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WHAT IF I HAVE TO TAKE A LIE DETECTOR TEST?

Not many employers can or will make you take a polygraph test, aka a lie detector test. In fact, under the US Employee Polygraph Protection Act of 1988, most employers may not legally ask you to take such a test, either as part of the hiring process, nor once you are employed. The only employers who *can* require a polygraph are federal, state and local government agencies; and even then, most don't bother. The fact is, lie detectors don't work. Scientists say that, despite claims to the contrary, there is no evidence that polygraph tests can detect lies any better than pure chance. In fact, most industrialized nations do not use polygraphs, labeling them pseudoscience. Guess which one country still insists on using them? Here's some advice in case you apply for a government job, and have to take a polygraph test: **Don't try to beat the machine.** Yes, a thousand self-published pamphlets and web sites will give you all kinds of advice on how to fool a polygraph. And many of these tricks actually work. But polygraph testing personnel are trained to look for those cheats. And anyway, it's never a good idea to lie at any time during the hiring process, fancy electronic machine or not. **Don't lie.** When an employer or government agency hooks you up to a lie detector, they're not trying to coerce out of you every bad thing you ever did. They're not the cops. They want to know if you are trustworthy. So tell the truth on the test, even if you have to admit negative things about yourself. For instance, many employers don't really care if you smoked pot in college that one time. They just want to know that you will honestly answer the question. If you have any real, serious secrets you want to keep, I'd suggest you simply don't apply for jobs that require a polygraph test. And if the polygraph tester asks you something terribly inappropriate, do what you should do in any job interview if that happens -- walk out.

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