

Interview Do's and Don'ts

Do's

Arrive 15 minutes early. Late attendance is never excusable.

Clarify questions. Be sure you answered the questions the employer really asked.

Get the interviewer to describe the position and responsibilities early in the conversation so you can relate your skills and background to the position throughout the interview.

Give your qualifications. Stress the accomplishments that are most pertinent to the job.

Conduct yourself professionally. Be aware of what your body language is saying. Smile, make eye contact, don't slouch and maintain composure.

Anticipate tough questions. Prepare in advance so you can turn apparent weaknesses into strengths.

Dress appropriately. Make your first impression a professional one. Ask questions throughout the interview. An interview should be a mutual exchange of information, not a one-sided conversation.

Listen. This is probably the most important ability of all. By concentrating not only on the employer's words, but also on the tone of voice and body language, you will be able to pick up on the employer's style. Once you understand how a hiring authority thinks, pattern your answers accordingly and you will be able to better relate to him or her.

Don'ts

Don't answer vague questions. Rather than answering questions you think you hear, get the employer to be more specific and then respond.

Never interrupt the employer. If you don't have time to listen, neither does the employer.

Don't smoke, chew gum or place anything on the employer's desk.

Don't be overly familiar, even if the employer is doing all of these things.

Don't wear heavy perfume or cologne.

Don't ramble. Long answers often make the speaker sound apologetic or indecisive. On the other hand, don't answer questions with a simple "yes" or "no." Explain whenever possible.

Do not lie. Answer questions as truthfully as possible.

Do not make derogatory remarks about your present or former employers or companies.

Closing the interview

Too many people second-guess themselves after an interview. By closing strongly and asking the right questions, you can eliminate the post-interview doubts that tend to plague most interviewees.

If you feel that the interview went well and you would like to take the next step, express your interest to the hiring authority and turn the tables a bit. Try something like the following:

"After hearing more about your company, the position and the responsibilities at hand, I am certain that I possess the qualities that you are looking for in the (title) position. Based on our conversation and my qualifications, are there any issues or concerns that you have that would lead you to believe otherwise?"

You have a right to be assertive. This is a great closing question because it opens the door for the hiring authority to be honest with you about his or her feelings. If concerns do exist, this is a great opportunity to overcome them. You have one final chance to dispel the concerns, sell your strengths and end the interview on positive note.

A few things to remember during the closing process:

- * Don't be discouraged if no definite offer is made or specific salary discussed. The interviewer will probably want to communicate with the office first, or interview other applicants, before making a decision.
- * Make sure you answer the following two questions: "why are you interested in the company?," and "what can you offer?."
- * Express thanks for the interviewer's time and consideration.
- * Ask for the interview's business card so you can write a thank you letter as soon as possible.

Follow-up

When you get in your car, immediately write down key issues uncovered in the interview. Think of the qualifications the employer is looking for and match your strengths to them. Call your recruiter! Follow-up now is critical. A "thank you" letter should be written no later than 24 hours after the interview.