

Turning Interview Stress into Interview SUCCESS

Interviewing for a job can be daunting. But, if you are well prepared and bring a positive attitude you can take this potentially stressful event and turn it into an opportunity for success.

A job interview has a lot in common with opening night at the theatre. Both require focused preparation. You do everything you can to prepare yourself for success, then the curtain goes up, the interview begins, and you're on center stage.

Making First Impressions Count!

Just as on opening night at the theatre, what you wear and how you walk onto the stage sets the tone for what follows. The person or persons you're interviewing with form a first impression of you within seconds. Paul Shearstone writes, "Reflecting on my own experience as a trained recruitment interviewer for a Fortune 500 company, first impressions colored nearly every interview...those who made poor first impressions put themselves at an obvious and avoidable disadvantage..."



First impressions are primarily the result of your:

- Appearance (Wardrobe and Grooming)
- Body Language (Gesture, Handshake, and Eye Contact)
- Tone of Voice

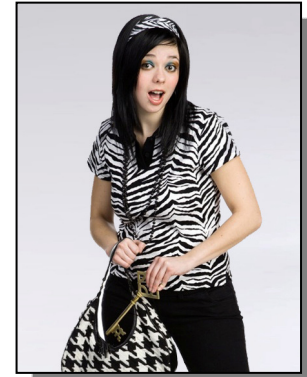
Manage each of these critical areas by following these ten easy guidelines and you'll make a great first impression every time you walk on stage for a job interview.

Dress the Part

Arrive for your interview looking the part you want to play. Your goal in the interview is to communicate your professionalism, interest and abilities. Just as actors rely on the wardrobe department to help lend credibility to the characters they play, your interview wardrobe should help you communicate your value as a potential employee. Dressing the part also heightens your self confidence. Even if you'll be wearing casual or business casual attire in the workplace, you should always bump it up a notch for the job interview. In most cases this means a business suit. If the work environment and business culture where you are applying is very casual, tailored separates; a jacket, shirt, skirt or slacks; can be an appropriate substitute.

Be the Focus

As much as you want your wardrobe and non verbal presentation to support your performance as qualified candidate during the interview process, you want to ensure they do not create a distraction. The focus should be on you, not on what you are wearing. Avoid extreme styles, bold patterns, or large amounts of bright color that run the risk of diverting attention to themselves. When the interview is concluded you want the lingering impression to be all about you, not about what you were wearing. You definitely do not want to be remembered as the candidate in animal print and overlarge hounds tooth.



Use Color Strategically

Medium to dark neutral colors are the traditional choice for an interview suit with navy blue ranking as the most popular choice. However, adding a splash of more dynamic color near your face, especially color that repeats an element of your personal coloring, will help to enhance your visibility. For men a tie; for women jewelry or a blouse are good places to introduce an unexpected and more personal color choice.

Pay Attention to Details

One of the qualities a potential employer will be looking for is your ability to manage detail. So don't neglect the details of your appearance. Your shoes should be polished and the heels unblemished. Your clothes should be impeccably clean and freshly pressed. Consider hanging your jacket while you drive to your interview and slipping it on just before you enter the building. This is especially helpful if the weather is hot or humid, conditions that encourage wrinkling.

Arrive Well Groomed

Good grooming is fundamental. Your hair should be freshly trimmed and styled. If you color your hair, the color should be well maintained. Your nails should be neatly trimmed and your cuticles manicured. Women, if you wear polish, a clear or pale neutral color is your best choice. Brush and floss daily and visit the dentist for regular cleanings and corrective procedures as necessary. Use a breath mint just before your interview. Also, try to arrive early so you will have time to visit the restroom and make any necessary last minute adjustments.

Master the Handshake

A firm handshake communicates self confidence so you always want to offer you hand in greeting. This applies equally to men and women. A good handshake is neither overly strenuous nor unduly delicate. Meet your counterpart's hand web-to-web, make eye contact, match the intensity of their grip, pump a maximum of 2 to 3 times, and then release.



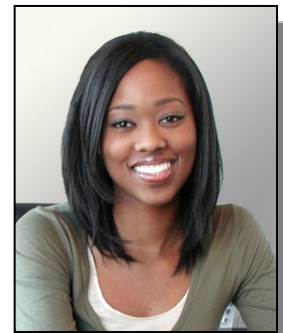
The Body Knows

When you're self-confident, relaxed and fully present in the moment your body communicates your state of being. Equally, if you are anxious or distracted your state of mind will find expression in your body language. Become aware of your body language and use it as one more tool to project a more positive image. Stand and walk with your body held erect; Sit

a bit forward in the chair to communicate your interest and keep both feet on the floor. Women may cross their legs at the ankles. Perhaps most importantly, keep good eye contact at all times.

Smile.

A warm and friendly smile is one of your most powerful and winning assets. We all want to do business with people we like. If two people have equal skills and qualifications and only one of them is warm and personable, that person has a better chance of landing the position. You don't have to overdo it, you don't want to be silly, but letting your personality show through your smile is a winning strategy.



Don't Over Use Scent

Many people have allergies to strong fragrance. Indoor work environments can trap fragrance and when there are large numbers of people in relatively confined spaces it becomes important to keep your use of perfume or cologne subtle. Your scent should not invade the personal space of others.

Know the Culture

Businesses hire people who "fit in", people who they think will reflect their corporate culture and values. It's great to have a sense of personal style and to enjoy expressing yourself but a potential employer needs to know that you can be an effective member of the team. Opting for traditional business attire during the interview process will assure you appeal to the widest range of business sectors.

Follow these ten guidelines to put yourself a step ahead of your competition and a step closer to landing the business role you're auditioning for.