	<p>Applicant’s place of</p>



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	home? How long at each particular address?	residence.
Height, Weight, Strength	n/a	Questions regarding height, weight, or strength may only be asked if the employer can prove these requirements are necessary to do the job.
Photograph	An employer cannot ask for a photograph to accompany an application.	No questions.
Military/Veteran Status	Inquiry into the applicant's general military experience or type of discharge.	Applicant's work experience, including names, addresses of previous employers, dates of employment, reasons for leaving.
Criminal Record	Inquiry related to arrests, juvenile record, sealed court records, misdemeanors more than five years old. Any inquiry or check into a person's arrest, court, or conviction record if not substantially related to functions and responsibilities of the prospective employment.	Have you ever been convicted of a felony?
Education	Questions about education designed to determine the age of the applicant.	Inquiry into the academic, vocational, or professional education of an applicant for employment.
Experience	Inquiry into the organizations of which the	Inquiry into work experience. Inquiry into



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	applicant for employment is a member, the nature, name, or character of which would likely disclose the applicant's protected class status.	countries that applicant has visited. Inquiry into references.
Organizations	Inquiry into an applicant's membership in non-professional organizations (e.g., clubs, lodges, etc.)	Are you a member of any professional societies or organizations? (Exclude the organizations' name or character of which indicates race, creed, color, or national origin of its members)

Sources: MIT Faculty Search Committee Handbook (2002), Yale Office of General Counsel, Harvard Office of Human Resources, Harvard Office of General Counsel.