



First Impressions on Job Interviews

Ready Reference ♦ G-2

College of Engineering, Architecture & Technology ♦ Career Services

How important are first impressions in an interview? The answer is simple – first impressions are critical. In fact, some studies have suggested that an employer often decides whether to hire or not hire a person in the first few minutes of the interview. Fair or not, it is a simple fact that first impressions are an important consideration in the hiring process. By following these simple strategies, you will be on the road toward making the best impression you can with the employer.

Preparation

- Research the company and community. It will help you discuss formal and informal issues throughout the entire interview.
- Know how to get to the interview location, as well as parking arrangements. Leave sufficient time to arrive 10 minutes ahead of your scheduled interview.
- Dress appropriately. Even in today's casual work environment, you can't go wrong by wearing a business suit. Nothing about your appearance – clothing, jewelry, hairstyle, perfume, etc. – should fall outside the expected norm of that type of organization. A job interview is not the time to be the trendsetter, but rather to “fit in” with the organizational culture.

Arrival Advice

- Be polite and respectful to everyone you meet.
- Greet people by name. If you don't catch the name, ask for it again.
- Give a firm handshake.
- Introduce yourself to the receptionist, explaining who you are and your purpose in being there.
- Establish good eye contact to everyone you meet.
- Smile and relax.
- Be enthusiastic and eager about the opportunity to meet with the employer.
- Be yourself!

A recent study found that interviewers rated 40% of all applicants as having grooming problems that created a negative first impression.

Nonverbal Behaviors

- Act interested in the position. Lean slightly forward in your chair and make good eye contact throughout the interview.
- Eliminate annoying behaviors such as foot tapping, and saying “uhhh” excessively.
- Pay attention to the tone and volume of your voice.
- Be aware of your facial expressions.

Make sure that your resume, letters, and thank-you notes are neat and error-free. This creates an impression too.

To Quickly Establish a Positive Relationship

- Use the interviewer's name as often as possible. Use Mr. or Ms. Etc, unless invited to use first name.
- Use small talk whenever possible, but particularly in the first few minutes of the interview. Don't be in too big of a rush to get down to business.
- In a genuine manner, note something of interest that you see in the interviewer's office. It will help to provide a connection with him/her.

Oklahoma State University
College of Engineering, Architecture & Technology
Career Services Office ♦ 101 Engineering North ♦ Stillwater, OK 74078
405.744.3920 ♦ cathy.southwick@okstate.edu
www.hireOSUgrads.com