

Creating a Good First Impression



People form an opinion of someone they meet in the first two to four minutes. For that reason, it is important that you pay attention, to detail to create the best first impression you can. Some factors that affect the impression you make are appearance (hair, clothing, hygiene, jewelry, make-up), movement, mannerisms, personal space, and speaking manner. A weak or too firm handshake makes a negative impression. You should practice shaking hands before an interview. To help enhance your chances of making a favorable impression, follow the basic rules discussed below:

Communicate your best image through APPEARANCE:

Dress appropriately. Keep your dress understated, conservative, and neat. If you're unsure about what to wear, a good rule of thumb is dress slightly better than you would to report to the job every day. For example, if blue jeans are acceptable attire at the work place, you could wear casual dress pants to a job interview with such an organization. You can determine the dress code in a work place by asking or observing, if it is a public place. If you are still unsure, a suit in a dark neutral color is almost always a good choice. Some social service agencies provide appropriate interview clothing to those in need.

Dress for Success:

It is helpful to try a “dress rehearsal” before a job interview. You can increase your confidence by seeing your put-together, professional self; you can be assured that the clothing is clean and in good repair; and you can ask the opinion of a friend or relative.



Women Should Avoid:

1. Hair that is over styled, teased, or moussed. It is best to keep hair conservative styles.
2. Dangling or Large earrings
3. Too many earrings, rings, necklaces, or bracelets.
4. Too much make-up. Too little is always better than too much.
5. Too much perfume- none is better
6. Low- cut, tight, or short apparel
7. Exposed undergarments
8. Leather, suede apparel
9. Ruffles, bows, or fringe (they do not project a professional or businesslike image)
10. Patterned nylons. Plain are best
11. Very high heels.
12. Glittery, silver, gold, or open toes shoes.
13. Showing of tattoos or body piercings- cover with clothing or make-up if possible.

Men Should Avoid:

1. Earrings, bracelets, pinkie rings, or similar jewelry
2. Too much aftershave or cologne- none is better
3. Unbuttoned shirts
4. Tee shirts
5. Patterned T -shirts under dress shirts
6. White socks with dress pants. Wear dark colored dress socks
7. White pants
8. Novelty or Leather Ties
9. Sneakers
10. Showing of tattoos or body piercing- cover with clothing or makeup if possible.

Interviewing/Communicate Your Best Image by BEING PREPARED

- Arrive early** Plan your schedule and route so you arrive 10-15 minutes prior to the appointment. Allow time to stop in the building's bathroom, if there is a public one, for a last-minute check on your appearance.
- Be prepared** Bring a black pen, extra copies of your resume, your reference list, copies of licenses, driving record (for jobs requiring it), and social security or alien card.
- Bring any other documentation** supporting your qualifications (portfolio, work samples, references, etc.).
- Introduce yourself politely** using your first and last name and stating the first and last name of the individual you are to see.
Do not chew gum.
- Do not smoke** It is best not to smoke just before an interview as many people find the smell on your clothes and hair offensive.
- Say, "It's nice to meet you"** in your initial greeting to the interviewer.
Shake hands firmly.
- Address the interviewer as Mr. or Ms.** Unless you are requested to do otherwise. Don't assume that if the interviewer calls you by your first name you are both on a first-name basis!
- Be willing to make a bit of small talk** possibly about the weather, about the interviewer's good directions, or about traffic on the way to the interview.
- Speak clearly**, and in a positive, audible manner -but don't be too loud.
Notes:

Interviewing/Do's and Don'ts

Do's:

- Do bring a pen.
- Do arrive early to show how organized, prepared, and dependable you are.
- Do greet everyone including the receptionist in a courteous, friendly way.
- Do smile and show a positive attitude; be enthusiastic.
- Do greet the interviewer by name (not first name!).
- Do look the interviewer in the eye.
- Do offer a firm handshake and introduce yourself.
- Do wait for the interviewer to ask you to be seated.
- Do speak clearly and loud enough to be easily heard.
- Do relax if you can; remember the interviewer may be as nervous as you are.
- Do sit still.
- Do thank participants for their time, smile, and shake hands when the interview is over.
- Do depart in a positive manner.
- Do send a thank-you letter recapping your interest in the job.

Don't-Don't-Don't

- Don't chew gum or smoke; even if the interviewer does.
- Don't put anything on the interviewer's desk (elbows, purse, notebooks, etc.).
- Don't play nervously with your keys, rings, or pens.
- Don't slouch or look tired.
- Don't mumble or speak too softly.
- Don't avoid looking the interviewer in the eyes.
- Don't look too scared or nervous.
- Don't argue or act defensive or secretive.
- Don't talk too much or too little.
- Don't wear a hat or dark glasses.
- Don't talk about personal problems.
- Don't talk negatively about past schooling, jobs, or supervisors.
- Don't ask the interviewer if the company is stable or unstable.
- Don't fidget. Don't use slang.

