



ANSWERING JOB INTERVIEW QUESTIONS ABOUT SERVING TIME

If you've served time in prison, expect to be questioned closely during a job interview. The key to dealing with prison or jail time when responding to interview questions is to make the experience as positive as possible. Work double-time to outshine the other candidates with your positive outlook and qualifications for the job. We encourage you to look over the following tips and to come to Navigating Your Job Search (Tuesdays & Wednesdays at 10AM) to learn more helpful ways to discuss serving prison time during an interview.

HERE ARE SEVERAL TIPS YOU MAY FIND USEFUL:

- Find the best collection of resources that address the criminal record employment dilemma on the ExOffenderReentry.com site. The resources include books, DVDs, free articles and more. Inmates without access to the Internet will have to rely on family and friends to obtain these resources.
- Don't count on expungement — the court sealing of criminal records — to keep employers from knowing that you've served time in prison. Expungement is no longer a reliable strategy for ex-offender job seekers because in this digital era, commercial databases are slow to update what courts have forgiven; expunged records now often turn up in criminal background checks ordered by employers.
- Job seekers with prison records should be aware of the [Federal Bonding Program](#). It which essentially provides insurance guaranteeing worker honesty — an incentive to employers to hire an at-risk applicant.
- The **Work Opportunity Tax Credit** is a tax break for employers who hire certain workers, including ex-offenders.
- The U.S. Military accepts enrollments from those who have served time for misdemeanors and felonies. The pathway to enlist begins with applying for a moral waiver. The moral waiver process varies with each military service. Ask military recruiters for more information.

HOW TO RESPOND TO “TELL ME ABOUT YOUR INCARCERATION...”

- Describe how it was one of the best learning experiences you've ever had. Explain the crossover (transferable) skills and education you acquired in prison.
- Say that it helped you make changes in your life, so that the behavior that got you in trouble is history. Part of your old problem was hanging out with the wrong people. In your new life, you hang out with a different group of people who do not get into trouble.
- Never lie to an interviewer or put false information on your resume or application. This will disqualify you when the employer does a background check or checks your references.

Don't give too much information or too many details about your past. Instead, answer questions directly. Address any concerns an employer might have about your past. Then, steer the interview back to your skills and the positive traits that you bring to the job. For example:

"I can see why that gap in my work history might concern you. But that was several years ago and since then, I have maintained a solid work record. I come to work on time and don't call in sick. I am a very hard worker and quick learner."

- Avoid talking about negative issues at the very beginning or the end of an interview. Employers are more likely to remember their first and last impression. If possible, try to address your criminal history in the middle of the interview. Then, end with a summary of your qualifications.
- If asked to give information about your past (convictions, incarceration, drug and/or alcohol abuse), say something like:

"I understand that you have questions about my background. I assure you that I have learned from my mistakes and have corrected past problems. I have spent the past few years training for this career path because I am more mature now and have a solid plan for my future. If given the chance, I will give your company 100 percent effort. I will be at work early, and even stay late if necessary. I know you will be more than satisfied if you hire me."

- Use every opportunity to talk about your current activities and future plans. Emphasize your education and job training, community work, and other activities you have done since your release. Talk about your career goals, how you chose them, and how the job you are applying for fits those goals.

GOOD RESOURCES:

Exoffenderreentry.com

Work Opportunity Tax Credit:

<http://www.doleta.gov/business/incentives/opptax/>

Federal Bonding Program:

Bonds4jobs.com

List of companies that hire Felons:

<http://www.ranker.com/list/list-of-companies-that-hire-felons/business-and-company-info>