

**Top Ten Interview Mistakes**

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So you've finally landed that coveted interview and you want to make sure you don't blow your chances at your dream job. Knowing the most common mistakes people make during interviews can help you avoid any gaffes and secure your new career.

**1. Inappropriate Attire**

Wearing the right clothing can be the most important aspect of an interview. You have only one chance to make

a first impression, and a wacky tie or visible piercings can have an unfavorable impact. "Showing up in the

appropriate attire shows you understand that this is a business exchange," said Isabelle Ferrales, MS, director

of Arizona State University's Career Center and member of the National Career Development Association.

Ferrales recalled an interviewee who had long purple nails and when the interview was over, all she could think

about were her nails. When you dress, do so conservatively, she said. A funny tie or wild outfit may offer a

window into your humor, but interviewers are not as interested in your everyday personality as they are in what

you can offer the company. Wear a suit, or the closest you can get to a suit, Ferrales recommended. "Do a dry

run of your attire. Shirts may look ok when you're standing, but appear tight when you sit," she said. For

women, double check the skirt length when you sit down, otherwise you'll spend half the interview pulling on

your hemline.

**2. Nervous Ticks**

High-stakes interviewing can be stressful for anyone, but be mindful of repetitive or distracting body language

you may exhibit under pressure. From twirling your hair to playing with jewelry or twitching your nose, these

ticks can be distracting and convey a lack of confidence to employers.

Ferrales recommends developing a gimmick to help avoid such distractions. "When I get nervous, I rotate my

wedding ring constantly, so I'm not going to wear my wedding ring to an interview," she said. If you have long

hair and are often tempted to play with it during an interview, style it in a way that won't tempt you. Know

yourself and know your mannerisms.

**3. Cell Phone Etiquette**

Excusing yourself to take a phone call during an interview will end all hope of landing the job. But also be

aware that vibrating phones can be just as distracting as an obnoxious ring tone. The best advice is to turn the

phone off. Interviewers want to know you're focused on the interview, not your plans for the weekend.

**4. No Questions Asked**

One of the biggest mistakes job seekers can make is neglecting to prepare questions for the interviewer. Scott

Warner, MLT(ASCP), lab manager at Penobscot Valley Hospital, Lincoln, ME, said prospective employees

should always prepare a list of questions, no matter what. "A good interviewer will allow time for you to ask

questions. Remember, the hiring process is an exchange of value, not an audition," Warner said.

**5. Poor Eye Contact**

Eye contact is another important and sometimes neglected interview skill. If you've taken public speaking

courses, you know how tricky maintaining proper eye contact can be: hold it too long and it becomes an

awkward stare, not holding it long enough can make you appear shifty and nervous. "Looking down, looking up,

rolling your eyes, and blinking sleepily are all bad," Warner said. Take your eye-contact cue from the

interviewer. If she meets your gaze while asking you a question, make sure you meet hers when answering.

**6. Exaggerating Experience**

Those little white lies can cause problems in a job interview. Embellishing your experience to get your foot in

the door can backfire if an employer asks you to perform a task you said you could do, but can't. Be honest

about your experience, and try to highlight how your actual experience can contribute to the company's needs.

For students fresh out of school, mention the skills you acquired through your program's requirements.

Exaggeration can lead to problems down the road, but if you have the opportunity to promote skills you have,

take it!

**7. Leaving Things Out**

Ferrales recommends job seekers make a list of two to three points they think are most important to convey to the interviewer. Maybe you spent time studying abroad or volunteered at your local hospital. The perfect opportunity to mention skills or experiences you have is when an employer asks if you have any questions; the end of the interview can be your opportunity to flaunt knowledge, skills or experience that you didn't mention. Start off by saying, "before I get to my questions, there's just a few things I wanted to mention that weren't covered in the interview." Don't leave the interview with regrets.

**8. Listing Demands**

Making demands of an employer in the first interview is a huge mistake, Warner said. Explaining what days you

can't work and why won't improve your chances of getting a job. Keep your specific demands to yourself until

the time is right, and tactfully approach your new boss. "If you end an interview by listing your demands of the

company, you might as well walk out and save time," Warner said.

**9. Vocalized Pauses and Slang Speak**

"Umm.uhh.err." When pausing to consider a question, be aware of the dreaded vocalized pauses; they can be

distracting and annoying. Everyone does it occasionally, but once you become aware of how often you say 'like'

or 'umm' you'll be better prepared to sound more professional and less like you're fumbling for the right words.

Also make sure you're aware of any inappropriate slang words or expressions you may often use. Remember,

the interview is a professional communication exchange, don't let your language slip into informal territory.

**10. Arriving Late (or Too Early)**

Strolling in to an interview 10 minutes late will probably guarantee only one thing: you won't get the job. But

being too early can send the message that you're desperate or have poor planning skills. Arriving early is a

good idea, but if you're too early, take some time to relax in the parking lot or review your questions for the

interviewer. Striking a careful balance between desperation and indifference can be tricky, so try to arrive as

close to the interview time as possible. It's best to arrive at least 20 minutes before the interview.

The bottom line in an interview: show the company what you have to offer. Participating in a mock interview can

show you where your strengths and weaknesses are. Take as much time preparing for an interview as you

would with any other aspect of job hunting; it's a chance to highlight your interpersonal skills and show that

you're more than just a resume and a cover letter.

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