Interviewing/Communicate Your Best Attitude

- **Sit straight and relatively still.** Avoid distracting wiggling or jiggling of your hands or legs or tapping and clicking of a pen.
- **Fold your hands comfortably in your lap** or on top of your resume materials. Do not cross your arms over your chest (makes you appear disagreeable) or spread them across the back of the chair or couch (makes you appear too relaxed, lazy, or disinterested).
- **Maintain good eye contact.**
- **Show reserved confidence.** Let the interviewer start the dialogue. Listen carefully.
- **Avoid interrupting,** even if the interviewer does most of the talking.
- **Ask questions** if you don't understand something.
Be positive and upbeat in your remarks.
- **Avoid complaining** about a previous job or employer. Whether or not your remarks are true, you won't appear professional if you "harp" on these subjects.
- **Avoid criticizing** or disagreeing with the interviewer.
- **Tell the employer about your skills.** If you don't, no one else will! Don't make the employer work harder than you during the interview.
- **Welcome all questions** and give direct, honest answers. Take your time by developing the answer in your head before you respond.
- **Try to plan ahead for tough questions** and practice your answers before the interview.
- **For women, crossing your legs is acceptable.**

Interviewing/Communicate Your Best Image by Finishing Strong

- ❑ **Don't overstay your time.**
- ❑ **If you want the job, say so!** Summarize why you are qualified. This is the time to state strengths and qualities you may have forgotten to emphasize earlier.
- ❑ **Thank the interviewer for his or her time and interest** and extend your hand for a strong parting handshake.
- ❑ **Be proactive in your follow-up.** Ask how you will be notified or arrange to call the employer to learn their decision.
- ❑ **Send thank-you letters or notes** within 24 hours to each person with whom you interviewed.
- ❑ **Use each interview as a building block for the next one.** You may go through many interviews before you connect with the right job. *It is not what happened at the last interview that is important, but what happens at this one!*



Interviewing/Questions Interviewers May Ask You

Why should I hire you?

Why do you think you might like this particular job?

Why would you like to work for this company?

Tell me about yourself.

What are your main strengths? (Skills, abilities, etc.)

What do you consider your main weakness?

Describe a time when you did not get along with a supervisor, teacher, or co-worker and how you handled the situation.

What would you like to be doing five years from now?

Tell me about your last job (likes and dislikes).

How do you work under pressure?

Tell me about any work gaps in your employment history.

Have you ever been fired or asked to leave a job?

Have you ever been convicted of a felony?

What are your salary expectations?

When would you be able to start work?

Would you be willing to work overtime and/or weekends?

Can you travel; do you have a car for travel?

All interview questions are really asking the same question:

Why are you the best person for the job?

Market Yourself!

View yourself as a product that needs to be sold to the employer. Analyze your strengths, qualifications, interests, and abilities and relate them to the position(s) for which you are applying. As a well-prepared candidate, you can use the interview process to send the message, "I am the best person for this job," through everything you say and do.

To succeed in today's job market, not only must you do more than be able to demonstrate evidence of talents and skills; you must also be prepared to sell yourself. This requires you to have a thorough understanding of who you are, including your short and long-term goals, what motivates you, and what you believe sets you apart from the competition.

Telephone Etiquette

Telephone Interviews

It is almost guaranteed that you will talk to a professional employer on the telephone at some point in the hiring process. In an extensive job search you will be using the telephone to conduct research, cold-call employers, make networking contacts, schedule meetings, and interview. Your first phone call to a potential employer can often mean the difference between getting an interview and being overlooked as a candidate.

There are three basic types of telephone interviews:

1. You initiate a call to the hiring manager and they are interested in your background. The call from that point forward is an interview
2. A company calls you based upon a previous contact. You will likely be unprepared for the call, but it is still an interview
3. You have a pre-set time with a company representative to speak further on the phone.

Telephone Interview Preparation

In preparing for your phone interview, there are several things you can do. To prepare for an unexpected contact:

Tape your resume to a wall in view of the phone. It will be there for the call and will be a constant reminder for your job search.

Keep all of your employer research materials within easy reach of the phone.

Have a notepad handy to take notes.

Conduct a telephone mock interview with a friend or a Career Services staff member.

If the phone interview will occur at a set time, there are additional steps you can take:

- Place a “Do Not Disturb” note on your door.
- Turn off your stereo, TV, and any other potential distraction.
- Warm up your voice while waiting for the call. Sing a song to yourself.
- Have a glass of water handy, since you will not have a chance to take a break during the call.

In general, it’s best to make calls in the morning when people are alert and not yet involved in the day’s events.

The first rule of telephone etiquette is to be prepared. Know whom you want to speak to and what you want to say. If you sound hesitant or unsure of yourself, you may have more difficulty getting past the person answering the phone.

Knowing what you will say if you get someone’s voice mail and having a “script” ready will enable you to leave a simple, clear, and concise message. Your message should be 30 seconds or less and include a phone number with area code.