

# **Interviewing Strategies**

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## **What is a job interview?**

A job interview is a structured conversation between an employer and a person applying for a job.

Good interviewing is based upon a strong job search foundation of self-assessment, skills identification, setting goals and objectives, research, résumé and letter writing, and networking.

## **What's the purpose of an interview?**

The purpose of an interview is to exchange information. It lets an employer get to know you – your accomplishments, skills, talents, interests, work experience, education, and how interested you are in working for the particular organization. The job interview helps an organization find a person who's a "right match" for the particular job. A right match includes someone who can perform the essential functions of the job, execute the mission of the organization and effectively fit into its culture, and successfully relate to other team members and staff.

The job interview also lets you find out information about the employer. It allows you the opportunity to assess if there is a match between your skills and interest and determine if the overall environment meets your needs. The interview is a two-way street, one for the employer to assess you and for you to assess the organization.

The job interview is an important step in your job search. How much preparation time you invest and how you represent and present yourself in an interview can greatly affect your chances of getting a job, getting a job quickly, or finding an employer that is compatible with your skills and interests.

## **The three basic steps in the interview process include:**

1. Preparation
2. The Interview
3. Follow Up

## **STEP 1: Preparation**

### **Prepare in advance**

- The better prepared you are, the more confident you will be and the greater your chances for success.

- Find someone to role-play the interview with you. The person should be objective and knowledgeable, perhaps a mentor, teacher, co-worker or business associate.
- Use a mirror or video when you role-play to see what kind of image you project.

### **Assessing your interviewing skills**

- Observe your strengths and repeat them.
- Work on correcting your weakness, such as speaking rapidly, talking too loudly or softly and nervous habits.
- Learn the questions that are commonly asked and prepare answers to them. Practice giving answers that are brief but thorough.
- Decide what questions you would like to ask and practice interjecting them at different points in the interview.

### **Evaluate your strengths**

- Evaluate your skills, abilities, accomplishments, education and personal worker traits as they relate to the type of job you are seeking.
- If you have details about the specific job before the interview, practice tailoring your answers to show how you meet the company's needs.
- Look at your transferable and technical skills, and things you've accomplished that had positive results. Be prepared to give specific examples of your accomplishments in the interview.

Match your skills and experience to the job for which you are applying. On the left side, make a list of what the employer is looking for based on the job description. On the right, make a list of the qualities you possess that fit those requirements. Demonstrate your skills and experience on your resume and in the interview.

<b>Position Requirements</b>	<b>My Skills and Experience</b>
<p><b>Example:</b> Excellent Communication Skills</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 years experience communicating with customers while working at Burger King. Explained menu, provided customer service, resolved customer complaints, and informed supervisor of any issues.</li> <li>• Presented senior training project to American Society of Training and Development. Explained purpose of project to a group of 38 trainers.</li> </ul>

## **Assess your overall appearance**

- Your clothes should be clean and pressed and your shoes polished.
- Make sure your hair is neat, your nails clean and you are well groomed.
- Dress like the professional you will soon be. Choose dark colors and leave flashy jewelry and strong scents at home.
- Find out what clothing is appropriate for the organization you are applying with. Although some industries are more stylish, acceptable attire for most industries are more conservative. Men: Wear a sports jacket, collared shirt, tie and slacks. Women: Wear a pantsuit or blazer, blouse and skirt.

## **Research the company**

- The more you know about the company and the job you are applying for, the better you will do on the interview. This information will also help you determine before the interview if you would like to work there.
- Know the company's products and services, who their competitors are and their reputation in the community.
- You can find information on the Internet, at career centers, libraries, and by calling the employer.

## **Know the job**

- Carefully read the job description.
- Understand the responsibilities, skills, and qualifications the employer is seeking.
- Consider the job from the hiring manager's perspective and ask yourself what type of person would you hire?
- Prepare questions directed toward the employer that demonstrate your interest in the job and the company.

