



# First Impressions in Job Interviews

## Ready Reference ♦ G-2

♦ OSU Career Services

How important are first impressions in an interview? Without doubt, they are critical! In fact, some studies suggest that an employer often decides whether or not to hire a person in the first few minutes of the interview. At the very least, first impressions are an important consideration in the hiring process. By following some simple strategies, you will be on the road toward making the best possible impression you can with the employer.

### Before the Interview

- Research the position, employer, and community to be prepared to confidently discuss formal and informal issues throughout the entire interview.
- Review how to find the interview location and parking arrangements. Leave sufficient time to arrive 10 minutes ahead of your scheduled interview.
- Dress appropriately. Even in today's casual work environment, choose to wear a business suit when going to a job interview. Make sure that your clothes are pressed and that your shoes are shined. Your appearance and accessories (clothing, jewelry, hairstyle, perfume, etc.) should be appropriate to the organization. Unless an employer specifies in advance, opt for a very professional appearance. When in doubt, err on the side of conservatism. A job interview is not the time to be the trendsetter. It is an opportunity to show the employer that you "fit" with the organizational culture.

### On Arrival

- Be polite and respectful to each person 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 and explain who you are as well as the purpose of the meeting.
- Establish good eye contact with 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 Communication

- Lean slightly forward in your chair and make good eye contact throughout the interview. This communicates genuine interest in the position and what is being said.
- Eliminate repetitive, nervous behaviors, such as nail biting, knee jerking, foot wiggling, or gum chewing.
- Pay attention to the tone and volume of your voice.
- Be aware of your facial expressions.
- Be prepared with a pen and portfolio to take notes when appropriate.

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

### Set the Tone and Establish Rapport

- Use the interviewer's name as often as possible. Use Mr. or Ms. unless invited to use the first name.
- Establish rapport with the interviewer, particularly in the first few minutes of the interview. Express appreciation for the helpfulness and hospitality of those who have greeted you. Observe and comment on your surroundings. Don't be in too big of a rush to get down to business; however, if the recruiter appears to be ready to start the interview, always follow his or her lead without distracting the recruiter.
- In a genuine manner, note something of interest that you see in the interviewer's office. It will help to establish a connection with him or her.

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