

Interview Checklist

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You just scheduled an interview. Congratulations! All your hard work putting the finishing touches on your résumé, networking and job searching has finally paid off. Follow these interview tips and you're sure to nail the interview and be the winning candidate:

Be prepared.

This means more than merely making extra copies of your résumé. It means having researched the industry and company, as well as thought about how your skills match the responsibilities of the position, says recruiter and career coach Rick Nelles.

Dress to impress.

Your interview attire should be tastefully simple, clean and wrinkle-free. Forgo trendy for conservative when deciding what to wear.

Be on time.

Being on time for an interview really means arriving at least 15 minutes before your scheduled interview. Not only will your punctuality be noted, the extra time allows you to calm down, focus and review your résumé and notes you prepared for the interview.

Make eye contact.

Greet your interviewer with a firm handshake, warm smile and direct eye contact. Avoiding the gaze of the interviewer can make you appear inexperienced, unsure of yourself and untrustworthy.

Show your enthusiasm.

If you're locked in a dead heat for a job with other candidates, you need to find a way to stand out. "In a tight candidate race, the most enthusiastic almost always gets the job," says Martin Yate, career coach and author of several career advice books, including "Knock 'Em Dead 2007 -- The Ultimate Job Search Guide." Your enthusiasm for the job tells the recruiter you will be a highly-motivated employee.

Demonstrate that you're a team player.

Employers want a team worker who can take direction, Yate advises. No one wants to hire an unmanageable employee. They also are looking for someone who can galvanize a team to work toward a common goal. So give some examples of how you worked together with colleagues to tackle a large project or service an important client.

Sell yourself.

The interview is a sales pitch in a sense. Have a list of things you want to make sure the interviewer knows about you and be ready to bring specific topics up on your own if they are not adequately touched on in the interview.

Be honest.

You should never stretch the truth on your résumé or during the interview. Today's technology makes fact checking far reaching and lightning quick. Remember, companies are looking to fill a position, not hand out the Nobel Peace Prize. You don't have to be a Renaissance man (or woman), just the right person for the job.

Act professionally.

You would think this goes without saying, but candidates often need to be reminded not to chew gum, slouch or steer the conversation too far off work-related themes. Sit up straight and conduct yourself with a professional demeanor at all times.

Ask questions.

An interview is meant to be a fact-finding mission for both the interviewer and the interviewee. Don't be afraid to ask questions about the responsibilities of the job, clients or projects. In fact, it is to your detriment to be completely passive and reactive in an interview. If you do not engage the interviewer, you appear weak and ineffective.

Say "thank you."

Close the interview with another firm handshake, a "thank you" and a smile. Ask when they will be making their decision and if you should follow-up. Later, send a note or e-mail thanking the interviewer for the time spent and letting them know you are interested in the position and will contact them again soon.