

JOB SEARCH TOOLKIT:

Tools & Techniques You Need for a Successful Job Hunt

The following section is entitled: **Chapter 10: Interview Tips**

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The full text of the Job Search Toolkit is available at: ***FirstFind.org>>Look for a Job.***

Chapter 10

Interview Tips

When does a job interview begin?

Sometimes an interview can begin before you sit face-to-face with a potential employer.

The process could start when someone reads your application or resume or even when they hear your voice.

- When you are looking for a job, remember to ALWAYS answer your phone in a polite and friendly way. The voice at the other end of the phone could connect you to a potential employer.
- Your cell phone message or voice mail can give an employer their first impression. Make sure it is clear and simple. While you are job hunting leave off the cool music and casual message. State your name and phone number clearly.
- If you call an employer to respond to an ad, the person you talk to may conduct a telephone interview. Make sure you have your Resume and/or Personal Data Form in front of you before you pick up the phone and be prepared to answer questions. It should be a good place to talk without any background noise of the TV, music, family or people passing on the street.
- If an employer calls you and you are not prepared to speak, are in the middle of something, the phone connection is not clear, or it's just too noisy where you are, ask to reschedule the conversation. Say, "I'm really interested in speaking to you about this position but I am finishing up an appointment. Can we schedule this conversation later in the day or tomorrow?" If you are driving, only answer the phone with a hands free device and pull over to complete the call.
- Remember that someone will notice your behavior as soon as you walk in the door of a potential employer. Always try to make a good impression.

- Be prepared for an interview even if you are going to pick up or drop off an application or resume. Be well groomed and dress neatly. The person you meet may want to interview you immediately.

Know how to get there

If your interview is in an area you don't know, take a practice trip to learn how to get there. Try to make the drive or take the bus or train near the time of your scheduled interview so you will learn about any problems with traffic or crowds.

When you know where you are going, it will be easier to be on time and be more relaxed for the interview.

What should I wear?

The way you look can make or break your chances of getting a job. Grooming and hygiene are probably the first things a potential employer sees. The way you look will tell a great deal about you.

Your hair must be neat. Men sometimes get a haircut before they go to an interview to make sure that their hair will be neat. For women, it may not be a good idea to try a new hairstyle. You want an interviewer to remember that you are qualified, neat and enthusiastic - not that you have pink hair or a fancy cut.

Your face, hands and fingernails must be clean. Men should be shaved or have a neatly groomed mustache and/or beard. Women's hairstyles should be neat and well groomed; you should not be remembered as the one with the purple hair.

If you have tattoos try to cover them as much as possible when you go to an interview. Visible tattoos, unless they are expressly for the purpose of religious belief, are likely to be prohibited in conservative industries like banking, health care, and many direct customer service positions. Tattoos are unlikely to present a problem if you are interviewing in a creative industry or to be a barista or bartender. When in doubt cover the tattoo(s). You don't want potential employers to be distracted by a distinctive design or remember you for your body art and not your job related qualifications.

Look like you have given some thought to what you are wearing. You do not have to wear a suit or even a jacket and tie. Men should wear a shirt, preferably one with a collar, and slacks. Women should wear a neat dress; a blouse with slacks or a skirt; or a suit with a skirt and a jacket. Do not wear sneakers, the latest in urban style or anything that shows too much skin or cleavage.

If you do get a new outfit for the interview, try it on and sit down to make certain you can sit comfortably. If you are not comfortable or spend time tugging at your clothes, it will make you nervous. It will also distract the interviewer.

There are a few rules of appearance for an interview:

- Don't wear too much perfume or cologne.

- Don't wear too much jewelry. Men should remove earrings. Men and women should wear no more than a watch, one ring, and one simple necklace.
- If you have multiple facial and ear piercing, remove all but minimal items for the interview, except those worn for religious purposes.
- If you wear a hat, take it off when you are inside, unless you cover your head for religious reasons.
- Don't wear a hood.
- If you wear a coat, take it off when you are inside. (It looks like you want to leave if you never take off your coat.) Ask if there is a place to hang your coat so you do not have to carry it around.

Making a good impression

Applicants who present themselves well in the interview impress employers. Having good skills and knowing the answers to questions is not enough to get a job. You must also make a good impression.

Some ways that you can make a favorable impression include:

- Extend your hand to shake hands with the interviewer. You may need to practice a natural handshake. It is firm but not hard and not a bear hug but rather a professional approach.
- Smile when you meet a new person. Smile naturally when you are speaking, if it is appropriate.
- Make frequent eye contact with the interviewer. This does not mean that you have to stare at them. Make eye contact naturally, which will include looking away at times. This may also be something you want to practice with someone of the same AND opposite sex.
- Speak clearly at a medium volume. You should not be heard in the next office but at the same time the interviewer should not have to strain to hear you.
- Maintain good posture. Stand and sit up straight! Practice sitting straight in a chair with both feet on the ground. Do not lean back with your legs open. Don't cross your legs so that the interviewer can see the bottom of your shoes. Don't lean forward on the edge of your seat looking like you want to leave as soon as possible.
- Be polite and courteous. Saying please and thank you will help make a good impression. Don't sit down until the interviewer tells you where to sit. Don't interrupt the interviewer no matter how long they speak. Don't complain about the time if you are asked to wait.

- Be energetic and friendly. It is normal to be nervous but don't let that keep you from acting positive and interested.
- Be enthusiastic and interested in the job and the company. Don't give an interviewer the impression that you are only talking to them because you need a job. The interviewer will be more impressed if you tell him why you want the particular job at his company.
- Describe yourself and your abilities with confidence. Practicing questions and answers will make you more confident at the interview.
- Ask questions about the job and the company. Your questions will demonstrate that you are interested and that you prepared for the interview.

Think about these behaviors before you start to go to interviews. Remember them during the interview if you start to get nervous.

Thank you for your time

At the end of every interview thank the person for taking the time to meet you. Thank the person you speak to on the phone. Thank the person you meet when you drop off a job application. Good manners will always make a good impression.

Review your notes after an interview

Reread the questions and answers that you prepared in your notebook. You may want to change some of your answers. You may also want to add in any new questions that you were asked in the interview.

Workshops on interviewing

If you hear of a program about how to be interviewed, sign up and go to the class. Even if you have had 20 interviews, you may learn something new at a workshop.

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