## **Have extra copies of your résumé available to take on the interview**

- The interviewer may ask you for extra copies or you may want to offer your résumé to the employer for review. You can also refer to your résumé to complete applications that ask for job history information.
- Make sure you bring extra copies of transcripts, letters of recommendation, references and any other type of documentation appropriate for the position in which you are interviewing. Think about developing a portfolio presentation to help organize your documents.

## **STEP 2: The Interview (Intro, Middle, Closing Phases)**

The job interview is a two-way discussion between you and a prospective employer. Most interviews are structured with a traditional format. It usually consists of three phases.

### **Prior to Arrival**

- Plan to arrive 15 minutes early
- Give yourself plenty of time
- Go to the interview alone
- Dispose of chewing gum before entering the interviewer's office.
- If you smoke, do not smoke before the interview.
- It's important to make a good impression from the moment you drive into the parking lot and enter the reception area.

**INTRODUCTORY PHASE** - Consists of causal conversation and this is very important. You want to make a good impression and if possible get additional information you need about the company. You only have a few seconds to create a positive first impression, which can influence the rest of the interview and even determine whether you get the job. The interviewer's first impression of you is based mainly on non-verbal clues. The interviewer is assessing your overall appearance and demeanor. When greeting the interviewer, be certain your handshake is firm and that you make eye contact. Your posture shows that you are interested in what is being said. SMILE naturally at appropriate times. Avoid keeping your briefcase/purse on your lap. Pace your movements so that they are not too slow. Try to appear relaxed and confident.

### **Winning Interview Behavior**

1. Smile, offer to shake hands and give your name distinctly when greeting the interviewer
2. Don't sit down until told
3. Let the interviewer take the lead
4. Listen and pay attention to what is being said
5. Maintain eye contact
6. Avoid using slang expressions
7. Avoid using verbal fillers like "um", "yeah", "like" and "you know"

## Winning Interview Behavior Continued

8. Be aware of body language
9. Never criticize others (especially a former employer)
10. Never beg for a job or be boastful
11. Don't discuss personal problems
12. Be positive and show your enthusiasm
13. Don't use generalities when answering questions
14. Don't exaggerate previous positions or their salaries
15. Stress strong points
16. Answer questions in full rather than merely nodding or saying "yes" or "no"
17. Indicate preference as to job desired, never say "I'll take anything"
18. Be genuine

**MIDDLE PHASE** - You will be asked questions about your work experience, skills, education, activities, accomplishments and interests. Your answers will be assessed on how you will perform the job in relation to the company objectives. Use specific examples to illustrate your point whenever possible.

**EXAMPLES:**

**"Describe a conflict you had with a supervisor/co-worker/colleague and the process you used to resolve it."**

**AN ARTICULATE ANSWER FROM A CANDIDATE USING THE STAR METHOD:**

***Situation/Task*** - "Last semester, I was working with a group on a project for a class. We needed to decide on a topic and determine the data that needed to be analyzed. A number of people in the group became argumentative and could not come to a consensus as to what direction to take."

***Actions*** - "I remembered a workshop that I had attended about conflict resolution and used some of the techniques to help us understand each other. We sat down and outlined all of our options, and determined exactly where we actually disagreed."

***Results*** - "In the end, coming together at the table and making lists really helped, and we were able to pull off a great project. The professor said that it was one of the best organized projects that she had ever seen!"

## **Frequently Asked Questions and Suggested Responses:**

### **“Tell me about yourself.”**

Briefly describe your education, work experience, qualifications for the position you are applying and a personal worker trait.

“I will be completing my AA degree in Organizational Communication this spring with a 3.75 GPA...”

“I have excellent computer skills that include Microsoft Office, Word, PowerPoint, Excel, Publisher, Outlook and I like to be assigned challenging projects.

### **“What is your weakest point?”**

Translated means: “What are your areas for improvement?”

Your response could be something like:

“I have always wanted to learn another language, especially in today’s workplace and am currently enrolled in conversational Spanish class.” Of course this should be a true statement.

### **“What is your strongest point?”**

“I have excellent computer skills and am proficient in building power point presentations, excel, word...”

“I work well under pressure...”

“I am organized and manage my time well...”

