



Do's & Don'ts of Interviewing

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Interview!

The word has a way of making your palms sweat and your knees knock. But before you start to frantically prepare for your first meeting with a potential employer, pause for a moment and take a breath. Now, give yourself a pat on the back for getting the interview in the first place. Although it may not seem like it at first, interviews do get easier with practice. So, if you have a chance to go on an interview, take it – even if you don't know if the job is right for you. Better you make your mistakes at an interview for a job you don't really want, than one you want more than anything in this world.

We have known job seekers who went on fifty interviews before getting a job offer and then there are those lucky few who get an offer the first time out. Wherever you fall on this spectrum, remember...don't get discouraged. Employers can easily detect a negative attitude or someone with little self-confidence, so approach every interview in an upbeat, positive manner.

The Right Packaging

Just as you will be paying close attention to the image the company projects, the company will be judging you in much the same way. A good interview involves "chemistry" – the kind of feeling which clicks between two people who know a relationship has the potential to work out well. An employer will have an immediate adverse reaction to you and the chemistry will never have the chance to develop if you fail to follow a few basic points.

- **Be sure to look professional.** Your interview may be at the most low-key, creative company in town, but don't show up in casual attire. Men should always wear a suit in a dark color with a white shirt and a conservative tie. Be sure you wear dark shoes and socks to match the suit. Women should wear a suit, a blazer and a skirt or a dress with a matching jacket. Try for a color that looks good on you without being too wild. Wear simple pumps and hose in either beige, black or white depending on the outfit.
- **Avoid heavy perfume and/or cologne** as well as too many accessories, i.e., jewelry.
- **Look as though you have been out in the working world even if you have not.**

- **Be on time.** If you are late for the interview, the employer may decide that you are not really interested in the job. Also it might make him/her think you would show up late for work. Go on a practice run the day before to see how long it takes you to get there. Suggested arrival time is fifteen minutes before your appointed time.
- **Arrive alone.** There is no need for anyone to go with you to an interview. You can do it on your own. Another person might be distracting.
- **Greet the receptionist** or the person who will introduce you to the interviewer. Be pleasant. Say your name clearly, and tell this person the name of the interviewer, if you know it. Be sure to name the job for which you are applying.
- **Wait patiently** if the interviewer is not ready for you. You may wish to sit quietly and read the materials in your personal information folder until you are called to the interview. Use this time to read brochures, which are sometimes placed, in waiting areas.
- **Fill out the job application form** if it is required. Fill it out neatly and completely. Provide all necessary information such as dates of employment, address of companies, etc.
- **Shake hands** if it seems appropriate when you meet the interviewer. Use a firm handshake but not an overpowering one. A firm handshake indicates your self-confidence. A weak handshake indicates your lack of confidence.
- **Maintain eye contact** with the interviewer during your time together. This is considered to be a sign of honesty and self-confidence. Don't let your eyes roam while he or she is talking. Appear enthusiastic and nod at appropriate intervals.
- **Use interviewer's name** at appropriate times – don't overuse it – it can be a detriment.
- **Control any nervous behavior.** Tapping your foot or “talking with your hands,” for example, may annoy and distract the interviewer. Chewing gum is another thing you should not do during your interview. It interferes with clear speech and shows a lack of sophistication.
- **Smoking or drinking coffee are not good ideas.** Refrain from smoking just before your interview – the smell can be distracting. Also, do not bring coffee with you – it's not professional.
- **Choose your words carefully** and avoid slang or other special expressions that the interviewer may dislike or misunderstand. For example, an expression such as

“to be perfectly honest with you” may insinuate that you are not honest with everyone.

- **Talk about what you do well.** Often you will find that you can answer a question by mentioning certain talents, interests or skills. Avoid making excuses for your past performance or lack of education; discuss what you have done to improve yourself.
- **Follow the interviewer’s lead** during the course of the interview. Stick to the point. The interviewer is interested in experiences and attitudes that might affect your performance on the job. There is no need to talk about details of your personal life that have nothing to do with the job.
- **Listen carefully** to show interest. In addition, if you are listening carefully you will receive information to use when asked if you have any questions.
- **Stay calm.** Try not to show disappointment or anger if you’re not hired or if the interviewer does not make a decision immediately. He/She may have to see some other applicants before deciding.
- **Don’t forget to smile.** Be yourself. Let your personality shine.
- **Express appreciation for the interviewer’s time and restate your interest.** Even if you have not been offered the job, or if no decision has been made, tell the interviewer that you are interested in the position. As for his/her business card (so that you’ll have the correct spelling of his/her name and address for a thank you note) and if you can call back at a certain time to find out about the decision.