

Interviewing – what are acceptable questions?

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When advertising and interviewing for a position within your business, you should be aware of potential pitfalls when asking particular questions at interview or on application forms so as to avoid any later claims of discrimination or favourable treatment.

Here a few common questions:

1 How old are you? UNACCEPTABLE

Age is a specific ground for discrimination, and is inappropriate to ask either in an application process or interview situation. Age discrimination is a denial of equal employment opportunities as it makes assumptions based on the age of the potential employee. By specifying a particular age requirement involves the stereotyping of people according to their age and can also be associated with assumptions about maturity, experience, physical condition and financial status. It is acceptable for the employer to ask the age of the employee once the employee is the successful applicant (not at interview) if the relevant Award rates of pay are age-based so as to determine the applicable wage.

2 Do you have small children at home? UNACCEPTABLE

Discrimination on the basis of sex.

3 Are there any languages you speak fluently? If so, what are they? UNACCEPTABLE

This question should only be asked if the job is a language-related position, for example an interpreter. Otherwise it is not acceptable and could be construed as racial discrimination.

4 Would you be available for overtime work on Saturdays and Sundays? ACCEPTABLE

If it is an essential part of the job it is hoped that employers, where possible, would accommodate the religious observances of the applicant if it is reasonably possible to do so.

5 Are you able to travel one week every month? ACCEPTABLE

If the job requires regular travelling as part of the normal duties of work, then this is an acceptable question – it should be noted that the same questions should be asked of all applicants in the position.

6 Do you have any impairments, physical, mental or medical, which would interfere with your ability to perform this job? ACCEPTABLE

This is acceptable because the employer has the right to know the capabilities of his or her employees in order to fit them into the correct roles. However it must not be too intrusive or be used as the sole reason not to grant the position to the applicant.



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