

Interview Tips for Baby Boomers

By Kate Lorenz, CareerBuilder.com

You're well-educated, your résumé screams experience and you're vigorously looking for a new job. So why are you so nervous?

Searching for a new job when you're 50 or older presents a whole new set of challenges. As if interviews weren't intimidating enough, now you're trying to dispel all sorts of stereotypes about older job seekers to an interviewer who's 15 years your junior.

Employment discrimination based on age against anyone over age 40 is illegal under the Federal Age Discrimination in Employment Act. But according to Gail Geary, career management consultant and author of *Over-40 Job Search Guide* (Jist Works), older job seekers often find themselves uncomfortably struggling to answer tough age-related questions during interviews.

Here are five of the most common age-related interview questions – and how to field them gracefully – according to Geary's book:

1. "Will you be using this job as a bridge to retirement?"

Other variations of this question include "Where do you expect to be five years from now?" and "What are your long-term career goals?" Geary's book states that if you're over age 50 and look your age, openly addressing the retirement issue may benefit you.

Reassure your interviewer that you are excited about the position and plan to continue working for a long time. If you're relatively young and look even younger, you may not need to address the issue at all.

2. "What are your salary requirements?"

This question is tough for everyone, but it can be even harder for older candidates with decades of experience who do not want their previous high salaries working against them.

When faced with this question, first respond with a cool, noncommittal answer. If pressed, give a salary range based on your research. For example, say: "I've researched the salary range for this position in our area and have found the typical salary range to be from \$125,000 to \$175,000, plus bonus. Is this what you have in mind?"

3. "Do you have enough energy, stamina or brain power to do the job?"

It's unlikely you will face this question outright, Geary writes, but you may be asked something like: "How do you feel about working in a fast-paced environment?" or "Are you able to come in early and work late?"

This type of question is your cue to talk about your drive, energy and enthusiasm for the job.

Give specific examples that reveal your energy using the STAR technique, where you describe the Situation, Task, Action and Result. Also keep in mind that this type of question reveals clues about the job's demands, hours, deadlines and overall expectations.

4. "Aren't you overqualified for the position?"

Geary says the question of overqualification is common for mature job seekers, particularly those with 20 or more years of experience. To help avoid this problem outright, Geary suggests including only 10 to 15 years of relevant experience on the résumé.

If the question does come up, emphasize your strengths and accomplishments, not the length of your experience – the interviewer may be concerned that you will have excessively high salary requirements or won't be a fit with the company culture. Remember to always stay positive and try to determine and address the real reason why the interviewer is asking the question.

5. "How old are you?"

Again, most interviewers are savvy enough not to ask you this question outright. But they may ask: "When did you graduate from Walker High?" or "I have a friend who graduated from Duke. When were you there?"

This type of question is generally illegal, and you can graciously refuse to answer. Other tactics include responding with humor, or addressing the question behind the question: "I am incredibly energetic and expect to be working for a long time." Whether or not you choose to reveal your age, always keep the atmosphere positive.

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