

## Interviewing Questions Do's and Don'ts

Category	Legal Question	Illegal Questions
Gender and Family Arrangements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If applicant has relatives already employed by the organization (see NAU policy # 1.05)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gender of applicant</li> <li>• Number of children</li> <li>• Marital Status</li> <li>• Spouse's occupation</li> <li>• Child care arrangements</li> <li>• Health care coverage through spouse</li> <li>• For example: Is your spouse looking for work in this area? <i>(attempt to gain marital status information)</i></li> <li>• For example: Do your children attend school? How old are they? <i>(not job related)</i></li> </ul>
Race		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applicant's race or color of skin</li> <li>• Photo to be affixed to application form</li> <li>• For example: You have a distinctive accent, are you Asian? <i>(illegal)</i></li> </ul>
National Origin or ancestry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whether applicant has a legal right to be employed in the U.S.</li> <li>• Ability to speak/write English fluently (if job related)</li> <li>• Other languages spoken (if job related)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ethnic association with a surname</li> <li>• Birthplace of applicant or applicant's parents</li> <li>• Nationality, lineage, or national origin</li> <li>• Nationality of applicant's spouse</li> <li>• Whether applicants is a citizen of another country</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applicant’s native tongue/English proficiency</li> <li>• Maiden name (of married woman)</li> </ul>
Religion		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Religious affiliation/availability for weekend work</li> <li>• Religious holidays observed</li> <li>• For example: Flagstaff has a rather small Jewish community, from the sound of your name that might be of interest to you. <i>(attempts to gain religious information)</i></li> <li>• For example: Could we help you get in touch with a minister, rabbi, etc. while you are visiting our campus? <i>(attempt to gain religious information)</i></li> </ul>
Age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If applicant is over age 18</li> <li>• If applicant is over 21 if job-related</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Date of birth</li> <li>• Date of high school graduation</li> <li>• Age</li> <li>• For example: From your credentials, we were expecting someone much older. How old are you? <i>(may cause applicant to question whether age is a factor in the decision. Age discrimination is illegal)</i></li> </ul>

Disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whether applicant can perform the essential job-related functions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If applicant has a disability</li> <li>• Nature or severity of a disability</li> <li>• Whether applicant has ever filed a worker's compensation claim</li> <li>• Recent or past surgeries and dates</li> <li>• Past medical problems</li> <li>• For example: Will your physical/mental impairment allow you to do this job? <i>(illegal based on Americans with Disabilities Act)</i></li> </ul>
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conviction if job-related</li> <li>• Academic, vocational, or professional schooling</li> <li>• Training received in the military</li> <li>• Membership in any trade or professional association</li> <li>• Job references</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number and kinds of arrests</li> <li>• Height or weight except if a bona fide occupational qualification</li> <li>• Veteran status, discharge status, branch of service</li> <li>• Contact in case of an emergency (at application or interview stage)</li> <li>• For example: This department is made up entirely of men. As a female, would you find that difficult? <i>(may imply that gender is a qualification and being considered by the search committee)</i></li> </ul>

## **Tips for committee members before the interview:**

- It's all in the details: remember this is the applicant's first impression of their potential career experience with your department, make every effort to make them feel welcomed and comfortable.
- **Prepare:** plan the interview questions you will be asking with the key skills, words, and experiences you are seeking from the candidate. Be sure to include questions to assess the candidates' abilities to occupy a safety/security sensitive role when applicable. All committee members should have a typed final copy of the interview questions and be familiar with them in advance. This will keep you on track for follow-up questions, if needed.
- **Develop:** your rating criteria and list the key attributes you are seeking in an applicant's response to your questions. It is helpful for each committee member to score responses to interview questions. This helps your committee determine who is the most qualified candidate.
- **Consistency:** ensure questions asked of applicants remain the same for all applicants in the interviewing process.
- **Record:** take notes from the interview and be aware the notes are discoverable based on a legal action. It is recommended to document applicant's responses clearly and accurately.
- Sometime it is not financially feasible to bring an applicant to campus. In this case, be sure to give the applicant the option to come to campus on their own. If this is not possible, departments may do phone interviews with some or all candidates. It is important that you ask phone interviewees the same questions that are asked of face-to-face interviewees.

# Sample Interview Questions to Choose From

## Opening Questions

- Tell us a bit about your work background, and then give us a description of how you think it relates to this position.
- Why are you interested in this position?
- After learning about this opportunity, what made you take the next step and apply for the job?
- What do you know about NAU?

## Behavioral

- If someone told you that you had made an error, describe how you would react and what you would say in your defense?
- If someone asked for your assistance with a matter that is outside the parameters of your job description, what would you do?
- Tell me about a time when you were a part of a great team. What was your part in making the team effective?
- Can you tell me about a time during your previous (or current) employment when you suggested a better way to perform a process?
- Tell me about a career goal that you have accomplished and why it was important to you.
- Give an example of a time when you were not able to meet a deadline. What did you do?
- What strengths did you rely on in your last (or current) position to make you successful in your work?
- What do you do when you believe you are right and your boss disagrees with you? Give me an example of when this has happened in your career and how you handled it.

