

Job Interviewing Do's and Don'ts

by Randall S. Hansen, Ph.D.

Here are the keys to successful job interviewing. Follow these simple rules and you should achieve success in this important phase of job-hunting.

- **Do** take a practice run to the location where you are having the interview -- or be sure you know exactly where it is and how long it takes to get there.
- **Do** your research and know the type of job interview you will be encountering. (See [types of job interviews](#).) And **do** prepare and practice for the interview, but **don't** memorize or over-rehearse your answers. (See our [some of the best collections of interview questions](#).)
- **Do** dress the part for the job, the company, the industry. And **do** err on the side of conservatism. If you're not sure, you should consider reading our article, [When Job-Hunting: Dress for Success](#).
- **Do** plan to arrive about 10 minutes early. Late arrival for a job interview is never excusable. If you are running late, **do** phone the company.
- **Do** greet the receptionist or assistant with courtesy and respect. This is where you make your *first* impression.
- **Don't** chew gum during the interview.
- If presented with a [job application](#), **do** fill it out neatly, completely, and accurately.
- **Do** bring extra resumes to the interview. (Even better, if you have a [job skills portfolio](#), **do** bring that with you to the interview.)
- **Don't** rely on your application or resume to do the selling for you. No matter how qualified you are for the position, you *will* need to sell yourself to the interviewer.
- **Do** greet the interviewer(s) by title (Ms., Mr., Dr.) and last name if you are sure of the pronunciation. (If you're not sure, **do** ask the receptionist about the pronunciation before going into the interview.)
- **Do** shake hands firmly. **Don't** have a limp or clammy handshake!
- **Do** wait until you are offered a chair before sitting. And **do** remember body language and posture: sit upright and look alert and interested at all times. **Don't** fidget or slouch.
- **Don't** tell jokes during the interview.
- **Do** make good eye contact with your interviewer(s).
- **Do** show enthusiasm in the position and the company.
- **Don't** smoke, even if the interviewer does and offers you a cigarette. And **don't** smoke beforehand so that you smell like smoke. And **do** brush your teeth, use mouthwash, or have a breath mint before the interview.
- **Do** avoid using poor language, slang, and pause words (such as "like," "uh," and "um").
- **Don't** be soft-spoken. A forceful voice projects confidence.
- **Do** have a high confidence and energy level, but **don't** be overly aggressive.
- **Don't** act as though you would take any job or are desperate for employment.
- **Do** avoid controversial topics.
- **Don't** say anything negative about former colleagues, supervisors, or employers.
- **Do** make sure that your good points come across to the interviewer in a factual, sincere manner.
- **Don't** ever lie. Answer questions truthfully, frankly and succinctly. And **don't** over-answer questions.

- **Do** stress your achievements. And **don't** offer any negative information about yourself.
- **Don't** answer questions with a simple "yes" or "no." Explain whenever possible. Describe those things about yourself that showcase your talents, skills, and determination. Give examples.
- **Do** show off the research you have done on the company and industry when responding to questions. (See our [Guide to Researching Companies](#).)
- **Don't** bring up or discuss personal issues or family problems.
- **Do** remember that the interview is also an important time for you to evaluate the interviewer and the company she represents.
- **Don't** respond to an unexpected question with an extended pause or by saying something like, "boy, that's a good question." And **do** repeat the question outloud or ask for the question to be repeated to give you a little more time to think about an answer. Also, a short pause before responding is okay.
- **Do** always conduct yourself as if you are determined to get the job you are discussing. Never close the door on an opportunity until you are sure about it.
- **Don't** answer cell phone calls during the interview, and **do** turn off (or set to silent ring) your cell phone and/or pager.
- **Do** show what you can do for the company rather than what the company can do for you.
- **Don't** inquire about salary, vacations, bonuses, retirement, or other benefits until after you've received an offer. Be prepared for a question about your salary requirements, but **do** try and delay salary talk until you have an offer. (You might consider visiting our [salary tutorial](#) for more tips and strategies.)
- **Do** ask intelligent questions about the job, company, or industry. **Don't** ever *not* ask any questions -- it shows a lack of interest.
- **Do** close the interview by telling the interviewer(s) that you *want* the job and asking about the next step in the process. (Some experts even say you should close the interview by asking for the job.)
- **Do** try and get business cards from each person you interviewed with -- or at least the correct spelling of their first and last names. And **don't** make assumptions about simple names -- was it Jon or John -- get the spelling.
- **Do** immediately take down notes after the interview concludes so you **don't** forget crucial details.
- **Do** write thank you letters within 24 hours to each person who interviewed you. (You can see some [sample thank-you letters](#) here.) And **do** know all the rules of [following up after the interview](#).

Questions about some of the terminology used in this article? Get more information (definitions and links) on key college, career, and job-search terms by going to our [Job-Seeker's Glossary of Job-Hunting Terms](#).

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