“I catch on quickly and am eager to learn

Give specific examples

### **“What do you hope to be doing 5 years from now?”**

“I hope I will be working here and have increased my level of responsibility based on my performance...”

### **“Why have you been out of work for so long?”**

“I spent some time re-evaluating my past experience and the current job market to see what direction I wanted to take...”

“I had some offers, but I’m not just looking for another job, I’m looking for a career...”

### **“What do you know about our company? Why do you want to work here?”**

Don’t make up the information do your research.

“You are a small/large firm and a leading force in the local/national economy...”

“Your company is a leader in your field and growing...”

## **Frequently Asked Questions and Suggested Responses:**

### **“What is your greatest accomplishment?”**

Give a specific illustration from your previous or current job where you saved the company money or helped increase their profits. If you have just graduated from college, try to find some accomplishments from your schoolwork, projects, part time jobs, volunteer work, or extra curricular activities.

### **“Why should we hire you?”**

Highlight your background based on the company’s current needs. Recap your qualifications keeping the interviewer’s job description in mind. If you don’t have much experience, talk about how your education and training prepared you for the job.

### **“Why do you want to make a change now?”**

“I am convinced that there would be no better place to work than your company. You are the top business in your industry. You provide your employees with the tools they need to stay competitive and sharpen their skills while working in an open, team-based environment. I am also aware that you provide a mentor for all new employees, and I would embrace any opportunity to work with a mentor and eventually become one myself.”

### **“Tell me about a problem you had in your last job and how you resolved it.”**

The employer wants to assess your analytical skills and see if you are a team player. Select a problem from your last job and explain how you solved it.

### **“Stress Questions” Asked of You**

- Have you ever been fired from a job?
- If you were starting all over again, what jobs would you consider?
- What do you like best/least about your job?
- What did you like best/least about your last supervisor?
- Why have you held so many jobs?
- Why did you get into this field?
- Does your employer know you are planning to leave?

**CLOSING PHASE** - You will be asked whether you have any questions or not. Ask relevant questions that have not been previously asked or answered. If you have decided that you want the job, tell the interviewer. If another interview has been scheduled, get the necessary information. If this is the final interview, find out when the decision is to be made and when you can call. Thank the interviewer by name, offer to shake hands and say goodbye.



## Questions You Could Ask the Employer

- How would you describe your management/supervisory style? (provided future supervisor is involved in the interview)
- What are the opportunities for growth?
- How is an employee evaluated in this position?
- What does a typical work day/week look like for this position?
- How would you describe the culture of your company/department?
- What do you think is the biggest challenge of this position?
- Why did the person who had this position previously leave?
- What are your goals for this department?
- Do you have any questions or concerns regarding my qualifications for this position?
- Do you have a business card(s)? (If not be sure to obtain correct spelling of name and title before you leave)
- What will be the next step in the hiring process?

### STEP 3: Follow Up

You are not finished yet. Write down the name and title of the interviewer (watch for spelling). Review what the internship entails and record what the next step will be. Note your reactions to the interview; include what went well and went poorly.

Make sure you send a **THANK-YOU note/card immediately after the interview.**

- Be handwritten (only if you have **very** good handwriting)
- Be simple and brief and on good quality paper
- Express your appreciation for the interviewer's time

October 15, 2011

Dear Mr. Interviewer,

I really appreciated your taking the time to meet with me this afternoon. I believe that my experience in dealing with new products would fit right in with your marketing plan. I am very interested in working for your company.

As we agreed, I will contact you next Thursday.

Sincerely,

Susie Seeker

## **Phone Follow Up**

If you were not told during the interview when a hiring decision will be made, call after one week. At that time, if you learn that the decision is still not made, find out whether you are still under consideration for the position. Reiterate that you are interested in the position.

If you learn that you did not get the position, ask the employer for specific ways to improve regarding your qualifications or the way you interview.

If you are offered the position, you have to decide whether you want it. If you are not sure, thank the employer and ask for time to think about it. If you know you want the position, thank the employer, accept the position and get the details on when you start.

