

TIPPS FOR YOUR JOB INTERVIEW

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How to act before interviews

First of all you have to research the company and study the job description because the interviewer will surely ask you what you know about the company and why you want the job. You can also practice answering common questions interviewers ask with your friends and relatives.

Collect and arrange your important papers. This makes you look organized and professional. Don't forget to bring along relevant documents such as extra resumes and reference lists, immigrant work-authorizations papers¹, letters of recommendation², and information required on job applications. Bring at least one pen and pencil, and a notepad too.

It would be good to go for a shower, to brush your hair and to dress appropriately. Arrive five minutes earlier for the interview.

How to act during interviews

Smile, immediately offer a firm handshake, introduce yourself, and say something like, "I'm pleased to meet you." or "I've been looking forward to talking with you." Be sincere and avoid informal greetings you might use to say hello to your friends. Take the polite, conservative route.

Read the mood. If the interviewer is formal, then you probably should be, too. If the interviewer is casual, then follow along while remaining courteous³ and professional. In either case, try to appear to be relaxed, but not too relaxed. It's not a good idea to put your feet up on the interviewer's desk!

¹ immigrant work-authorizations papers – Arbeitserlaubnis-Dokumente

² letter of recommendation – Empfehlungsschreiben

³ courteous – höflich

Wait to be told to take a seat or ask if you may, then say thank you. This shows good manners.

If it's possible without making a commotion⁴, move your chair a little closer to the interviewer's desk or take the chair closer to the desk, like you're ready to dive right in⁵. This shows interest and confidence. But don't invade the interviewer's personal space, a perimeter⁶ of about two feet by US standards.

Sit with good posture. If you don't know what to do with your hands, keep them folded in your lap. This is another indication of good manners. Avoid crossing your arms over your chest, as it subliminally⁷ demonstrates a closed mind to some.

Even formally-trained interviewers are regular people like you, so they'll expect you to be a little nervous while sitting in the "hot seat". Still, try to avoid obvious signs like fidgeting⁸.

Maintain eye contact with the interviewer. Avoid staring or you might make the interviewer uncomfortable, but don't look away too often either. To some, failure to maintain a comfortable level of eye contact indicates that you are lying, reaching for answers or lacking confidence.

Don't eat, drink, chew gum or smoke, or even ask if it's okay. But if the interviewer offers coffee or other beverages⁹, it's okay to accept. It's probably better to say "No, thanks!" to snacks (unless you're at an interview meal), so you don't accidentally drop crumbs in your lap, be forced to talk with your mouth full, and all that other stuff your mom told you not to do with your food.

Speaking of which, if you are attending an interview meal, do follow all the good eating manners your parents taught you. For example, put your napkin in your lap, don't order anything complicated and messy to eat like ribs or crab legs, avoid bad-breath foods like garlic and onions, chew with your mouth closed, keep your elbows off the table, and order only moderately-priced¹⁰ items from the menu.

⁴ commotion – Tumult

⁵ to dive in – hineinspringen

⁶ perimeter – Umkreis

⁷ subliminally – unterbewusst

⁸ to fidget – herumzappeln

⁹ beverages – Getränke

¹⁰ moderately-priced – mit gemäßigten Preisen

Don't order booze¹¹, even if your interviewer does. Let your interviewer pick up the tab and be sure to thank him or her for the meal.

It's okay to ask questions to better answer the questions the interviewer asks you. But withhold the bulk¹² of your questions until the interviewer asks you if you have any, which is typically toward the end of the interview. Avoid asking the frivolous¹³ just because interviewers expect you to have questions. Instead, ask about important matters, such as job duties, management style and the financial health of the company. It's not a good idea to ask questions about vacation, sick days, lunch breaks and so on, right off the bat¹⁴. Ask about the lesser¹⁵ matters of importance during follow-up interviews.

Typically, you'll negotiate salary, benefits, perks¹⁶ and such in a follow-up interview. Regardless, don't bring it up until asked, yet be ready to discuss it at any time.

How to act after interviews

Immediately, send a thank-you letter to each of your interviewers. To get their contact info, ask for business cards during interviews. Sending thank-you letters is professional and courteous, and will help to make you stand out in the minds of your interviewers. Besides, many interviewers expect it, and it's a good idea to do what interviewers expect.

Be prepared to attend two or three interviews at the same company. If you're called back for another interview, it means that they're interested in you. But they're also narrowing the competition, so keep up the good work!

Be patient. It's not unusual for interviewers to take weeks to narrow the competition. But if you don't hear from them in about a week or 24 hours or so after they said you'd hear from them, it's okay to send follow-up letters. Don't call without permission. Interviewers might consider it rude of applicants to interrupt their workday with unso-

¹¹ booze – Alkohol

¹² bulk – Hauptteil

¹³ frivolous – leichtsinnig

¹⁴ right off the bat (AE) – sofort

¹⁵ lesser – unbedeutender

¹⁶ perks – freiwillige Sozialleistungen

licited calls. One follow-up letter per interviewer is sufficient. Don't pester¹⁷, as the squeaky wheel¹⁸ doesn't always get the oil in this case. If they're interested, they'll contact you without prodding¹⁹. But it doesn't hurt to make sure your candidacy didn't fall through the corporate cracks²⁰. It also shows that you really want the job and are eager to start.

Good luck on your next interview!

Comprehension Questions

1. Why is it necessary to study the job description of the vacant job?
2. What else should you do before the job interview? Why is this important?
3. Make a list of what you should and should not do during a job interview.
4. Why should you send a thank-you letter to the interviewer?
5. What is the best reaction when you don't get an answer from the interviewer?

¹⁷ to pester – belästigen, plagen

¹⁸ squeaky wheel – quietschendes Rad

¹⁹ to prod - anstacheln

²⁰ corporate cracks – Fehlerstelle im Betrieb