

How to present yourself at a job interview

It can be daunting to some, but if you know the keys to having a successful job interview, then you are much more likely to impress your potential employer and get the job.

BODY LANGUAGE

Actions speak louder than words. Your body language has to convey confidence and capability, or your words will seem artificial. When you walk into the building where your interview is taking place, the positive body language starts - your good interview behavior is not reserved only for the person who is interviewing you. When you check in with the receptionist, stand up straight, keep your shoulders back, and make direct eye contact.

You don't want to look scared and nervous. People who work together talk to each other about prospective employees, so your impression on the "gatekeeper" is important. When you go into the office for your interview, greet your potential employer with a firm handshake, direct eye contact, and a warm smile. Do not sit down until your interviewer has stepped behind his or her desk. Men, do not cross your legs when you are seated. It will make you look standoffish. Sit with your feet firmly on the floor. Women, if you are wearing a dress or skirt, you should cross your ankles, but not your legs. Sitting with your legs open in a dress or skirt really makes you look silly and sometimes even inappropriate. Do not grasp the arms of the chair because that makes you look very uneasy and uncomfortable.

Keep your hands folded in your lap, or place them on your thighs. Never cross your arms during an interview, or you will look like you have something to hide, which is the last thing you would want to project during a job interview. When you are answering questions and conversing, always maintain eye contact - never let your gaze wander around the room, or you will look uninterested and aloof. When your interviewer is explaining things to you, make sure you nod your head to convey understanding. At the close of the interview, extend your hand for a second firm handshake.

BE CONFIDENT, NOT COCKY

During many job interviews, you will be asked to talk about your strengths and weaknesses. It can feel really awkward and uncomfortable trying to talk about yourself in either way, because you have to walk such a fine line between confidence and arrogance.

Try to stay away from phrases like: "I'm the best ____." You shouldn't be general; you should use factual evidence that proves your competence so that your interviewer has more objective factors to base his opinion on, rather than your subjective view of yourself.

For example, if you are interviewing for a management position, you might be able to say, "I managed a team of twenty employees, and under my leadership, sales increased twenty percent from the previous year." Concrete examples of your experience will speak volumes more than flashy adjectives. As far as the question about your weaknesses, you should never be too forthright. Don't say, "I have a hard time getting out of bed in the morning to make it into work on time" or "I usually hate all of my co-workers." You also don't want to say nothing, or that



you can't think of anything negative to say about yourself. Try to put a positive spin on your weakness. For example, "I can sometimes get stuck working on one thing for hours just to get it just right - I am a bit of a perfectionist."

BE INFORMED

You should try to learn as much about the company and the position that you are interviewing for as possible. It will be very impressive to your interviewer if you are knowledgeable about the company because it shows that you were willing to go the extra mile to get the job. The more you know about the position, the more prepared you will be for the interview. Your interviewer might even ask you what you know about the company, and it is great if you can actually talk about their formation, their reputation, their standards, etc.

ASK QUESTIONS

When your interviewer asks you if you have any questions, have some. If you don't ask anything, it will seem like you really don't care and you aren't very interested in getting the position. However, ask questions about the company and the position you are interviewing for. Do not ask questions about salary, benefits, or insurance during an initial interview. Those details can wait until at least the second interview, and if you ask them during the first one it makes it seem like your motivation to work there is purely financial, not because you think that this will be a great job to have.

FOLLOW-UP

After the job interview is over, you still have some work to do. Send a note or e-mail to thank the interviewer for his or her time and consideration, and let them know that if they need any further information, that you are happy to provide it. It will show them that you are really excited about the position. If they have interviewed many applicants, then following up like this will set you apart from the pack.