



HOW TO STAND OUT FROM THE CROWD

Making a good first impression is critical at a job interview. Being interviewed can be a nerve-racking business that requires research and preparation. This should include spending time on your grooming and developing an awareness of your body language and general demeanour to make a good impression. If you look the part and can demonstrate that your experience and skills fit the role, you have done all you can to ensure you are selected for the position.

PRESENTATION AND GROOMING

Presentation is about marketing yourself to the interviewer and demonstrating how you would perform as part of their team. Effective presentation means looking the part, promoting a professional manner, dressing appropriately for the industry and the position, and revealing your preparation for the interview. This includes all aspects of your physical appearance, from clothes and accessories to hairstyle and make-up.

- Dress to impress - classic clothing is usually best for men and women. This means a suit with shirt and tie for men, and a business suit in a conservative style and colour for women
- Tailor your choice to the industry and the position for which you are applying. Find out what to wear as part of your pre-interview research about the company
- Be clean and neat - shirts and blouses should be pressed, shoes polished, and suits brushed
- Fashion statements or quirky accessories are best avoided when attending interviews - your interviewer will be expecting you to make an effort to impress, and you cannot predict their interpretation of your unusual tie or funky shoes
- For women, make-up is an important part of their image and grooming. As with clothing, it is important to note that different people will interpret different looks in different ways. For this reason, classic and understated day-time make-up is most appropriate. Nails should be neat and clean and any nail varnish should be unchipped and subtle in colour
- Hair should be clean and neat, and men should be clean-shaven or ensure that beards are trimmed and neat
- Perfume and cologne should not be too overpowering
- Jewellery such as watches and earrings should be classic and understated. Facial piercings such as nose studs or eyebrow rings should be removed
- Make sure you have a professional-looking bag, which will hold your resume without having to fold it
- Take a copy of your resume, any references and a copy of the job description with you to the interview. File them neatly in a clear file or folder, so they are protected and easily accessible

BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

- Be prepared as it helps you to answer questions in a concise and relevant way and enables you to demonstrate knowledge of the company and a real interest in the position. The amount of preparation you do will determine how well you deal with difficult questions. One of the best ways to prepare is to prepare answers to some common questions that might relate to the qualities the employee is seeking, as stated in the selection criteria or job ad. Think how you might answer the question and of the important examples you would bring up that demonstrate your ability in a certain area
- Don't learn an answer parrot fashion, but do practice your responses at home with a friend or family member. It's only when you actually verbalise the answer that you hear how good or bad your answer sounds
- Be punctual. Check a map for the location of your interview and familiarise yourself with the best route. If in doubt go to Whereis or Google maps and print a route map, which will include estimated travel times
- Plan where you will park; ensure you have sufficient money on hand to pay for car parks, or the correct change for trams, trains or buses
- If you are unfamiliar with the area, always allow an extra fifteen minutes in case you get lost, or have trouble finding a carpark
- Take your recruiter's phone number with you in case you are running late, or run into difficulty, so that they can let the interviewer know.
- Don't call once you are already late – as soon as you realise you won't make it on time, call immediately. That way the interviewer can reorganise their schedule to fit in other tasks before you arrive
- If you arrive early, do not go inside. Wait in your car or go for a walk until a few minutes prior to the appointment time
- Upon arrival, state clearly who you are and who you are there to see
- Ensure you have sufficient paper, and pens that write properly in case you need to take notes
- Remember to be nice to the receptionist when you arrive: their opinion of you can be very important!

- Phones should be turned off, sunglasses should be removed from your head, chewing gum should be disposed of, **before** entering the company premises, not once you are in reception
- Use tic-tacs as opposed to chewing gum, as nothing looks worse than a professional person chewing. Tic-tacs are small and don't need to be disposed of if your client arrives unexpectedly
- Avoid eating anything potentially 'anti-social' prior to the interview, eg garlic, onions

DURING THE INTERVIEW

Your interviewer will be considering you as a member of the organisational team, as an employee, and as a representative of the company to the outside world. You must prove that you can perform well in a formal business setting, that you are a good communicator, and that you will fit in with the office team. This can be a challenge when nervous, but a good interviewer will ask a mix of personal and work-related questions that should allow you to relax and be yourself, as well as discuss your candidacy in a professional manner.

It is important to remember that the interviewer(s) is not the only person you need to impress. If you get the job you will become part of the team, so be polite and professional with everyone you encounter before and after your interview, whether it is the receptionist or the interviewer's assistant.

- Feel confident about yourself - knowing you look good and are well prepared will boost your confidence
- Smile - it helps relax you and makes others receptive to what you have to say
- Be positive and polite about any delays during interview, and when answering questions
- A firm handshake is essential
- Be aware of your body language and what it communicates. The key body language factors during an interview are posture, eye contact and active listening.

- Despite interview nerves, try to refrain from fidgeting, sit up straight, and maintain eye contact with the interviewer – this will express your interest.
- If meeting with more than one interviewer, arrange their business cards in the order that they sit around the table; this will help you remember who's who.
- Let the interviewer guide you as to the style of the meeting: formal or informal, and respond appropriately. However don't be too informal. Even if your interviewer has a relaxed and friendly style, they are still trying to assess you as a potential employee and representative of their company
- Take your time and consider what you are going to say rather than rushing into unprepared and possibly irrelevant speech.
- Don't use slang phrases such as, 'you know' or 'sort of'.
- Don't slide down or slump in your chair as time passes in longer meetings.
- Finally, remember to smile and be yourself - it is important to you that the job and organisation suit you, so there is no point acting like somebody else in your interview.

AVOID COMMON INTERVIEW MISTAKES

- Poor interview preparation and a lack of thought about the position or research about the company
- Poor posture and failure to maintain eye contact or scowling or fidgeting through nervousness
- Being overly friendly. Inappropriate behaviour in an interview situation such as talking too much about personal circumstances, swearing or using other inappropriate language
- Being negative about present and former employers, the company, its staff or procedures
- Arriving too late or too early or arriving flustered and unkempt