

Interview Tips

Dress and Personal Appearance

First impressions are lasting impressions. It is important to keep in mind that judgments are made in the first 30 seconds of an introduction. Typically people immediately notice your clothing, face, hands, and shoes. Your attire and appearance are non-verbal statements about who you are and what you do. If you take care in your appearance, the interviewer will assume that you will take care in your job.

Attire

- **Business Attire** consists of a two-piece suit in a conservative color (black, gray, navy) with a dress shirt/blouse and matching-color or dark shoes/pumps with low or medium heels. Men should wear conservative ties.
- **Business Casual Attire** varies from one organization to another. In some settings this may mean a coordinated jacket and slacks/skirt and shirt/blouse. In other offices, khakis/slacks and a shirt/blouse may be the norm. No tie is required for men.

What to Wear

For Interviews

- Know the industry standard. Generally, attire is more formal/conservative for large corporations and less formal for nonprofit and government offices.
- Check with the employer and/or review the employer's website.

At Career Fairs

- A wide variety of employers attend career fairs, each with different expectations. To accommodate these differences, attendees should wear business casual attire at a minimum. If you want to make a positive impression, be sure to look neat, clean, and presentable.

At Employer Information Sessions

- Check in the on-campus recruiting listings to see if the expected type of dress for a particular presentation is noted.

- Wear professional attire to sessions hosted by corporate firms, or those conducted in formal settings such as the Statler Hotel.
- Opt for business-casual dress for sessions conducted in seminar rooms, lounges, or classrooms.

Grooming

- Wear **clothes** that fit well and are clean and pressed. Be sure there are no rips/tears, missing buttons, or lint, and remove tags from new clothes.
- Make sure your **hair** is clean and neat. Men should be clean shaven or have facial hair neatly trimmed.
- **Fingernails** should be clean. Women should wear only neutral shades of nail polish.
- Make sure **shoes** are clean, polished, and in good condition.
- Practice good **hygiene** and avoid cologne, perfume, and scented body products such as after-shave or deodorant.

Do

- Wear clothes in which you feel confident.
- Match your belt and shoe color.
- Remove body piercings and cover tattoos.
- Have fresh breath.
- Wear neutral hosiery with skirts.

Do not

- Smoke just before an interview.
- Wear revealing clothes.
- Wear white socks.
- Wear excessive make-up.
- Wear too much jewelry (i.e., more than two items).
- Wear open-toed shoes/sandals.
- Chew gum or candy.

Etiquette

Before the Interview

- Make sure your answering machine/voicemail has a professional sounding message. Remove any inappropriate language, music, and other recordings. Employers begin to form an impression of you through phone contact.
- Inform the employer immediately if you must cancel or change the date of your interview. Plan ahead for conflicts with other interviews, exams, etc.
- Plan to arrive for your interview ten to fifteen minutes early.
- Treat administrative staff with the same courtesy you give interviewers.

During the Interview

Do:

- Turn off your cell phone.
- Give the interviewer a firm handshake.
- Be enthusiastic, confident, courteous, and honest.
- Be aware of your non-verbal behavior.
- Convey interest and knowledge of the position and organization.
- Stress willingness, ability, and compatibility.
- Always present the best of your background or qualifications.
- Listen to the questions carefully and give clear, concise, and thoughtful answers.
- Thank the interviewer for his/her time and ask for his or her business card.

Do not:

- Address the interviewer by his/her first name unless invited to do so.
- Let the employer's casual approach fool you—maintain a professional image.
- Dominate the interview or appear arrogant.
- Criticize yourself or discuss your personal problems.
- Speak or act in a nervous manner.
- Ask questions that the interviewer has already answered.
- Interrupt when the interviewer is talking.
- Bring up negative information about past jobs, co-workers, former employers, professors, etc.

After the Interview

- Send the interviewer a thank-you letter as soon as possible. Reiterate your interest in the position and the organization.
- Return phone calls during normal business hours as soon as possible. The longer you wait to return a call, the greater the likelihood that employers will assume you are not interested in the position.

Travel

Accept the invitation only if you are seriously interested and have not accepted or intend to accept another job offer. Clarify before the visit what portion of expenses the employer will cover (if any), if you will need to prepay reimbursable expenses, and who will make travel and hotel arrangements. You will need to submit receipts for reimbursable expenses.

Social-Networking Websites

Some prospective employers are using social-networking websites like Facebook and Myspace to prescreen applicants before offering them a job interview or even a job offer. Be aware that potential employers might develop ideas about your personality and social life based on your personal profile. Consider modifying your privacy settings.

Meals

Interviews during meals may seem less formal than onsite interviews, but they are just as important. During a meal interview, you are evaluated not only on your answers, but also on your demeanor. Can you hold an intelligent conversation? What are your manners like in a social setting? Are you a pleasant person to talk to?

- Place napkin in lap once everyone is seated, on seat when stepping away, and loosely next to plate when leaving event.
- Do not discuss food restrictions or aversions.
- Maintain excellent posture and do not lean elbows on the table.
- Avoid foods that are difficult to eat, have strong smells, or may stick to your teeth.
- Order menu items that are mid-range in price or ask the host for his or her recommendation.
- Choose a light meal—you will be talking more than eating!
- In general, avoid alcoholic beverages. Under no circumstances should you consume alcohol unless you are of legal age and, even then, do not exceed one drink.