

Tips for a Successful Interview

First impressions are important. Here is a quick guide to help you make an impact on your next interview... because winging it was so last year!



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We have all heard that first impressions really do count. That is why it is important to make a positive, convincing first impression when beginning an interview. Here are some tips to keep you at your best when you first meet your potential employer:

1. Prepare for the interview- “By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail” – Benjamin Franklin

Winging it for an interview is a big no-no. It is important that you take the time and do some company research before you step into that interview room. Knowing who you are interviewing for is key. Make sure your research what the company’s mission and vision is. The company website is a great way to start gathering information, but take it a step further. Many companies utilize social media to connect with their audience, so check out their Facebook and Twitter accounts to find the most up to date information and stories.

Make sure to check:

- Company website
- Social media sites: Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn
- Google search company information and try websites such as wetfeet.com, or vault.com

2. Dress Professionally –

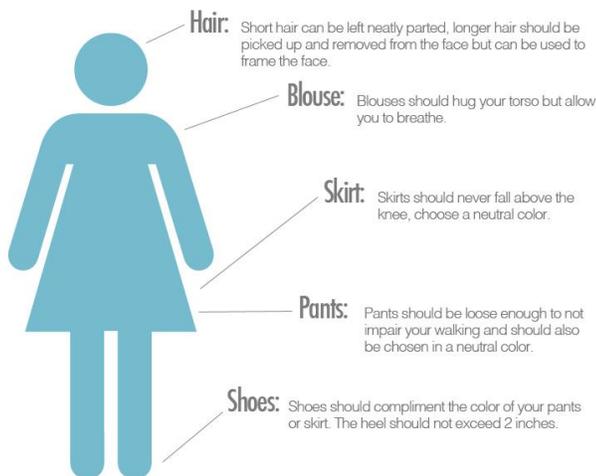
It is crucial to dress appropriately for an interview, appear clean and professional. Your clothes should be clean and pressed, and you should avoid wearing things like jeans, t-shirts or tennis shoes. Dressing appropriately allows you to make a good first impression and shows the employer that you are both professional and prepared. Dress to impress!

Remember to:

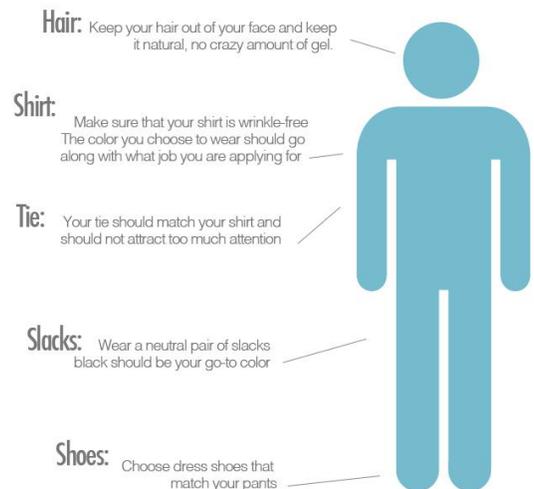
- Dress for the position you are applying for
- Dress conservatively and professionally
- Groom properly
- Avoid perfume or cologne

Remember, first impressions are key. Below is some general advice, but if you like visuals, try websites such as Pinterest to search for visual interview attire outfits for both men and woman.

Interview Attire Chart: Ladies



Interview Attire Chart: Gents



3. Be There on Time and Relaxed – The importance of being a few minutes early for an interview cannot be emphasized enough! Make sure you know exactly how to get there, and allow for extra time for traffic or parking problems. Aim to arrive fifteen minutes early so that you can find the correct area and relax for a few minutes before. Rushing in at the last minute will leave you feeling stressed and anxious – exactly how you don't want to come across and feel before and during an interview!

4. Introduce Yourself Confidently – Appearing confident is extremely important when your employer first sees you. Smile, and introduce yourself with a firm handshake. Try to make as much eye contact as possible, and show your enthusiasm from the start.

Once you have settled into the interview, you can maximize your chances of success by:

1. Following the Interviewer's Lead – The interviewer will set the tone and level of formality for the interview. Do not talk excessively about yourself or try to fill in every gap in the conversation. If the interviewer appears bored– talk less. If he or she seems interested – continue answering in the same manner, giving more details as needed. Whenever possible, highlight how your skills and experience fit with the position, and how you can contribute to the company's success.

2. Ask Intelligent Questions About the Position – Careful preparation is needed in order to ask intelligent, well researched questions prepared about the position and company. Find out as much information as you can by reviewing the company website, your network, articles in newspapers, trade journals, and business directories.

3. Show Your Enthusiasm – Always show your interest and enthusiasm in the position by asking questions, smiling, and being very positive. Ask the employer when the decision will be made, and summarize why you think you are the perfect fit for the job at the end of the interview. Do not brag, but instead highlight how your skills fit with the demands of the position. Remember, how you act plays a big role in the decision making process. You want the employer to want to work with you, so be pleasant, enthusiastic and smile!

After the Interview is finished:

1. Learn From Your Experience – After the interview, try to think objectively about how it went. Decide which areas went well, and where you could improve in future interviews. Write down a few alternative answers you could have given, and keep these on file for future interview preparation. Just remember that every interview is different. Make sure you are preparing

2. Send a Thank You Note – Many people neglect sending a thank you note, but it is a must! It serves two purposes: It thanks the employer for their time and allows you to briefly restate how you are an excellent fit for the position!

