



Interview Questions

Competency-based, or behavioral questions, allow people with disabilities to talk about their skills and abilities and draw from their life experiences. Behavioral questions are open-ended (not yes or no) and typically begin with “tell me about”, “describe a time”, “how do you”, or “give me an example of a time when”.

Poorly worded questions	Appropriately worded question	Rationale
“Do you have a disability?”	“Can you tell me how you might perform (insert the key job task you are asking about)?”	Employers cannot ask a person if they have a disability. They can ask how a person would complete the specific job task.
“Tell me about yourself”	“Can you take me through your résumé?”	This is a culturally-biased question - some cultures, and some individuals, may find it difficult to ‘sell’ their skills.
“What type of work environment do you prefer?”	Ask a question that is directly related to the skills needed for the job. For instance, in a customer service job, you might ask “can you tell me how you might handle a customer complaint about ...”	This question assumes that the individual has sufficient work experience to answer this question. It also implies that the employer has a certain type of work environment, and may not be open to accommodations or differing work styles.
“How would you describe yourself?”		This question is unrelated to the skills of the job, and favours candidates that have strong verbal skills, or a lot of practice in interviews. A practiced and polished answer to an interview question does not make the interviewee the best fit for the job.

Poorly worded questions	Appropriately worded question	Rationale
“What are your strengths?”	“Can you tell me about a time when you were able to complete a project ahead of schedule?” (ask about a specific strength or skill that you are seeking).	Some people with disabilities have never learned to communicate about themselves in flattering terms and feel that it is boasting.
“We are looking for someone who thinks outside of the box. Give me an example of when you did this.”	“Can you give me an example of how you solved a problem in an unexpected way?”	Some people with disabilities, such as people who have Autism Spectrum Disorder, are unfamiliar with slang or euphemisms. Use clear language.
“Why did you apply for this job?”		<p>For many people with a disability, this might be their first job, or economic necessity might be a primary consideration in applying. This does not mean that they are not the best fit for the position.</p> <p>The best practice would be to not use this question at all, as it is unrelated to the duties of the job.</p>
“Which job have you found the most difficult?”	“Can you tell me about a time that you had to make a change and how you dealt with that?”	Do not assume that the person has a work history to draw from. By expanding the question to include ‘change’ instead of ‘change on the job’, it allows all candidates to address the question.

Assess all candidates consistently, and based on criteria identified from a job analysis. Don’t divert into “gut feel” or rely on ‘intuition’.

Author Credit

Hire for Talent: <https://www.hirefortalent.ca/>

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