- Tell me about a situation you wish that you had handled differently based on the outcome. What was the situation? What would you change about your behavior (or will change) when faced with a similar situation?
- It's 4:30 on a Friday afternoon. Your supervisor gives you an assignment that needs to be finished by 8:00 Monday morning. You have already made plans to be away the entire weekend. What would you do?
- What did you do in your present or past position to contribute toward a teamwork environment? Be specific.
- The \_\_\_\_\_ department can be very stressful at times. Describe ways you deal with stress and the types of situations you feel are most stressful to handle?
- Give an example of a situation in which you went above and beyond to get a job done. Explain the outcome. How did you feel when the job was done?
- Have you ever had people give you assignments without complete instructions? How did you handle it?
- How would you rate your communication skills (scale of 1-10)? Please explain.
- How would you prioritize the following scenario?
  - Your phone is ringing
  - Your boss needs a report
  - There is a \_\_\_\_\_ deadline
  - An angry employee (student, \_\_\_\_\_, or, \_\_\_\_\_) is here to see you

## **Professional Skills**

- Provide two examples of when you worked on a group project. How effective were you?
- Describe your management/supervision style. Explain why this works best for you.
- Give us an example of when you did not follow an established company policy or procedure. What were the circumstances? Please explain.
- Describe your style when working with groups. How does that differ from when you are functioning as the leader in the group?
- Describe a time when you had to go above and beyond the call of duty in order to get a job done. What was the outcome?

- Provide an example of one of the more difficult or challenging problems in your professional career that you have resolved in the past year.

### **Diversity Awareness**

- How do you deal with people who think differently than you?
- What kinds of experiences have you had in relating with people whose backgrounds are different than your own?
- What skills or experiences do you possess that would enable you to communicate effectively with individuals with backgrounds different than your own?

### **Interpersonal/Human Relations**

- Give us an example of a time when you were able to successfully communicate with another person, even when that person may not have liked you.
- How would your co-workers describe you? Your last supervisor?
- What are your strengths and weaknesses? What have you done to improve on your weaknesses? How will this job help you?
- How do you go about gaining the respect of others?
- Describe a situation in which you handled an irate student, customer, or co-worker. What was the outcome?
- Share an example of an important professional goal you have set in the past and explain how you reached it.
- How would your co-workers describe your work style?
- Which is more desirable: A business that is run in an efficient business-like manner OR a business that is run in a personal and friendly way?
- Describe how you like to be supervised, and the best relationship you have had with a previous boss.
- What do you do when others reject or resist your ideas or actions?
- What do you think are the best and worst parts of working in a group? How do handle working in groups?

### **Ethical**

- Suppose your supervisor asked you to get information for them that you know is confidential and he/she should not have access to. What would you do?
- If you observed a co-worker who made inappropriate sexual or racial remarks to another employee, and it was obvious to you that the situation was creating an uncomfortable environment, what would you do?
- Explain the phrase ‘work ethic’ and describe yours.
- Define professional behavior and/or conduct appropriate in the workplace.
- Have you ever faced a significant ethical problem at work? How did you handle it?
- If you saw a co-worker doing something dishonest, what would you do?
- What would you do if someone in management asked you to do something unethical?
- Tell me about a time that you have experienced a loss for doing what is right.
- If you knew that your supervisor was doing something unethical, what would you do?

## **Creative**

- What was the most creative thing you did in your last job?
- What is your interpretation of “success”?
- Describe an ideal work environment or “the perfect job.”
- In what way(s) do you express your personality in the workplace?

## **Customer Service Skills**

- Tell me about a time when you went out of your way to go above and beyond the call of duty.
- Describe a process or system that you improved so customers would be better served.
- Tell me about a time when you asked for feedback on your customer service skills from your manager or co-worker and then used that response to improve your

work.

- Tell me about a time when you knew that your customer might not get what he or she needed on time. How did you handle this?
- Tell me about a time when you had to say “No” to a customer because it was against company policy.
- Tell me about a time when you had trouble working with a difficult or demanding customer. How did you handle this?
- Tell me about a situation in which you “lost it” or did not do your best with a customer. What did you do about this?

## **General**

- What unique qualities or experiences would you bring to this position that no other applicant can?
- Could you share with us a recent accomplishment of which you are most proud?
- What would you have liked to do more of in your last position? What held you back?
- What are your qualifications in your area of expertise, i.e., what skills do you have that make you the best candidate for this position? Include any special training you have had (on-the-job, college, continuing education, seminars, reading, etc.) and related work experience.
- Tell me about your present or last job. Why did you choose it? Why did you/do you want to leave?
- What was your primary contribution/achievement? Biggest challenge?
- What are your short-term and long-term goals?
- In what areas would you like to develop further? What are your plans to do that?
- What are some positive aspects of your last employment/employer? What are some negative aspects?
- What are your career path interests?
- What do you know about our company?

- If the position requires traveling, explain the specifics of the travel requirements, and ask if the candidate can meet the requirements.
- If the position required it, would you be willing to relocate?
- If you were offered this position, when would you be available to start?
- If you are the successful applicant, how would you expect to be different after a year in this position?
- Now that you have learned about our company and the position you are applying for, what hesitation or reluctance would you have in accepting this job if we offer it to you?
- Tell me anything else you would like us to know about you that will aid us in making our decision.
- What questions would you like to ask me?
- How would best describe the way you learn?
- How would you describe your level accuracy and attention to detail?
- What sort of direction do you want from a supervisor or someone who delegates work to you? Do you like detailed instructions or would you rather have highlights? Would you want instructions in writing?
- What is your definition of a team player? Do you prefer working as a team member or as an individual? Explain your preferences and how it has impacted your prior work experience.