

INTERVIEWING ETIQUETTE



By Cole Abbott Associates

1. What is considered proper attire for an interview?

It depends on the industry, position and geographical location. For the most part, it is a good idea to dress fairly conservatively for an interview, especially during the first interview with a company. Your attire shows your level of self respect and the level of respect you have for the interviewer and the company. Here are some simple guidelines to keep in mind:

- A. Classic suits in darker colors are best for conservative industries. More creative industries may allow a little more flexibility. Men, this is not the time for wild or humorous ties. Women, dresses and pant suits are not as professional as a skirt and jacket suit.
- B. All dress shirts should be professionally laundered and pressed.
- C. Hair, make-up (for women), and jewelry should be classic and understated.
- D. Men should wear above-the-calf dress socks. Women should always wear hose.
- E. The industry or company may be on the cutting edge, but the interviewer may not. Avoid flashy attire, hairstyles, and accessories in any interview.

2. May a woman wear a pant suit?

I wouldn't recommend it. Pant suits are becoming more popular with women in the workplace, but they have yet to be accepted as interviewing attire in many industries.

3. How should a male handle wearing an earring during an interview?

Please, no earrings on men during an interview. If you wear any jewelry at all, limit it to a classic, professional-looking watch, a class ring, or wedding ring.

4. What should I wear to an employer presentation?

Business casual attire is fine for an on-campus presentation. If the event is off-campus, wear what you would wear to an interview.

5. On which side of my jacket should I place my name tag?

It is easier for others to read and re-read your name if the tag is placed on your right side.

6. Will having a beard or mustache work against me during an interview?

If you do have a beard or mustache, make sure it is well-trimmed. Goatees, "5 day stubble" and long sideburns are considered trendy and are not appropriate for most professional interviewing situations.

7. Should I wear perfume or cologne?

Any scent should be very subtle. Perfumes and colognes give some people a headache.

8. What styles of shoes are appropriate for a woman during an interview?

Wear a closed-toe pump with a 1 or 2 inch heel.

9. As a woman, do I have to wear my long hair up or pull it back?

For a man or a woman, hair should not be distracting to an interviewer. Your hair should not be in your face and should not be flung about, played with, or constantly hand-groomed during an interview. If your hair is long and would cause any of these problems, either pull it back, put it up, or cut it.

10. What should I bring to an interview -- briefcase, notepad, etc.?

You will need a leather folder style portfolio containing pockets (for extra copies of your resume), a notepad and pen.

11. How should I sit?

Sit up straight. Women, make sure your skirt isn't half way up your thighs. Men, don't sit back and lounge as you would on your sofa at home. The best way to avoid these situations is not to cross your legs. Pay attention to your posture. No fidgeting.

12. How should a recruiter from my peer group be addressed -- Mr., Ms., John, Mary?

If the recruiter is definitely around your age and is fairly casual when he or she meets you, go ahead and use his or her first name. If the person is older or seems to be the least bit conservative, use Mr. Or Ms.. Don't be too casual; always maintain a level of respect. If you have any doubt on this issue, use the more formal approach.

13. Should a student offer a handshake first or wait for the recruiter/interviewer?

You may extend your hand as soon as eye contact is made and the introduction begins.

14. What do I do if I draw a blank on someone's name?

Take the embarrassment on yourself by saying, "I'm sorry, I know we've met, your name is...?". Too often we forget names because we weren't paying attention in the first place.

15. Should I ask about salary on the first interview?

No. Your research of the industry should give you an idea of what the position will pay. The interviewer is responsible for initiating negotiations on salary.

16. How many questions should I ask the interviewer? Should I ask for clarification if I don't completely understand a question?

The key is to show you have done your research and are interested in the company and the position. Don't try to out-interview the interviewer and don't ask questions that have already been answered during the interview. If you don't understand a question, politely let the interviewer know what you don't understand and ask for clarification.

17. Should I bring up sexual orientation during the interview?

Discussing or revealing sexual orientation is not a necessary part of the interviewing process. Some interviewers may feel it is inappropriate. If including this information is very important to you, you may include affiliations with gay and/or lesbian associations on your resume (which may cause concern during the employer's pre-screening of your application), or address the subject during the final interview process.

18. If I am being interviewed by more than one person, whom should I address when speaking?

Start and end your answer or response by directing your attention to the person who asked the question. Include members of the group during the body of your response.

19. Is it okay to e-mail or fax a resume, cover letter, or thank you note?

You may fax or e-mail a resume or cover letter only at the interviewer's request. Always follow-up by sending a clean copy in the mail. Send thank you notes and letters through the mail.

20. Should I read my questions to the interviewer?

Interviewers appreciate questions, but the questions should never seem as if they are being read.

21. Should I pay for my own meal when an interview includes lunch?

If the interviewer asks you to go to lunch, he or she should pay. If you suggest lunch, you may be expected to pay. If you invite someone to lunch or dinner to gather information on an industry or company, you should pay. He/she who invites, pays.

22. How do I correct a recruiter who mispronounces my name?

As soon as the person mispronounces your name, politely and clearly say, "I'm sorry, my name is, not" . Smile and don't make a big deal of the mistake.

23. My full name is on my resume, but I prefer to be called by my nickname. How do I bring this up in an interview?

Your full name is expected on your resume. If the given name is Robert or Patricia, the interviewer may ask if you prefer Bob or Pat. If they ask, let them know at that time. Many companies require you to fill out an application to accompany your resume. There is usually a space on that form for your nickname. Some people place their nicknames in parenthesis or quotation marks under the full name on their resume.

24. How long should I wait to write or call the employer after sending a resume and cover letter?

Call the employer in about a week after sending your information. This will give them time to receive, and possibly review, the package. After a week, the recipient may lose or dispose of the information.

25. How much time do I have to make a decision on an offer? How much time should I request? May I ask for an extension?

If you ask the employer at the time the offer is made, he or she will let you know how much time you have. Make your decision within that time frame. If you need an extension, let the employer know. Your reason for this request should be a good one. The employer is under no obligation to accept your request.

26. How will I know the employer's deadline for making a hiring decision?

At the end of the final interview, ask the employer if he or she has a date in mind for making his or her final decision. Having a specific time frame will help you in your follow-up.

27. Should the thank you note be written on regular letter size or note size paper?

Personal notes to anyone who has given you a lead or referral should receive a handwritten thank you note on your personal stationary. Thank you's written after a job interview should be typed on business-sized paper.

28. How many thank you notes should I send following a panel interview?

Usually there is one person who was your contact or interview leader. If so, a thank you letter should be written to him or her. If there is no such person, contact the company representative who arranged the interview and ask for the name(s) of the person to whom a follow-up may be written. The letter should be sent within 24 hours.