## **NEGOTIATING YOUR COMPENSATION PACKAGE**

Do not discuss your salary with the employer until you have been offered the job and you think it is an offer you should seriously consider. During salary negotiations, you are not only talking about your monetary salary but your entire compensation package. This includes sick leave, vacation time, health insurance, tuition reimbursement, and other benefits the company may offer. Your base salary and performance raises are probably the most negotiable parts of your compensation package.

Make sure you consider all benefits the company has to offer, not just salary. This might also include distance to drive to the job, whether or not travel is involved, and if so, how much. Before you begin negotiating, decide which benefits are most important to you so you are ready to talk to the employer.

## **HOW TO FIND SALARY INFORMATION**

- Salary.com
- Salaryexpert.com
- Occupational Outlook Handbook
  - [www.bls.gov/oco](http://www.bls.gov/oco)
- Labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov
- California Career Zone
  - [www.cacareerzone.org](http://www.cacareerzone.org)
- Careerbuilder.com
- Professional Associations

## The Negotiating Meeting

Be assertive when negotiating a fair compensation package. If the employer makes you an offer that does not seem equitable, restate additional qualifications (if any) that take your overall value above the minimum offer and make a case for increased compensation in other areas (i.e. if a cash increase is not feasible).

If you really want the job, but the offer still seems low after negotiating, ask if the employer will consider a salary review three to six months from your starting date. You usually don't have to make a decision immediately. Ask the employer for a day to consider the offer. Always get the agreement in writing.

## ILLEGAL QUESTIONS

Generally, ANY question is permissible as long as the questions:

- Are clearly job-related
- Are asked of every candidate
- Don't have an adverse impact on any specific group of persons

Unless the questions pertain to occupational qualifications, employers are forbidden by law to make any distinctions related to:

- Age, Race, Sex, Religion, and Ethnicity
- National Origin or Group Affiliations
- Child Care, Disabilities, or Transportation
- Spouse's feelings about travel away from home

If you feel that you were asked an illegal question and as a result were discriminated against, you should file a charge within 180 days. You should file concurrently with both your state agency and EEOC.

The following response may be made when asked an illegal question:

- Ask the interviewer to explain the question's relevance to the job. This gives you time to clarify both your choices and what the interviewer is driving at.

## DIFFERENT TYPES OF INTERVIEWS

- ✓ **Phone Screening Interview:** A preliminary interview by phone, in which a company representative determines whether you have the basic qualifications to warrant a subsequent interview.

- ✓ **Structured Interview:** The interview explores certain predetermined areas using questions which have been written in advance. The interviewer has a written description of the experience, skills and personality traits of an ideal candidate. Your experience and skills are compared to specific job tasks. This type of interview is very common and most traditional interviews are based on this format.
- ✓ **Multiple/Series Interviews:** Multiple interviews are commonly used with professional jobs. This approach involves a series of interviews in which you meet individually with various representatives of the organization. In the initial interview, the representative usually attempts to get basic information on your skills and abilities. In subsequent interviews the focus is on how you would perform the job in relation to the company's goals and objectives. After the interviews are completed, the interviewers meet and pool their information about your qualifications for the job.
- ✓ **Situational Interview:** Situations are set up which simulate common problems you may encounter on the job. Your responses to these situations are measured against pre-determined standards. This approach is often used as one part of a traditional interview rather than as an entire interview format.
- ✓ **Panel Interview:** Two or more company representatives may interview you simultaneously.
- ✓ **Group Interview:** You may be interviewed with several other applicants. The employer is using the group setting to glean information not thought to be readily accessible in a one-to-one interview. In group interviews the employer will observe applicants' interpersonal skills.

