14 Questions to You Should Never Ask at a Job Interview

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Scored a job interview? Congratulations! Want to stay in the running and make it past the first interview? Then avoid asking these alarmingly common deal-breaker questions. We all know how important it is not only to intelligently answer the hiring manager's questions, but also to ask our own questions (so we seem engaged and interested). Some questions, though, should never be asked in a job interview:

How much does the job pay? This is by far the top pet-peeve question for hirers. They want to think that you're so in love with the job that money isn't such a big issue for you. "Raising the subject of money during the interview stage may give the impression, rightly or wrongly, that all you care about is money, as opposed to working as part of a team and giving your heart, soul, and first-born child to the corporation," says Todd Moster, a Los Angeles legal recruiter.

Salary is the elephant in the room that no one acknowledges during the interview phase, says Moster. You'll get a chance to discuss pay once you get an offer, but you may not get an offer if you discuss pay first.

What is the benefits package? Ditto. If you don't love your career, it will show in your interview. Take a few minutes to take a free career interest test if you want to know your best career fit.

What are the hours? "This is the question that makes me cringe more than any other," says financial-industry executive recruiter Paul Solomon. "Try 24-7, like every other position these days. Wall Street managers don't want a clock watcher, so when I hear that question, I know the candidate won't be the right fit."

How much vacation time will I get? If you want to give the impression that you're more interested in time off than working, ask this question. Otherwise, save it until after an offer has been extended, recommends Cathleen Faerber, managing director of The Wellesley Group, an executive search company.

Can I telecommute? Wait to inquire about telecommuting until you're well established in your new job and have a good track record. If you ask the question in an interview, "they're going to wonder why you would want to get out of the office before you even see it," says John Kador, the author of "301 Best Questions to Ask on Your Interview."

If you really want to work from home, starting your own business may be the best career option for you. Take a free entrepreneur test to see if you have what it takes.
What kind of company is this? If you have to ask this, it shows you didn't have the initiative and incentive to prepare for your interview. That doesn't bode well for how you'll handle the job itself. Before you even write your resume and cover letter, you should know all about the company. "There's no excuse for going into an interview unprepared and not being knowledgeable about the company," says career coach Cheryl Palmer.

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What happened to the last person who had this job? Of course you might be curious, but don't ask. "What's the difference? It's not your business to know," says career coach Michael Coritsidis. Asking will just make you look nosy. The same goes for questions that probe into the personal life of the interviewer, cautions Sharon Blaivas, president of Shake Up My Resume. You may be trying to be friendly, "but these may be sensitive areas and have nothing to do with the job," she says.

What do you like least about your employer? Sure, you may have heard dirt about the company, but an interview is not the place to bring it up. "It will make you seem like you focus on negatives or don't think the company is representing itself correctly," says Richard Kirby, the author of "Fast Track Your Job Search." A little research will give you the scoop about whether this is a company you want to work for.

How much help will I get? If there is a team, you'll be introduced to the members, says executive recruiter Bruce Hurwitz. "Asking about help gives the impression that you can't do the job by yourself and the company will have to do more hiring just to keep you," he says.

Can I work at another job part time? Employers want someone who is devoted to the company, not someone who could burn out by juggling too much, says Robert Galinsky, founder of the New York Reality TV School.

Do you do background checks? You like red flags? Wave the background-check question in front of the interviewer. "The hiring manager will start to wonder if they need to call security or if they're sitting across from a felon," says Adriana Llames, the author of "Career Sudoku: 9 Ways to Win the Job Search Game."

What is your policy on drug use? Believe it or not, this isn't an uncommon question, says sales and leadership coach Dave Sheffield. "The funniest part of this question is that the interviewee sees nothing wrong with it," he says.

How did I do? Sure, you want to find out if you're a contender after an interview. "But asking that question puts an interviewer on the spot, and they're rarely in a position to answer," says Frances Cole Jones, the author of "The Wow Factor." Plus, it makes you sound unprofessional. She suggests an effective alternative like, "So what are my next steps?"
No questions: "By far the worst question is the one you never ask: Not asking any questions during an interview shows a lack of interest or comprehension, or can make you look desperate, someone who will take any job under any circumstances," says motivational speaker Barry Mather, the author of "Filling the Glass." "Nobody wants someone nobody wants."