

Ten Tips to Boost Your Interview Skills

By Carole Martin

Even the smartest and most qualified job seekers need to prepare for job interviews. Why, you ask? Interviewing is a learned skill, and there are no second chances to make a great first impression. Study these 10 strategies to enhance your interview skills.

Practice Good Nonverbal Communication

It's about demonstrating confidence: standing straight, making eye contact and connecting with a good, firm handshake. That first nonverbal impression can be a great beginning -- or quick ending -- to your interview.

Dress for the Job or Company

Today's casual dress code does not give you permission to dress as "they" do when you interview. It is important to look professional and well-groomed. Whether you wear a suit or something less formal depends on the company culture and the position you are seeking. If possible, call to find out about the company dress code before the interview.

Listen

From the very beginning of the interview, your interviewer is giving you information, either directly or indirectly. If you are not hearing it, you are missing a major opportunity. Good communication skills include listening and letting the person know you heard what was said. Observe your interviewer, and match that style and pace.

Don't Talk Too Much

Telling the interviewer more than s/he needs to know could be a fatal mistake. When you have not prepared ahead of time, you may tend to ramble, sometimes talking yourself right out of the job. Prepare for the interview by reading through the job posting, matching your skills with the position's requirements and relating only that information.

Don't Be Too Familiar

The interview is a professional meeting to talk business. This is not about making a new friend. Your level of familiarity should mimic the interviewer's demeanor. It is important to bring energy and enthusiasm to the interview and to ask questions, but do not overstep your place as a candidate looking for a job opportunity.

Use Appropriate Language

It's a given that you should use professional language during the interview. Be aware of any inappropriate slang words or references to age, race, religion, politics or sexual orientation -- these topics could send you out the door very quickly.

Don't Be Cocky

Attitude plays a key role in your interview success. There is a fine balance between confidence, professionalism and modesty. Even if you're putting on a performance to demonstrate your ability, overconfidence is as bad, if not worse, as being too reserved.

Take Care to Answer the Questions

When an interviewer asks for an example of a time when you did something, he or she is seeking a sample of your past behavior. If you fail to relate a specific example, you not only don't answer the question, but you also miss an opportunity to prove your ability and talk about your skills.

Ask Questions

When asked if they have any questions, most candidates answer, "No." Wrong answer. Part of knowing how to interview is being ready to ask questions to demonstrate an interest in what goes on in the company. Asking questions also gives you the opportunity to find out if this is the right place for you. The best questions come from listening to what you're asked during the interview and asking for additional information.

Don't Appear Desperate

When you interview with the "please, please hire me" approach, you appear desperate and less confident. Maintain the three **C's** during the interview: **Cool, Calm and Confident**. You know you can do the job; make sure the interviewer believes you can, too.