

Dress to Impress

Dressing professionally

A neat and clean appearance will help interviewers focus on your qualifications, not your clothes or accessories. Clothing styles should be fashionable but not too trendy, and if you are unsure about how to dress for a particular interview, opt for the more conservative choice. Do your research ahead of time, and keep the company's culture in mind when you are picking out your interview outfit. Here are some additional tips:

What to wear

- Choose conservative colors. Dark, solid, and neutral colors work best.
- A suit or dress pants/skirt with a jacket will make a great first impression for a professional or office environment.
- When interviewing for technician and trade jobs, a collared shirt tucked into dress pants, dress socks and polished leather shoes are acceptable.
- If applying for creative positions, your attire should still be professional, but you may be able to add some visual interest with unique color, accessories or clothing.

Look professional and polished

- Close-toed dress shoes should be clean and non-scuffed. High heels should be less than three inches.
- Skirts should be no shorter than 2 inches above the knee, and tops should neither be too low-cut, too tight or sheer.
- If wearing a skirt to an interview, most career professionals recommend that you wear pantyhose. Make sure they are sheer, not textured, and neutral in color.
- Avoid flashy, excessive jewelry, remove unconventional body piercings and cover tattoos.
- Hair and nails should be clean and nicely groomed. Make sure teeth are brushed and breath is fresh.
- Makeup and nail polish should be minimal and natural looking.
- If you wear fragrance, use only the slightest bit, or forego it altogether.
- Carry the smallest number of items with you as possible. Pockets should not bulge and your right hand should be free so you can shake hands easily.
- Bring multiple copies of your résumé in a professional looking folder or padfolio.

THE INTERVIEW: WHAT CAN I EXPECT?

The interview is your opportunity to show employers that the skills and experience that motivated them to grant you an interview come from a talented and enthusiastic person who would be a great addition to the staff. Most interviews can be divided into three phases.

Phase 1: Making contact

Before serious discussion about the job and your qualifications begins, most interviewers like to spend a few minutes in casual conversation. This can be about the weather, some major event that happened over the weekend or something about your background that attracted their attention. This is an opportunity to make a special connection with the interviewer, which will help you stand out.

Phase 2: Establishing qualifications and opportunities

The two-way conversation about your qualifications and the job are the nuts and bolts of the interview. The best strategy is to elaborate on your résumé, highlighting the preparation and experience most relevant to that position. What do you have that is of special interest to the employer?

Your mood should be positive. Comment favorably on your education, past employers and your ambitions. Your work ethic is also being evaluated. Make sure that everything you present relates to the job.

Finally, come prepared with genuine questions to ask—questions that reflect your research and specific knowledge about the company.

Phase 3: Closing the interview and determining the next step.

As the interview draws to a close, if you are interested, ask for the job and inquire about the next step. Does the interviewer need any more information from you? Are there additional interviews? Thank the interviewer for his or her time. End with a firm handshake and follow up with a thank you note within 24 hours.

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