

What are unethical interview questions?

Interviews can be a challenge, and sometimes stressful -- and worrying about whether or not the interviewer is doing something he or she is not supposed to be doing should not play into the equation. However, there are certain interview questions that are considered unethical as they are designed to gain information about an applicant on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, gender, birthplace, age, sexual orientation, disability, or any other protected class. Any questions asked for the purpose of discriminating against an applicant are considered unethical.

How can I recognize if a question is unethical?

The best way to recognize an unethical interview question is to ask yourself, "Is this information relevant to the job or position?" If it is not, then be careful. It may help to make a list ahead of time of the possible unethical questions that might come up. Be prepared to recognize them, and deal with them in the way you best see fit.

What are some examples of unethical interview questions?

1. How old are you?
2. What is your maiden name?
3. Are you a U.S. citizen?
4. Do you have any children? Do you plan to have children?
5. Do you have any physical disabilities or handicaps?
6. Does your religion prevent you from working during certain times of the year?

How do I handle an unethical interview question?

When confronted with an unethical interview question, you have some options:

1. You can refuse to answer the question. This may or may not affect the interviewer's hiring decision; be ready to stand up for your rights.
2. You can swallow your pride (and privacy) and answer the question. You might feel like your privacy has been violated, but at least you are still in the running.
3. You could ask a response question. You might, if asked about your marital status, say, "I am not quite sure of the reason for that question. Is it because you are afraid that I might not be able to carry out all my duties?" This puts the responsibility back on the interviewer while at the same time informing him or her that you are aware of the unethical nature of the question.
4. You can address the real concern of the interviewer. Most of the time, unethical interview questions are a result of a genuine concern on the part of the interviewer (e.g., how long you plan to continue working at the company). It is possible to address this legitimate concern while ignoring the exact, unethically phrased question. For example, when asked about whether you plan to have children, you might say, "I plan to pursue a career, regardless of whether I decide to raise a family."

How can I prepare for unethical interview questions?

Deciding what questions are unethical and how you should go about dealing with them can be tough, especially when you are in the middle of an interview. It helps to be aware of these issues beforehand and sort out for yourself exactly how you want to approach them. Here are some tips you can use in preparing for an interview:

1. Make a list of sensitive questions you may be asked
2. Decide how much information you are comfortable releasing and where your boundaries are
3. Determine which of the approaches listed above you feel most comfortable using

Practice, practice, practice!

Remember, practicing or doing a mock interview will help you become more comfortable with this sometimes stressful process. The more prepared you are, the better you will be able to present yourself in the best light.

