

Good and bad job interview questions with polite indirect questions

Divide the cards you are given into questions that the interviewer might ask (e.g. questions your future boss) and questions that the interviewee/ candidate/ potential employee might ask (e.g. questions you might ask your future boss). Not all of the questions are good ones to ask but you will discuss which questions are good later, so just think about who is probably speaking.

Hint: There should be the same number of each kind of question.

Check with a copy of the worksheet.

Optional: Divide each category into questions you wouldn't ask (at all), questions which need to be more polite, and questions which are okay to ask (exactly) as they are. Then discuss a few classifications as a class.

How can you make (some of) the questions more polite?

Cross off the question starters below which don't make the questions more polite:

- "Can I ask...?"
- "Can I check...?"
- "Can you tell me...?"
- "Could you (possibly) tell me...?"
- "Did you already explain...?"
- "Do you (happen to) know...?"
- "Do you mind if I ask...?"
- "I want to know..."
- "I'd be interested in hearing..."
- "I'd like to know..."
- "Please tell me..."
- "Will you tell me...?"
- "You need to tell me..."
- "Would you say that...?"

What goes after those forms? How does the direct question need to change?

Change groups. Shuffle up each category of cards (still keeping the candidate and interviewer cards separate). Take one pack of cards each and put them face down on the table. Choose one card at random and ask the question, ask a more polite version of the question, or reject it and choose another. Your partner will answer the question that you asked, then discuss if you made the right decision about the question(s).

If you haven't yet, divide the cards into ones which are okay as they are, ones which need to be made more polite, and ones which you shouldn't ask at all. Then brainstorm more questions of each kind.

Brainstorm questions that you might want to ask before an interview, e.g. by telephone or email. Then roleplay asking those questions and getting replies.

Cards to cut up/ Partial answers

Questions by the interviewer (e.g. future boss)	Questions by the interviewee (= candidate/ potential employee)
How old are you?	What is the salary?
Are you married?	What can I do if I don't like my boss?
Do you have children?	Is there a lot of overtime?
Why did/ do you want to leave your job?	Is my future boss a nice guy?
Are you planning to have children?	What will my (main) duties be?
Why do you want to work for (company)?	Will I have to... in my job?
How did you find out about this job?	Will I have the opportunity to travel?
Are you a good team player?	Will there be training (in IT)?
Do you have any experience of...?	Are there opportunities for promotion?
How would you feel about working abroad?	Where would I be based?
What do you want to be doing in 20 years?	How much paid vacation is there?
How do you deal with conflict at work?	What time will this interview finish?
How would your colleagues describe you?	How much notice do I have to give to quit?
What has been your biggest achievement?	When will I know if I've got the job or not?
What does your present job involve?	Do I need to be able to program?
What did you study at university?	Is there a cafeteria?
Do you have to... in your present job?	Is there a shuttle bus to the office?
What can you contribute to this company?	How will the merger affect this job?

Questions by the interviewer	Questions by the interviewee
Why are you the best person for this job?	Will the news about you affect this job?
Have you applied for many other jobs?	How does your company feel about...?
Have you attended any conferences?	Will I have to wear a suit and tie?
Do you have a driving license?	I can't drive. Will that be a problem?
Can you speak any other languages?	Will I have my own desk?
Are you familiar with SAP software?	Are there any other perks of the job?
Have you been waiting long?	Are there (usually) bonuses?
Do you have any questions for me?	Do people tend to socialise after work?
Would you like anything to drink?	Will I be able to develop my... skills?
Did you have any trouble finding us?	Is paternity/ maternity leave available?
Is this your first time in (<i>place</i>)?	How many sick days can I take?
How is your experience related to this job?	Will I be able to do this job?
Do you have any medical problems?	What software will I have to use (for...)?
What are your main weaknesses?	Is here okay?
Are you a natural leader?	How often will I need to use English?
Can you work under strict deadlines?	When would the job start?
What skills have you learnt in your job?	Is there a probationary period?
Do you have a copy of your CV?	Is this suit okay?
Can you find your own way out?	Do you have a flexitime system?