### **The Phone Interview**

\*Adapted from an article appearing in Quintessential Careers: <http://www.quintcareers.com/>

Phone interviews are terrifying to some job seekers and absolutely painless to others. Regardless of your feelings about phone interviews, you can develop techniques and skills that will maximize your phone interview's impact on the hiring staff. Here are some phone interviewing tips to get you going:

#### **Pre-contact**

In certain circumstances it may be important to give additional contact information. For example, a college student going on spring break during the contact interval after submitting a letter and resume might choose to include a sentence such as "From March 17 to March 29, I will be out of the state/out of the country on spring break. During that time I can be reached at this number/I will be unreachable/I will be unreachable by phone but plan to check my email daily." An applicant who cannot be

contacted during work hours might include information such as "Although I prefer to receive messages at my home number, I check messages frequently throughout the day and can usually return calls during breaks." Finally, if you will soon be moving, include "until" dates with your phone, email and mailing information.

Next, think about your answering machine message. A trend observed by many recruiters is voicemails/answering machines that treat incoming callers to a snippet of music from the resident's favorite band of the moment. It's important to create a professional impression. It is helpful if recruiters can be sure they've called the right number. For privacy and security issues, many people do not list their first names, last names, or telephone numbers on their answering-machine/voicemail greetings. My recommendation is usually to leave *one* of these identifiers in the message: "You've reached Amy, Cathy, and Mark. Please leave a message" or "You've reached 617-973-5235. Please leave a message."

If you have roommates, housemates, a spouse, or children it's important to work out a system of message-taking. It might be a good idea to invest in individual voicemail boxes for each member of your household. After you mail your applications and while you are waiting for the phone to ring is a good time to create a mini-job log to have near the phone. My advice to job-searchers without photographic memory is to make a list of the companies at which they've applied and the titles of the positions applied for. Some people even list qualifications requested for each position. (See a [Sample Phone Interview Log](#).) Thus, if you are called by hiring staff, you will have some idea of which job they're calling about. This week of phone interviewing has really sensitized our staff to this issue. Ideally, the interviewer would like to think his or her company is the only employer to which you've applied. But this hope dies quickly when you say something to the effect of "now what job is this again; I've applied for so many....?" At best, it makes you look disorganized and at worst as if you are sending out hundreds of resumes desperately.

### **When You Miss the Contact**

If the hiring staff leaves a message for you, return the call as soon as you can. When you return the call, give your full first name and last name and indicate that you are returning the recruiter's call regarding the xxx position. If the message was left for you at 1 pm and you didn't get it until you returned home at 7:30, call and leave a voicemail *then*. In this circumstance, voicemail is your friend. Again, give your full first name, last name, specific position *and* your contact information for the next business day. Caution! Be prepared in case the recruiter is still there at 7:30 and wants to do a phone interview right then!

### **When You're There for the Contact**

Many interviewers like to make sure that interviewing now is convenient for the candidate. Most recruiting professionals will give candidates this courtesy, particularly when calling a candidate at her current place of employment. Many recruiters want you

to talk to them when they call, and may not want to call again later. They may have only one or two clarifying questions that would take just a few minutes. Or they may want to do the full 10-60 minute phone interview with you, and they *want* to have you do it extemporaneously. Other recruiters want the candidate to feel composed and settled and have a quiet place to talk and think, and may not mind making a later appointment. If you are good on the phone and quick on your feet, you may want to go ahead with the interview. If you are in the middle of something, running out the door, or can't remember what the job is, it may be best to suggest an alternate time. A good way phrase is "I'm so happy you called. I have about 10 minutes before I have to run out the door. Is that enough time, or can I call you back later this afternoon?" This way, you are expressing your interest, being clear about the time you have, and suggesting a time to connect later.

While you are talking, make sure that your cordless phone battery is not about to run out, that your roommate is not about to run the vacuum, and that you will be able to concentrate. It may help to have your notes and resume in front of you, and to have a pen in your hand to take notes. If the entire hiring committee is on the other end in a conference call, you will want to write down each person's name/role down so that you can refer to it later. It's important that you are clear about whether or not you can hear the interviewer clearly. *Don't* say, "Can you speak up?" *Do* say "I'm having trouble hearing you. Can you hear me clearly?" The latter is slightly less confrontational *and* clarifies whether the connection between you is bad or if the problem is on the recruiter's end. As with *any* interview, be prepared to ask questions at the end. You want to have the recruiter(s) hang up with a good impression of your interest in the company.