Interview Questions

Interview questions can be extremely challenging if little thought and preparation has been done ahead of time. These are some typical questions you might be asked in an interview, and some tips on how to answer effectively. Practice with someone to create some excellent responses and build your confidence. You may also want to record your practice interviews and learn from listening to how you come across. Remember no matter what, answer in as much detail as possible. Be sure to stick to the facts and tell a story. If you can quantify in your responses, go for it!

Traditional interview questions:

Tell me about yourself.

- ✓ This question is very open-ended, so it really requires you to be concise and to the point.
- ✓ However tempted you are to ramble on for 10 minutes about your life, keep your answer to 1-2 minutes, and be sure to keep it professional – do not give personal information and *information talked about should be relevant to the position you are interviewing for.*

Why do you want to work for our company?

- ✓ Make sure you address what the company's needs are, and how your skills and values would be a good fit for them.
- ✓ Describe briefly how you can contribute to specific company goals.
- ✓ Tell them what impresses you about the company (e.g., progressive, talented management, high quality, etc.)

What can you offer us?

- ✓ Be sure to explain how your skills, experiences, etc. are an excellent fit for the job- this takes a lot of self reflection. Be sure to interview yourself beforehand so you know what your skills are and what you have accomplished.
- ✓ Relate your past experiences of success to problems that you could work with in this company.
- ✓ Show how you can offer them a unique combination of skills and experience, and that you are the right person for the job!

What do you know about our company?

- ✓ Make sure to do your research ahead of time! During an interview is not the time to be learning about the company's history and goals!
- ✓ Briefly relay your knowledge about products, size, reputation, goals, management, style, skills, history, philosophy, and any other pertinent information.

Behavioral and situational interview questions are also becoming very popular, below are some examples of these types of questions so that you can practice:

Behavioral- asks about what did in past situations

1. Can you tell me about a time where you were required to work with a difficult person? How did you handle the situation? What was the outcome?
2. Do you prefer working alone or in teams? Give examples of how you have worked successfully both alone and in a team? What do you attribute your success to?

An effective way to answer a behavioral type questions is to follow **STAR** Method when responding to

- **Situation**-explain the situation/task at hand
- **Task**- explain the situation/task at hand
- **Action**- what steps did you take
- **Result**- what was the end result of your actions

Situational- hypothetical situations

1. If you were given a task to complete in an unrealistic time frame, what would you do?
2. What would you do if you saw a co-worker stealing?

Remember these are hypothetical situations. Although you may have never been in these situations before, employer's want to see how you would handle yourself, the situation and ability to problem solve.

STAGES OF INTERVIEWS

Most interviews can be broken down into three stages: beginning, body, and wrap-up. Knowing what these general stages involve can better prepare you to successfully tackle your next interview. Below is a brief description of what you can expect during each stage, and how to handle yourself appropriately:

Beginning:

The opening stage of an interview involves getting acquainted and comfortable with the interviewer(s). This short period of time is when important impressions are formed, so it is crucial that you remain positive and as relaxed as possible.

Some interviewers will make small talk for a minute or two, while others are very businesslike, getting straight to the point. The four things that you must do during this stage are:

- Follow the interviewer's lead
- Smile and firmly shake hands
- Make frequent eye contact
- Show your positive attitude and desire for the position from the start

Body:

The body of the interview is the largest segment, during which the employer asks you a series of questions. You also receive a lot of crucial information from the employer during this stage. For instance, you might be asked if you have questions, and will have a chance to find out whether you want to work at this company. Remember, the sharing of information is two ways, and that you are assessing this position as well as being assessed for it. If you feel that the questions have not allowed you to share some crucial information, be ready to volunteer it. See the other information and tips on interviews in the Interview Experience area to get some ideas on how to prepare for interviews and what types of questions to ask.

Remember:

- Listen
- Ask for clarification if needed
- Take a few seconds to compose your thoughts before responding

Wrap-up :

The last few minutes of the interview involve "wrapping things up", and determining the next step. The employer will usually state that you will be called regarding the decision within a certain period of time. Show your interest and enthusiasm for the position by asking when to expect a call. Thank the employer for his/her time, and state that you look forward to the response. Regardless of how you feel the interview went, remain positive and optimistic while leaving. Even if you feel it was a disaster, you may have impressed the employer enough for a second interview! Some important points to remember during the wrap-up are:

- Remain positive and smile
- Reiterate your interest in the position
- Thank the interviewer(s) for their time

WHAT TO BRING TO AN INTERVIEW

Never make the mistake of leaving for an interview empty-handed.

Being well prepared will enhance your confidence. It will also show that you are organized and serious about the position! You should always take the time to carefully prepare a briefcase or folder containing the following items.

- At least 2 copies of your resume, even if the interviewer already has a copy (he/she may want an extra, or if it was faxed, it is better to have an original copy)
- A page of references in case you are asked. Make sure these people know that they are being used for references.
- Paper and pen for taking notes if necessary.
- Questions for the interviewer. It is important to write down all the questions you want answered about the job, and refer to this sheet when needed. Such prewritten questions display your interests and enthusiasm for the company. Depending on your circumstance, you may also want to bring samples of your work (e.g., articles, artwork), letters of recommendation, and proof of your education (e.g., degree, diploma).
- Traveling directions and contact information (just in case)

Good luck!

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