

Interview Advice

The next step after you submit your resume, assuming all goes well and you are short-listed by the company, is the interview. The interview is an opportunity for the employer to meet you face to face and to gather information regarding you as a person that is difficult to convey through other means. You have to remember that an interview takes place within a very small timeframe, so appearances and first impressions are a very significant factor in the success of an interview. How you appear and come across to an employer during an interview are key aspects in whether or not you land the position, so it is important that you present yourself in the best possible way to them.

Be Contactable

You must make yourself available and contactable after you submit your resume to an employer so that they can easily reach you should they wish to speak to you via phone or email regarding anything.

Be Prepared

Prepare yourself for the interview several days beforehand. Study up on some of the company's history and background information; a good place for this is the company's website. It helps to know a few things about the company that you could potentially end up working for, and it can show to the employer just how committed and interested you are in the job. Find out the location of the company or wherever the interview is taking place, and make sure you know how to get there and how long it will take so you don't arrive late for the interview.

Practice

You can practise for the interview by coming up with some answers to questions that you might expect, such as the reason you chose to apply for the position, your experience and strengths, and certain examples where you demonstrated good communication or leadership.

Pack Your Things & Sleep Well

On the day before the interview, work out what you're going to wear and what you're taking to the interview. Bring all the original documents that you cited in your resume as evidence, in case the employer asks to view them during the interview. Store these documents and a copy of your resume, along with any other items that you deem fit to bring with you (like a bottle of water in case you sweat all your bodily fluids away, as some tend to do when they're nervous), in a briefcase or smart-looking bag. Once you're all prepared for the next day, get a good night's rest.

Look Your Best

Since appearances are big things in an interview, apply what you must to make yourself look and smell good. Don't overdo it though, as too much makeup or perfume/cologne can be unpleasant to others. Dress smart and make sure everything is in place.

Arrive Early

Eat well and set out early for your interview as you never know what could be in store on the way. Aim to arrive five to ten minutes early, but not too early as this may create inconvenience for the staff.

Smile & Be Polite

Greet the staff politely and be on your best behaviour once you're in there. Smile, be at ease and try to relax. Turn off or put your mobile phone to silent before you walk in for the interview.

Greet Your Interviewers & Listen

Create a good first impression by greeting your interviewers warmly and shaking their hands if it is customary to do so. Be respectful, polite and considerate to the people interviewing you. Sit up straight. Maintain eye contact when speaking with someone and try to smile. Nod your head or show signs that you are being attentive when an interviewer is speaking, since they will be watching your body language as well as listening to your words.

Answer the Questions & Elaborate Your Answers

The whole point of the interview is for the employer to find out more about your personality and character as well as your skills, so don't be intimidated as they are not out to get you. When answering the interviewer's questions, be concise and to the point, but don't make your answers too short (i.e. longer than "yes" or "no"). Some common questions that may come up during an interview include:

- Why did you choose this job?
- Why do you want to work for our company/organisation?
- What are your short-term and long-term goals?
- What type of work interests you the most?
- What do you think are your greatest strengths in the workplace?
- What might some of your weaknesses be?

Employers may also ask you to explain or clarify things that you wrote in your cover letter and resume, such as certain tasks you did in a previous job. Feel free to share your past workplace experiences with them, but don't go into too much detail and do not under any circumstances slander or be negative about your past colleagues or employers.

Ask Questions of Your Own

Don't hesitate to ask for clarification if you didn't hear the question or didn't quite understand it; sometimes a question can be phrased in a weird way or there may be terms you are unfamiliar with. As long as you ask politely and pay close attention to them, interviewers won't mind repeating or rephrasing the question. Also, don't hesitate to ask some questions of your own, as long as you don't interrupt the interviewers. You can ask for more information about the position and the company if it hasn't been provided, and asking about future opportunities shows you are career-minded and that you have plans to stay with the company. However, try to refrain from asking about payment and salary, as they will usually bring it up towards the end of the interview.

Thank the Interviewer

Once all the interview talk is done, you can ask how long the selection process will take and when you can expect to hear from the company. Even if the interview didn't go as smoothly as you had intended, thank the interviewers for the opportunity and shake their hands if it is appropriate. Leave on a positive note, even if you believe that you didn't do so well.

The Don't List

Here are a few things not to do during an interview:

- Don't fidget.
- Don't mumble.
- Don't yawn or look bored.
- Don't be negative.
- Don't act needy or desperate.

Speak clearly and audibly as this shows good communication skills. Mumbling not only makes it hard for the interviewers to hear what you're saying, but it can also make you look uncertain and reflect badly on yourself. If you have to think then just be silent or do your thinking pose. Yawning and looking disinterested during an interview will also fail to net you any points with the employer, for obvious reasons. Don't be negative about yourself or your past workplaces, and don't complain about your previous employers. On the negative note, try not to use too many negative terms during the interview, for example instead of saying "I don't know how" say "I'm willing to learn". And looking desperate or begging them to give you the job is just plain unprofessional so don't do it.

Overall, the key to having a good interview is to be prepared and to be confident in yourself and in your skills and abilities. Look sharp and plan well, and may the workforce be with you. All the best for your job hunting and acquisition!