### **After the Call**

Send a thank you note after the call. For example, "Thank you for spending time with me on the phone today talking about the enrollment management position. I enjoyed the conversation and have a better understanding of the job. I'd be interested in an on-site interview, and would welcome the opportunity to further discuss my candidacy."

### **AFTER THE INTERVIEW CHECKLIST**

Interview Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Names & Titles of Interviewers: \_\_\_\_\_

Place of Interview: \_\_\_\_\_

Position: \_\_\_\_\_

- \_\_\_\_\_ Arrived on time
- \_\_\_\_\_ Dressed properly
- \_\_\_\_\_ Friendly with secretary and all others
- \_\_\_\_\_ Introduced myself to interviewer(s) and shook hands firmly
- \_\_\_\_\_ Gave copy of my resume and/or other pertinent information
- \_\_\_\_\_ Described qualifications and accomplishments

- \_\_\_\_\_ Related skills and experience to employer's position
- \_\_\_\_\_ Maintained eye contact with interviewer(s) while talking
- \_\_\_\_\_ Kept good posture, avoided nervous mannerisms and had open body language
- \_\_\_\_\_ Mentioned sense of responsibility and dependability
- \_\_\_\_\_ Mentioned interest in job, showed enthusiasm and maintained a positive attitude
- \_\_\_\_\_ Listened to interviewer's questions
- \_\_\_\_\_ Manner of conversation understandable (voice, tone, volume, speed of speech)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Gave thanks and extended handshake at end of interview

1. How do I feel overall about the interview? \_\_\_\_\_
2. What did I do and say in the interview that I liked? \_\_\_\_\_
3. What did I do and say in the interview that I didn't like? \_\_\_\_\_
4. What might I do and say differently next time? \_\_\_\_\_
5. Did I do enough research on the employer and position? \_\_\_\_\_
6. What is the next step? \_\_\_\_\_

## **GUIDELINES FOR WHAT TO WEAR**

\*Adapted from Stanford University Career Development Center Website  
<http://cardinalcareers.stanford.edu>

### **What kind of suit is appropriate for the interview?**

Opt for a fashionable business suit in a low-key color such as navy, black or gray. Patterns are acceptable if they are extremely subtle, such as a fine dress tweed or pin stripe. The jacket should have long sleeves, with a straight or pleated skirt. A coatdress, with clean, simple lines, is also acceptable attire. Use subtle colors. Men should wear a two-piece, single-breasted suit in navy, black or charcoal, wool or wool blend, and solid or very thin pinstripes. If at all possible, avoid the shiny polyester.

### **What about accessories?**

Women should carry a small, simple purse. Men, if you are not yet in the habit of carrying a wallet, now is the time to start, and the place for it is in one of the inner chest pockets of your suit. A brief case is not necessary. However, a leather portfolio or notebook holder is a good idea for on-site interviews; on campus, a notebook to hold a few extra resumes would be appropriate. Now is the time to wean yourself from your faithful backpack.

### **What is the correct skirt length for business?**

Whatever is the most appropriate for both your legs and your profession. Consider what happens when you sit down in a short skirt. Would you be comfortable? Try on

skirts of various lengths, and then determine what your personal hemline should be for each style of skirt; slim, pleated and full. Generally, slim skirts look better at the knee while pleated and full skirts look best considerably longer.

### **Does it matter what kind of tie I wear?**

Yes. You should wear a tie that matches your suit. Wear a conservative tie with a simple knot. Ties with silk in a simple stripe or repeating pattern, with no more than three colors is a good start. The background color should be neutral perhaps navy, dark gray or burgundy, a paisley tie, in muted dark colors, is modern yet conservative for young men.

### **Can I wear a pantsuit to the interview?**

A pantsuit can be very smart and professional looking provided that the jacket is tailored to fit with matching slacks and is worn with a simple no frill, no tie blouse. However, if you are unsure of a company's policies regarding proper dress, call the personnel office for more information. A woman in a pantsuit, by some organization's standards, could be considered a "non-candidate."

