

Interviewing Skills

What to Do During an Interview



Introduction



Your qualifications and skills are only a part of what the hiring manager is looking for when conducting an interview. Whether you get the job depends largely on how you behave at the interview—what you do, what you say, and how you say it.

From the first door you walk through to the final handshake on your way out, this lesson will help you learn how to behave during an interview. It will help you identify **basic business etiquette** that can improve your chances, as well as show you how your **tone of voice** and **body language** can be interpreted by an interviewer. It will also outline the basic rules for **answering questions well**.

Business etiquette

To land the job, you'll have to appear professional, confident, and capable. You will be judged not only on your ability to do the job itself but also on how well you will get along with the people with whom you will be working. The hiring manager watches your **communication skills** and your **manners** to predict whether you'll work well with others.

Fair or not, using poor manners can give the hiring manager the impression that:

- You are unlikely to be able to perform well in certain work situations, especially those involving work teams or customers
- You do not care about, value, or respect the people with whom you are interacting
- You are prone to rudeness or ignorance

Top ten business etiquette tips to use in an interview:

1. **Be on time.** If you'll be late, show that you are respectful of the interviewer's time. Call to say when you'll be arriving.
2. **Thank the interviewer** for taking the time to meet with you, both at the beginning of the interview and again at the end.
3. **Dress appropriately.** If you arrive dressed too casually or too formally, the situation can be uncomfortable for both you and the person interviewing you.
4. **Introduce yourself** to the receptionist and to everyone you meet in the interview.
5. **Shake hands** with everyone, using a firm—but not forceful—grip, and make strong eye contact.
6. **Sit when you are asked to sit**, not before.
7. **Place your loose items on the floor next to your seat**, in your lap, or on the side table, coffee table, or in front of you at a conference table; do not put them on the interviewer's desk unless it is offered to you. Your briefcase or bag should be kept at your feet, not on a chair or table.
8. **Do not ask for refreshments or permission to smoke.** If a refreshment is offered, you may accept. If you are asked to dine out as part of your interview, use **good table manners**.
9. **Keep all of your mobile and other electronic devices turned completely off.** A phone set to vibrate will interrupt the meeting.
10. **Keep a positive and friendly attitude.**

The tone of your voice

Often, your **tone of voice** says more than your words do. You can say you know how to perform the job duties, but if it

doesn't sound like you do then you won't inspire much confidence in the hiring manager.

Click the audio player below to hear examples of how your answers can be affected by your tone of voice.

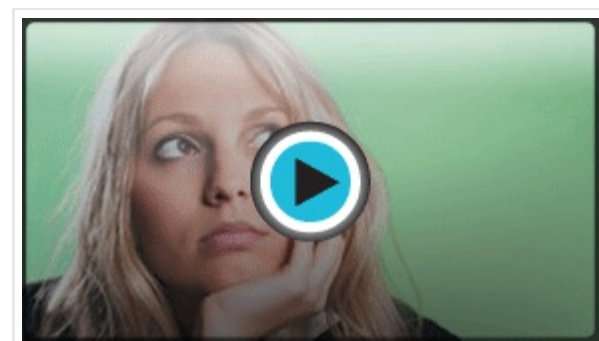
How to SOUND MORE CONFIDENT during the job interview:

- ✔ Pause before answering to give yourself time to gather your thoughts. A five second pause may seem like a long time to you, but it will likely show the interviewer that you have considered your answer.
- ✔ Stick with a factual but interested tone. Avoid raising the pitch of your voice at the end of a statement. Doing so can change the tone of your statement to one of a question, which makes you seem uncertain. Avoid using the same tone for every answer, though, as it can make you sound bored.
- ✔ Practice your answers before you go. If you have a good answer prepared and practiced, it will be on the tip of your tongue! You will sound more confident if you are not trying to think up an answer on the spot.
- ✔ Try to eliminate or reduce the number of times you say *um*, *uh*, *like*, and *you know*. These filler phrases imply that you are not sure about what you want to say.
- ✔ Don't use "weak words." Starting your answers with *I think that I am...* and *I hope to...* and *I believe that I can...* imply that you are not certain of your abilities.
- ✔ Don't apologize for being nervous. Doing so actually calls more attention to the fact that you are worried about your performance.
- ✔ You can get public speaking practice before the interview by joining a local public speaking group, such as Toastmasters (<http://www.toastmasters.org>).

Your body language

Body language can communicate almost as much information as what you are actually saying. Your true thoughts and attitude can be reflected in your body language. The more positive you feel about the interview and your abilities, the more likely this will be reflected in your body language.

➡ Take a look at some examples of how body language can communicate thoughts and feelings.



How can you improve your body language?

Try video recording yourself during a practice interview to observe your body language. You can also practice with a friend or use a web conferencing tool like **Skype** which allows you to see a mirror view of yourself while you are talking to another person. Pay attention to any unflattering mannerisms you may exhibit, like biting your lip, scowling while thinking, or nervous tapping.

While it is good to be aware of any body language concerns, the best way to portray good body language is to approach the interview with a positive attitude. When you feel positive, you will naturally relax and smile more, thus making you appear more confident and appealing.

Answering questions well

The largest part of your interview will be spent answering questions, so you will definitely want to know how to answer questions well.

Here are seven simple rules for answering any interview question:

1. Ask for clarification if needed. An interviewer will not be put off by your questions; in fact, he or she may be

impressed that you took the time to ask.

2. Be honest. Never embellish your past accomplishments or claim a skill you do not have. If you believe you are lacking a critical skill, tell the hiring manager that you haven't had the opportunity to use that skill yet, but that you are eager to learn.

3. Stay true to your message. Focus on the reasons the company should hire you; what skills and qualifications do you have that can be put to good use by this company? Use the **STAR method** to answer behavioral interview questions.

4. Always answer questions with your audience in mind. If you are interviewing for a job in a different industry than you have previously been in, the interviewer may not understand some of the technical terms you use. Explain where necessary.

5. Avoid topics that can get you into trouble. These typically include things in your personal life, such as your marital status, age, religion, or political beliefs.

6. Use clear and concise language. Speak slowly and carefully to make sure your words are being understood.

7. Seek feedback. Ask the hiring manager if you have provided the level of detail needed to fully answer the question.



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