

How to succeed in your interview

To land the right job, make your first impression the right impression. It's the first four minutes that can get you hired.

Within a mere 10 seconds, people begin to make judgements about your professionalism, social class, morals and intelligence. People tend to focus on what they see (dress, eye contact, movement, etc), on what they hear (speed of speech, tone of voice and volume) and on the actual words used.

Indeed, if you present yourself well initially, then you are more likely to enjoy the benefits of what sociologists call the "Halo effect". This means that if you are viewed positively within this time, the person you've met is likely to assume that everything you do is positive.

If your first encounter is not a good one, the interviewer could mistakenly assume you have other negative traits. Worse, he or she may not take the time to give you a second chance.

Before the interview

Prepare yourself . . .

Find out as much as you can about the company and prepare some questions that you can ask to show your knowledge and interest.

First impression . . .

It's most important to be on time, and remember, be conscious of your first handshake, they will. (Avoid the 'bone crusher' or 'limp fish' style).

Look your best . . .

Looking your best will signal success. Wear clothing appropriate to the job you seek. But, whatever you decide to wear should show you care about your appearance.

During the interview

Stand until you have been asked to take a seat. When you do sit, do not move the chair unless you are invited to, and do not slouch in it either.

Sell yourself . . .

Attend the interview with a positive attitude and "sell yourself". Even if you are somewhat unsure about the role or the company, never prejudice. If during the interview you think "this is the role for me" a negative attitude might have already made up the interviewer's mind against you.

Be pleasant and try to relax . . .

Be pleasant, relax and do not be afraid to ask questions . . . almost everyone likes to be asked questions, so don't be afraid to be the initiator sometimes. If you are asked a question you haven't prepared for in advance, take a moment to think through and organise your thoughts before giving your answer.

Good eye contact is essential . . .

Good eye contact indicates strength of character. Do not overdo this however, staring is intimidating.

Say what you mean . . .

Be honest and open with your answers. Answer all questions clearly and directly. During an interview some nervousness is understandable, but watch your body language.

Make your words consistent with your body language and appearance, if they are not in tune, the mixed message you send is bound to confuse your interviewer.

Be sure to make the interviewer aware of actual duties you have performed and accomplishments you've made.

Don't exaggerate, be honest in your assessment of what you have done.

Let the interviewer know your career is important to you.

Using a person's name . . .

When talking to the interviewer, using a person's name is a good way to keep a person's attention. Again, do not overdo this.

Summing up

Let the interviewer raise the question of salary, particularly in the first interview, unless you are fairly sure the employer will be hiring you.

Thank the interviewers for their time.

Following the interview

If a consultant has referred you to the position, it is helpful to make contact afterwards to notify how the interview went and if you are interested in progressing further.

Things to avoid

It is important to remember that making adverse remarks about either your present employer, former employers or any specific individuals you have worked directly for in the past, always has a negative effect. If you do have a complaint, however justified, the diplomatic approach is still the best.

Potential interview questions

One of the secret's of a successful interview is anticipating what the interviewer is likely to ask and having the facts ready as needed. Some commonly asked questions you should be prepared for are:

- Tell me about yourself
- What are your strengths?
- What are your weaknesses?
- What is your greatest achievement?
- Why did you choose this vocation?
- What attracts you to the current position?
- What qualifies you for this role?
- How would you describe your relationship skills?
- What do you consider essential in the management of people?
- What management style gets the best out of you?
- What motivates you?
- Where do you see your career being in five/ten years time?
- What are your spare time interests?
- What is your ideal position and why?
- What attributes would you add to this role and to this company?

"You do not get a second chance to make a first impression"