Handling Inappropriate Interview Questions

You have graduated, updated your resume, completed a job search, and now you need to prepare for the interview. One of the things to consider before entering the interview is how you will answer the various questions you will be faced with.

Some of the questions will be very easy for you to answer such as: where and when did you graduate? Other questions may take some deliberation on your part in order to answer in an appropriate and effective manner.

An example of a more difficult interview question is: what are your best skills and what are things you have difficulty with? Another category includes questions that are inappropriate for interviews.

There are guidelines set by government that outline topics that should not be asked during an interview. These questions are deemed inappropriate usually due to the personal nature of the information and because the information obtained may be used to discriminate against a particular group.

Sometimes new interviewers may be unaware of topics that should not be asked of a candidate and may simply ask a question out of curiosity. However you may enter an interview setting where you feel that questions asked are offensive and discriminating. It is important to be aware that you may be asked an inappropriate interview question at some point during the interview and job search process.

Topics that should not be asked of job candidates:

- Ethnicity, culture, or parental background
- Marital status or sexual preference
- Race and gender
- Religion or your religious practices
- Health or physical limitations
- Children, childcare, or family plans

Imagine you have found a job with a great salary and you are ready for the interview. If the interviewer asks you a question regarding your race and religion, how do you plan to respond?

It is a good idea to think about how you will respond if you are asked an inappropriate interview question in advance, since this type of question may make or break your interview and your chances of getting the position.

Tips for Answering

- Refuse to answer. State that you feel uncomfortable disclosing the information at this time.
- Simply answer the question. If you feel comfortable disclosing the information you can simply answer the question.
- Inquire how the question relates to the position or ask the interviewer to clarify the question.
- Redirect the question. Answer the question in a way to address the underlying issue or to promote your skills for the job. Ignore the question but compose your response in order to change the subject.
Remind the interviewer that the question is inappropriate. Please note that this tactic may not help you to get the job but if you find the question offensive it is an option to consider.

End the interview and leave. If you are asked questions that are blatantly offensive and discriminatory you may wish to leave the interview and find a different employer.

**Activities to Do On Your Own**

- Practice a mock interview at CAPs or with someone you know. You could even try recording your voice or videotaping yourself to observe how you respond in the interview setting.

**Other Resources**

- [CaPS Tips on Answering Inappropriate Interview Questions](#)
- [University of Alberta Office of Human Rights](#)
- "Hey, You Can't Ask Me That!": How To Respond To Inappropriate Job Interview Questions
- Job Search 101: Inappropriate Questions
- Answering Inappropriate Interview Questions
- Illegal and Inappropriate Interview Questions
- Handling Inappropriate Interview Questions