



Calm, cool, and collected.

Here you are: finally at the interview. You've done everything right so far – dressed properly, brought extra copies of your résumé and references, and arrived early.

So, take a minute. You've arrived 15-20 minutes early – take a deep breath, use the restroom, collect yourself. Throw out any gum you might be chewing. Of course you're nervous, understandably so, but you've practiced at home. Keep in mind that you have what it takes to be hired – that's how you got here. There are no guarantees, but there are opportunities.

Time to make your debut.

Remember, the interviewer is a person. Make eye contact with periodic blinks to avoid staring, smile, and be polite and pleasant. Offer a quick, firm handshake, say, "Very nice to meet you," and thank them for meeting with you.

Be aware of your body language throughout the interview – actions can speak louder than words (See: "Interviews: Body Language"). Sit up in your seat and look interested. Poor body language often sends the wrong message. It may seem that you're uninterested in the job or company, or that if hired, you may not be a hard worker. You want the interviewer to feel comfortable with you, so don't be too rigid either. Find a good balance between stiff and casual. If offered anything, it's safest to decline politely or accept just water.

Follow the leader.

Take a deep breath. Wait for the interviewer to begin the interview and

then pay attention and be respectful. Focus on what's being asked – it's probably something you've practiced. Take your time and answer intelligently. Never blurt out the first thing that comes to mind – think before you speak. Here's a list of some potential questions you may be asked in an interview:

- "Can you tell me a little about yourself?"
- "Why do you want to work here?"
- "What do you believe to be your strengths? Your weaknesses?"
- "Why are you the best person for this job?"

Keep your answers clear, concise, positive, and relevant. If you're nervous, try to pace yourself so your words don't become jumbled. Always give supporting facts, information, figures, and results where possible. Don't speak negatively about others. Don't panic and definitely NEVER LIE. Pause. Think. Breathe. Answer truthfully and to the best of your ability. Some questions have no right or wrong answers – they are asked to help the interviewer determine your personality, preferences, and thinking process.

Always keep in mind that the interviewer is not your best friend – they're looking for the best candidate for the job. Their intention is to gather information to see if you fit the mold. Your intention is to convince them that you do. You're aware of your strengths, so it's up to you to express them confidently.

You are expected to ask intelligent questions about the organization and the job – do so. Well thought-out questions and comments show how interested you are in the position.

Successful Interviews

Here are some guidelines for having an interview go the way you want it to.

Simply put:

A successful interview is just a few steps away:

- Arrive 15-20 minutes early to collect your thoughts and focus.
- Open and close the interview with a firm handshake and say, "Thank you for meeting with me."
- Be pleasant, polite, respectful, and confident.
- Listen attentively and answer carefully.
- Ask well thought-out questions.
- Don't bring up salary, bonuses, or other benefits.
- Be aware of body language.

However, don't be the first one to bring up salary or benefits – it'll give the wrong impression.

When all's said and done.

Regardless of how the interview went, offer a handshake and thank the interviewer again for his/her time. Ask if there's anything else he/she needs from you. Tell him/her you're very interested in the job and will be in touch. Stay professional until you've left the property – you never know who may be watching. Go home and send the expected and polite "thank you" note by both e-mail and snail mail. If you're hired, great. If not, you'll be even more prepared for the next interview.

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