

## How to Answer These Tricky Interview Questions

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Does the thought of going on a job interview cause your palms to sweat and your body to break out in hives? Stop itching; you're not alone.

The vast majority of job seekers admit to emotions ranging from mild uneasiness to downright panic leading up to their interviews. The good news is there have been no reported cases of job seekers who died of nervousness during a job interview. So relax and follow these simple tips for keeping your anxiety at bay before and during your interview.

First, take the proper amount of time to prepare for your interview. Being well-prepared will boost your confidence and lower your anxiety. Experts recommend that you spend at least three hours preparing for each interview.

You should draft answers to the most common interview questions and practice speaking them out loud. You also should read up on the company with which you will be interviewing and prepare some questions of your own. This lets the interviewer know that you are truly interested in the company and the position.

As a final step in your preparation, make sure you have good directions to the interview site. Some job seekers make a dry run to the interview site to ensure the directions are correct and to estimate the amount of time they will need to get to the interview on time.

Going into a job interview is often like entering the great unknown. Although every interviewer is different and questions vary from industry to industry, there are some questions that are common across the board. Reading through the following questions and developing your own answers is a good place to start in your preparation. Once you have done that, remember practice makes perfect! Nothing impresses a potential employer like being ready for whatever is thrown your way.

### **Why should we hire you?**

Here's the chance to really sell yourself. You need to briefly and succinctly lay out your strengths, qualifications and what you can bring to the table. Be careful not to answer this question too generically, however. Nearly everyone says they are hardworking and motivated. Set yourself apart by telling the interviewer about qualities that are unique to you.

### **Why do you want to work here?**

This is one tool interviewers use to see if you have done your homework. You should never attend an interview unless you know about the company, its direction and the industry in which it plays. If you have done your research, this question gives you an opportunity to show initiative and demonstrate how your experience and qualifications match the company's needs.

### **What are your greatest weaknesses?**

The secret to answering this question is being honest about a weakness, but demonstrating how you have turned it into a strength. For example, if you had a problem with organization in the past, demonstrate the steps you took to more effectively keep yourself on track. This will show that you have the ability to recognize aspects of yourself that need improvement, and the initiative to make yourself better.

### **Why did you leave your last job?**

Even if your last job ended badly, be careful about being negative in answering this question. Be as diplomatic as possible. If you do point out negative aspects of your last job, find some positives to mention as well. Complaining endlessly about your last company will not say much for your attitude.

**Describe a problem situation and how you solved it.**

Sometimes it is hard to come up with a response to this request, particularly if you are coming straight from college and do not have professional experience. Interviewers want to see that you can think critically and develop solutions, regardless of what kind of issue you faced. Even if your problem was not having enough time to study, describe the steps you took to prioritize your schedule. This will demonstrate that you are responsible and can think through situations on your own.

**What accomplishment are you most proud of?**

The secret to this question is being specific and selecting an accomplishment that relates to the position. Even if your greatest accomplishment is being on a championship high school basketball team, opt for a more professionally relevant accomplishment. Think of the qualities the company is looking for and develop an example that demonstrates how you can meet the company's needs.

**What are your salary expectations?**

This is one of the hardest questions, particularly for those with little experience. The first thing to do before going to your interview is to research the salary range in your field to get an idea of what you should be making. Steer clear of discussing salary specifics before receiving a job offer. Let the interviewer know that you will be open to discussing fair compensation when the time comes. If pressed for a more specific answer, always give a range, rather than a specific number.

**Tell me about yourself.**

While this query seems like a piece of cake, it is difficult to answer because it is so broad. The important thing to know is that the interviewer typically does not want to know about your hometown or what you do on the weekends. He or she is trying to figure you out professionally. Pick a couple of points about yourself, your professional experience and your career goals and stick to those points. Wrap up your answer by bringing up your desire to be a part of the company. If you have a solid response prepared for this question, it can lead your conversation in a direction that allows you to elaborate on your qualifications.

**Dress the Part*****10 Interview Fashion Blunders to Keep You From Your Dream Job***

First impressions are everything, especially when it comes to job hunting. That's why executive coaches, career counselors and others put so much stock in "dressing for success." The truth is, an interview might just be your only opportunity to impress. If you don't take your appearance seriously, you give the impression that you won't take your work seriously, either. Here are some common "fashion blunders" that job seekers make when getting ready for an interview.

**1. They Can Smell You Before They See You**

When it comes to perfume or cologne, less is best. Of all the things you want to be

remembered for after an interview, how you smelled is not on the top of your list. Additionally, you never know when you will meet with someone who has allergies or is sensitive to fragrances. In most cases, it's best to hold off on the perfume, cologne or aftershave, at least for interview day.

## **2. The Painted Face Syndrome**

Another good way to be remembered for the wrong reasons is to wear your "out on the town" makeup. Wearing makeup that is too showy will be distracting to the person interviewing you. You want to be known for what you have to say, not for the glitter in your eye shadow.

## **3. We Can't See Past the Tie**

Although accepted styles vary from company to company, your multi-colored fish tie will not send the impression you're trying to impart. Stick to conservative, solid color or limited design ties and leave the novelty pieces for an informal occasion.

## **4. The Noisemaker Effect**

If you don't want your interviewer to be distracted while you are talking, it's best to steer clear of pockets full of change or oversized jewelry. Interviewers often meet with several individuals, many on the same day, and you do not want to give him or her any reason not to listen to you intently. Too much jewelry or excessive pocket change will cause an unwanted distraction in the room.

