How to Conduct Yourself in a Job Interview

A job interview can be very stressful, especially for people who have recently left education or have not experienced many job interviews in the past. How you conduct yourself and the things you say during your interview are the only opportunity you have to impress.

Most job interviews follow a similar format – the potential employer asks the candidate a series of questions about their suitability to perform the job for which he or she has applied, and the candidate responds with answers he or she feels are appropriate.

The areas of discussion will cover the candidate’s personal history, work history, skillset, ambitions, future plans and personal tastes. The answers given will help the interviewer decide if the candidate is the right person for the job and if the candidate will fit in with the current regime. Sometimes the “fitting in” is much more important than qualifications or experience.

For every job interview there are a few simple guidelines which should be followed – these apply across the board and disregard status, salary and everything else…

**Do your research**

The one thing you should not do when attending a job interview is to go unprepared. Most companies have a website these days and if you do nothing else to prepare, you should at least have a look at the website. Try to pick out a few interesting facts about the company; its age, its history, its major achievements. Most employers working for small to medium sized businesses will be impressed if you can drop a few nuggets of information gleaned from the website into the interview conversation.

**Arrive on time**

It is paramount you arrive for a job interview on time. You should estimate how long the journey is going to take and add on at least half an hour (maybe even an hour). If you arrive early you can grab a coffee or go for a walk, but don’t arrive late.

**Dress appropriately**

The way you dress for an interview is very important; it says a lot about your status and your expectations. You do not have to attend all job interviews in a suit or a shirt and tie, although some businesses do expect this, but you do have to present yourself well.
If you are not sure about the dress code you could telephone the person performing the interview to ask, or you could pay a visit to the premises (stand outside at lunch time) to see what type of clothes the current employees are wearing.

**Give a firm handshake and make eye contact**

Your entry into the interview room is also very important as this is the time when a first impression is made. You may be brought to the interview room by somebody who is not involved with the interview process or you may be collected by the person doing the interview and then lead to the interview room.

Generally, the person performing the interview will introduce themselves by name and offer their hand for a hand shake. You should reciprocate by firmly shaking hands, making eye contact and offering an appropriate salutation.

If you are collected by a member of staff and lead to an interview room you should consider this part of the interview and display appropriate respect. Interviewers will often talk to other people the candidate has met whilst on the premises, this helps to give an overall assessment of their suitability.

**Speak clearly, don’t waffle**

During the interview you should always speak clearly and confidently, but don’t waffle (unless the job requires it!). Try to realise when you have said enough to answer the question and then say no more. If you talk too much you could put off your interviewer, but at the same time, if you say too little, you may not endear yourself to the interviewer enough.

**Keep eye contact**

Always try to keep eye contact with the person you are talking to. If there are a few people holding the interview you should make eye contact with each one, even if it is only for a few seconds at a time. Looking around the room at doors, windows or other furniture will not create a good impression. Eye contact instills confidence, trust and develops a relationship.

**Ask questions**

Usually, at the end of a job interview you are asked if you have any questions. It is always advisable to ask a few questions at this time as it displays your interest in the position. The best type of questions focus on the business and the position you have applied for, not the salary being offered, benefits and holiday entitlement. Ask about the software the company uses, the scope for promotion, the managerial structure, the initial and subsequent training, the plans for the future, how the company will grow etc.
Some more advice on how to conduct yourself before and during the job interview:

- Do not enter the interview chewing gum
- Try not to eat food such as garlic before the interview
- Try to avoid having a cigarette until after the interview
- If you are asked to complete an application form, fill it in neatly
- Let the interviewer take the lead
- Sit down when invited to do so
- Do not complain about your current employer during the interview
- Ensure your body language is positive and look interested
- Do not slouch in the chair or become over friendly with the interviewer
- Do not try to be too interested in salary or benefits

The interview should end as it begun – with a firm handshake, a “thank you for your time” salutation and a look in the eye.

The interviewer will advise you how long you should expect to wait before finding out if you have been successful. Generally this will be a few days, but it could be longer. The interviewer should also advise you if you will be notified by email, letter or telephone.