

INTERVIEWING TIPS FOR CANDIDATES

Interviews are opportunities to sell yourself and to demonstrate what's *not* on your résumé. Although you don't know what the interviewer will ask you, you can take steps to maximize your chances of getting the job.

Here's our list of tips for making a good impression:

1. **Do your homework.** Research the company by checking the website and all news releases about the company. Hoover's is an excellent resource for basic information that you'll be expected to know, such as company revenues, number of employees and product or service offerings. Don't forget to Google.
2. **Be prepared for chit-chat.** Have some interesting topics to discuss in the event your interviewer is unsociable or unprepared. You may need to fill some dead air – but be careful not to appear uncomfortable by talking too much. The goal is to demonstrate good interpersonal skills.
3. **Recall your past experience.** A common interviewing technique is to ask “behavioral-based” interview questions. These types of questions focus on relevant, specific examples of past behaviors in order to gain insight into how someone might perform in a similar situation. The key to answering is to provide examples. So, in order to prepare for the interview, make a list of difficult situations from previous jobs that resulted in a positive outcome, and examples of successes from previous jobs. *In no case should you ever say anything negative about a former employer, supervisor, or colleague. Regardless of how bad they might have been, speaking negatively about someone else only reflects poorly on you in an interview setting.*
4. **Dress appropriately.** As my mother told me, “it's always better to be overdressed than underdressed.” Showing up in khakis and a golf shirt when everyone else wears suits is an indicator of poor judgment. While the trend in some cities continues towards business casual, it depends on the season, the company and the day of the week. If you have any doubt, there is absolutely nothing wrong with asking. Also, if you know your clothing selection will scream, “I'm interviewing today,” call the recruiter or the company's HR department and explain.
5. **Exhibit basic social skills.** Look people in the eye, smile and shake hands. Remember – a handshake is supposed to be firm. Even for women! Some people view a limp handshake as a sign of poor social skills.
6. **Anticipate common questions and prepare for them.** What are your strengths and weaknesses? These are opportunities to promote yourself. With respect to weaknesses: the key is how you dealt with something or overcame it. (Obviously, don't mention a problem or issue you haven't solved.) What are you looking for in terms of salary? Resist – if at all possible – being the first to mention a number. The risk is leaving money on the table or giving the interviewer sticker shock that taints your candidacy.
7. **Afterward.** We believe that a thank you is more appropriate by email now, rather than hand written. But in each case, visit with your recruiter about whether a thank you note is appropriate after your particular interview. If so, proceed with caution, as we've known many candidates who have lost the chance at an offer due to a thank you note with typos or that was otherwise inappropriate. (For example, an exclamation point after every sentence!) Proof and re-proof and, if in doubt, have your recruiter review your message before you send it. The email should be short (no more than 3 to 4 sentences) and convey interest as well as appreciation..