### **What are the appropriate shoes to wear for men?**

For men, shoes should be leather, black or brown, and polished with no worn down heels. The wing tip and other plain lace-up shoes are the traditional footwear. Slip-ons work as well if they are dressy and in good taste. Business socks should be over-the-calf, never ankle length or even slightly droopy, and should match your pants or shoes.

### **What are the appropriate shoes to wear for women?**

For women, the best shoes are plain pumps with one to two inch heels. You can go higher if you don't feel tall enough, but make sure you can still walk quickly and steadily. Shoes should be of high quality leather in black or the color of your suit. Wear sheer stockings in a skin tone. *Never* wear black or opaque stockings with light or white shoes.

### **I was told to dress casual for my interview - what is casual?**

Never wear jeans, T-shirts, tennis shoes, sandals or boots to an interview. Appropriate business casual is usually a pair of slacks, shirt, and sports jacket.

### **I have only one suit. How can I change my look?**

Your suit should always be clean and professionally pressed, worn with an all-cotton, well-ironed white or possibly light blue, long sleeved dress shirt. Wearing a different tie can dramatically change the look of your suit. A woman may accent her basic outfit with a different blouse, or she may add a scarf or a simple small pin.

### **I do not own a suit and I do not have a lot of money to purchase one. Where can I shop to find an inexpensive one?**

You can find suits, dress shirts, blouses, and shoes that are very inexpensive and in



good taste at thrift shops, Salvation Army, discount stores, consignment shops and outlet stores. Remember that the key is a simple style in a conservative color. If you find a dark suit with contrasting buttons, replace them with buttons the color of the suit, have it cleaned and professionally pressed.

### **Is it appropriate to wear perfume or cologne?**

It is nearly impossible to tell how strong a fragrance your own perfume or cologne is emitting. What seems like a pleasant whiff of scent to you may overpower someone else. In addition, your interviewer may be allergic. So, why risk it? Don't wear any scent at all, and no, a little dab is not OK. The most attractive scent is your natural, fresh smell after a bath or shower with deodorant. If you smoke, avoid smoking in your interviewing outfit. Cigarette odors cling to your clothes for several hours and smoking to most employers is an undesirable habit.

### **What kind of jewelry should I wear?**

Too much jewelry or wrong jewelry can be considered distracting and can elicit negative responses. Women should wear post or simple earrings, no dangles, and a plain bracelet, if any. A dress rule that pays off: never wear jewelry that is not functional and keep it simple.

### **I have worn an earring throughout my college years. Is it okay, as a man, to wear it to my interview?**

It is not in your best interest because it breaks the rule of executive dress. This style of jewelry is all right when you are with your friends or even in some work environments, but it is out of place for the job interview.

### **Should I wear make-up?**

If you choose to wear make-up, keep it understated. Iridescent eye shadow, glossy red lipstick and inch long lashes (unless they are naturally long) should be avoided. Opt for a healthy, natural look. Your nails should be short with clear or pale polish.

### **Should I cut my hair to look more professional?**

It is not necessary for you to cut your hair, but you should wear it in a groomed style, off your face. It is distracting during an interview to constantly have to push your hair from your face. Your hair should be neat and clean, as well as attractive.

Men should shave and trim their mustache. Beards are probably best left to grow after you get the job. You may want to call the personnel office for information regarding the company's policy on facial hair.

### **Do these guidelines apply to all organizations, or just the corporate world? What if I'm interviewing for a job with a less formal environment?**

Every industry has its own requirements, and knowing what to wear on the day of the

interview is vitally important. Always think about the impression you want to make and what clothes will make that impression.

If you are interviewing for a job in a less formal environment, then it may be acceptable for men to dress business casual. Women can wear a simple dress or matching skirt and blouse. Whatever you decide should be clean, pressed, and help you look your best.

In the final analysis, creating a first impression is mostly a matter of common sense. Pay attention to your appearance, your body language and manners, and you will go a long way towards convincing interviewers that you are the kind of professional they want to hire.