



Interview Tips

Present Yourself to Advantage

"People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."-Unknown

When going on an interview, you want to present yourself to your best advantage. This is your chance to let the people interviewing you learn about your skills, knowledge, and strengths as you put your best foot forward. How do you do this?

First Impressions

Appearance counts, and is the basis for forming first impressions of a person. A neat, well-groomed appearance in an appropriate business suit comes across much better than casual clothes, or inappropriate makeup and jewelry.

Friendly, open people are also perceived more positively. When first meeting the employer, greet them with a firm handshake, a smile, and look them in the eyes. Listen attentively and don't interrupt.

Be On Time

Being late does not impress interviewers, and creates the impression that you would arrive late to work. So try to get to the interview on time, or even a few minutes early. This will give you a chance to do a last minute check on your appearance in the restroom, and to fill out any paperwork.

How you fill out your application paperwork will also reflect on you. Take your time, and make sure that it is filled in neatly, with correct spelling. You can write "negotiable" under the salary box, since you will want an opportunity to discuss this with the manager you are interviewing with.

Do Your Homework

One thing that will positively impress not only the recruiter, but also managers who may interview you, is knowledge about their company. Take the time to research the company, and be familiar with terms used in the industry that you are interviewing for. Being familiar with the company products, the services that they offer, and who their major competitors are will show that you have a real interest in the company.

Sources of information can include friends who work in the industry, a company's annual report, web sites, articles, trade journals, or visiting professional meetings. This will also allow you to begin networking with people who can answer your questions and who may have helpful advice. Bring several copies of your resume (2 or 3) in a folder or portfolio since you may meet with several people during the interview. A cover sheet with personal references should accompany it.

The resumes should be on the best quality paper that you can afford, and be professionally printed. Remember, they reflect on you, and the interviewers will be looking at them later, so they should leave an impression of professionalism.



Answer Their Questions Well

During an interview, you will present yourself well if you answer the questions completely and concisely (nodding or grunting "yes" and "no" to questions, or rambling for a half hour when asked about your experience are both equally bad). Instead, well thought out answers that demonstrate your skill and strengths as they relate to the position you are interviewing for will come across much more favorably.

Be as positive as possible during the interview. Do NOT speak negatively of a former employer, even if they are the worst possible, since this will be considered a problem area with you, or a bad attitude.

Use concrete examples of problem -solving and strengths when answering questions. Highlight these strengths in the interview.

The interviewers will be asking specific questions about your abilities, knowledge, and skills. Try to answer each question, sharing your strengths that would be useful for the position being considered. If you are unsure of the answer let the recruiter or employer know how you would go about finding the answer (this could demonstrate your problem solving skills).

Be honest, and NEVER lie or try to avoid answering. Do NOT say, "You can find that on my resume" since they are interested in YOU and how you interact with others, and your personal knowledge base. They can read the resume later. But do make sure that all information on your resume is correct, since the company will check on references, dates and job information.

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Ask Intelligent Questions

After answering their questions, asking good (i.e. relevant) questions of your own will also create a good impression.

You might ask the employer to describe the job in more detail. You should also have several questions written down to refer to, based on the background research you have already done to prepare for the interview.

Ask the employer what he or she is looking for in an employee, or the three most important things they are looking for in the person they hire. Then, listen attentively to the answers. Find out why the position is open (has there been a large turnover? A new position created because of growth? A problem that needed solving?) This is your chance to find out what the job entails, and to discover what you are getting into when you work there.

Your questions should focus on the job, the company, and what the employer wants or needs, not salary or benefits at this point. Do NOT ask the interviewer "Why should I work for you?" or "How much will you pay me?" since this puts them on the defensive, and creates the impression that you are only self-serving or mercenary.

Your questions could cover topics such as obstacles that the company has faced (and how they perceive you can help to overcome them), future changes or the direction that the company is moving towards, or what goals they have for the employee they hire. If you are filling a position that was formerly filled by someone else, you may want to ask how you can improve on what the former employee in the position did.

Practice Makes Perfect

It is a good idea to practice an interview before actually going to one. This will give you a chance to work on answering questions, listening, and getting feedback on your body language. See if a friend or co-worker can help you by asking you both standard and "surprise" interview questions that make you think and answer spontaneously. Include some hard ones as well.

Some typical questions

- Why do you want to work for us?
- What is your education? Credentials?
- What are your strengths? Your weaknesses?
- How do you deal with others? With those who irritate you?
- What type of an environment (or supervisor) do you work well in? Poorly?
- Have you had supervisory experience? What type?
- Why are you changing jobs/careers/looking for a job?
- What salary range are you looking at?
- What mistakes have you made? How did you handle them? Successes?

Your goal in answering questions is to let the company know that you are a motivated employee with good problem solving skills, and that by hiring you, you will bring strengths and abilities to the job that will help the company. Let them know that if you don't yet have a skill, that you are confident that you can learn the needed skills on the job (most jobs include at least some on the job training).



If possible, videotaping your practice interviews will help you to review your body language and improve. Look for signs of nervousness, such as bouncing feet or legs, clicking pens, fiddling with hair, etc.

Follow-up Is Important

After the interview, send a short thank you note on quality paper. This will bring your name to mind and confirms your continued interest in the position. Stopping by after an appropriate time, or a follow-up call can also be done as long as you don't continuously harass the recruiter or manager.

By using the above ideas, you should be able to create a good impression during your interview, and be further along the road to a good job-the one you want.