## **5. The Hair Speaks for Itself**

Unless you are interviewing at a highly creative, extremely casual company, avoid hair dye and extreme styles. The same thing is true for hairstyles such as pigtails, the "tousled" look, hair that hangs in your eyes, or any other unkempt look. Your hairstyle is large part of your overall professional demeanor and even if you have a wild side, you should sport a conservative ?do for an interview.

## **6. Hey Gals, This Isn't a Nightclub**

In the majority of interview situations, conservative is best. This means forgoing tight, short skirts and revealing blouses for an outfit that is more demure. Instead of wowing your interviewer by an outfit that leaves little to the imagination, wow them with your qualifications and answers.

## **7. The Five O'clock Shadow**

While companies have different policies on facial hair for men, looking neatly groomed is important in any situation. If you don't, take the time to shave in the morning. Nothing says "I

just rolled out of bed," like a five o'clock shadow. If you have a beard or goatee, make sure it has been trimmed.

### **8. Hey Guys, This Isn't the Nightclub**

So you've got a shiny silver shirt that you wore out last weekend and you think it really make an impression at your interview. You might be right, but the impression you'll make isn't optimal. While interview dress is boring to some, it's still best to stick with conservative suit colors, such as dark blue or gray, and neutral or basic color shirts.

### **9. Killer Nails...Literally**

Like excessive jewelry, flashy fingernails will only distract your interviewer. Make sure your nails are neat, clean and trimmed before the interview, and opt for a neutral or clear polish. Men should pay attention to nails, too. Going to an interview with nails that look like you've been gardening all day will not win you points with a professional interviewer.

### **10. Is it Casual Friday?**

Even if you are interviewing with a company you think is casual, showing up in jeans, a t-shirt and tennis shoes will send the wrong impression. The basic rule of thumb for dressing for an interview is to find out about the accepted attire at the company and then dress one level higher in professionalism. If you are in doubt about the company's dress code, ask. Just make sure you don't show up looking more casual than the company's employees.

## Actions Speak Louder Than Words

### ***Dos and Don'ts of Interview Body Language***

In an interview, it's not always just what you say that is important, but also how you say it and how you look when you are saying it. Despite answering all questions thrown at you with precision and confidence, if your body language is weak, your overall image may be perceived in this way, too. In order to make sure your physical actions and gestures are conveying the right message, here are a few dos and don'ts to keep in mind. While they alone won't win you the big job, they can certainly help or hurt your chances in a pinch.

**DO** enter the room confidently. When you meet your interviewer for the first time, hold your head up, put on a smile, and be sure you look like you are enthusiastic about the opportunity. Interviews are not fun, but if you go into it anticipating torture, your body language will reflect this attitude.

**DON'T** shake hands like a dead fish. In any professional environment, a handshake can say a lot about a person. Make sure your handshake is firm, not timid and limp. In the same respect, don't overdo it. You certainly don't want to be remembered as someone who broke the interviewer's fingers!

**DO** try to mirror your interviewer. Mirroring the body position of the person you are talking to is a natural tendency, and this strategy often results in a more relaxed atmosphere. Pay attention to your interviewer and try to mirror his or her attitude and actions in a subtle way. If your interviewer is extremely upbeat and enthusiastic, try to pick up on that emotion. In the same respect, if he or she is more subdued, it is best to follow the same rule. This doesn't mean, however, doing everything your interviewer does. You want the environment to be comfortable - not creepy.

**DON'T** swing your legs, tap your feet, twirl your hair, wring your hands, or bite your fingernails. All of these actions demonstrate lack of confidence and fear and can be extremely distracting. You want to make sure your interviewer concentrates on your great answers, not your fidgety behavior.

**DO** pay attention to your posture. It sounds elementary, but sitting up straight and having good posture will tell your interviewer that you are confident and have a strong personality, while slouching will paint you as lazy and weak. As uncomfortable as you might be in that business suit, sit up straight and keep your head up.

**DON'T** cross your arms in front of your body. Sitting with your arms crossed in front of you indicates defensiveness, resistance, aggressiveness or a closed mind. Use your hands to be expressive when you are talking. When the interviewer is speaking, keep your hands folded in your lap, rested on the arms of your chair, or in another position that is lower than your elbows.

**DO** make and keep eye contact. Failing to make eye contact with your interviewer will keep you from truly connecting with him or her, and might make you seem shy or even evasive. Yes, making eye contact can be uncomfortable, but it is an important tactic. Similarly, try to utilize other body expressions that demonstrate interest, such as nodding, tilting your head, or raising your eyebrows when the other person is making a point.

**DON'T** change positions often. It's hard to say whether having your legs crossed or feet flat on the floor is better. The key thing to remember is to find a position for your legs that is comfortable and try to stick with it. Constant shifting is distracting and can make a candidate seem untrustworthy. If you do opt to cross your legs, make sure they are crossed all the way. Resting your ankle on your knee will come across as too casual and even overconfident.

**DO** pay attention to your tone of voice. Just like your physical motions, your tone of voice says a lot about you. Be sure to answer questions in a strong, consistent tone. Avoid wavering or talking too softly, mumbling or speaking too quickly. A good thing to remember before answering a question is to take a deep breath, think for a second, and then begin to answer. This will help you calm your nerves and will give you the opportunity to "look before you leap" when it comes to your important answers.