

# Top Ten Interview No No's

MRINetwork  
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Use the following list to help you stay out of trouble and keep candidates interested in working for your company.

1. **Stay Away from Humor** Jokes, anecdotes and witticisms are the most readily misunderstood means of communication. To avoid sending the wrong message, speak literally. Also, attempts at humor on sensitive subjects (gender, age, national origin, etc.) are never acceptable.
2. **No Opening Monologue** It is often tempting to have a monologue at the beginning of your time with a candidate. Giving too much information about the type of candidate you are seeking, or providing a substantial amount of information about the position and responsibilities can be detrimental. Giving too many details up front leads a candidate to tell you what you want to hear, instead of what he/she actually thinks. Do simple introductions and quickly move to your list of questions, allowing the candidate to do the majority of the talking. Feel free to share more information at the end of the interview.
3. **Avoid Closed Ended Questions** The first type of question to avoid is one that can be answered by a "yes" or "no". Even if you think "yes" or "no" is your desired response, rework the question to allow for a more thorough response. Unexpected, beneficial information is often revealed when your questions allow the interviewee to elaborate with his/her response.  
EXAMPLE – Poor: Do you have experience in customer service?  
EXAMPLE – Good: Tell me about your customer service experience?
4. **Rephrase General Questions** To simplify the interview process, managers sometimes use standard questions that can be used for any job. However, ask a generic question and you will receive a generic answer. To improve basic inquiries, try to target your questions to the specific position.  
EXAMPLE – Poor: Have you ever managed anyone before?  
EXAMPLE – Good: Tell me about a time you when you managed a group of people.
5. **Avoid Leading Questions** It is good to control the flow of the interview through the questions you ask, but do not lead an applicant too far. Be careful to not give your candidate the preferred answers by the way you ask your questions. When you prepare your list of questions, figure out the exact wording of every question.  
EXAMPLE – Poor: Would you take care of an irate customer and help them out if they called to complain?  
EXAMPLE – Good: What would you do if an irate customer called to complain?
6. **Be Careful with Age** The only times you can ask about age are when it is a requirement of a job duty, or you need to determine if a work permit is required. Do not even inquire what year someone graduated from school; it can be interpreted as an attempt to determine age. If you need to ask about age, phrase your question as follows: "Are you at least 18 years old?"
7. **Never Ask About Race, Color, National Origin, and Gender** It is rarely appropriate or legal to ask questions in regards to race, color, national origin or gender. If you believe that you have an exception to this rule, consult with an attorney for advice before the interview to ensure that you are correct.
8. **Do Not Ask about Religion or Sexual Orientation** Although candidates may volunteer religious or sexual oriented information in an interview, you still need to be careful not to discriminate. Ask questions that are relevant to work experience or qualifications. Also avoid questions about religious holiday celebrations.
9. **Do Not Discriminate for Health or Disabilities** You may not ask about smoking, health related questions, or disabilities in an interview. Also, if you have more than 15 employees, you are required by law to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. The US Department of Justice provides a thorough question and answers document about this Act at the following URL:  
<http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/q%26aeng02.htm>

10. **Avoid inquires about Marital Status, Children, Personal Life, Pregnancy and Arrest Record**

You may not ask questions about these topics. These kinds of questions could be tempting to ask if you are interviewing for a position requiring travel; however, you can only explain the travel requirements and confirm that the requirements are acceptable. If you believe you have an exception to this rule, consult with an attorney for advice before the interview to ensure that you are correct.

There are some rare exceptions to the above rules. For example, when interviewing for positions where children are involved, it is often acceptable to ask for more details about criminal background. Or, when a church is interviewing a pastor, it is acceptable to ask detailed questions about the candidate's religious beliefs. Again, to keep yourself and company safe, if you believe you have an exception to the above rules, contact an attorney and avoid the risk.