

# 10 Tips for a Successful Interview

1. Dress appropriately and use good manners. Your appearance should be neat and clean, pressed and polished. Always remember to say please and thank you. **Remember—you rarely get a second chance to make a good first impression!**
2. Be on time. If you are late for the interview, the employer may decide that you are not really interested in the job or that you would show up late for work. Arrive 15 minutes ahead.
3. Show that you are knowledgeable about the company. Interviewers are inclined to look more favorably on a candidate who has made the effort to research the company and the position.
4. Think—tropical breezes. Self-doubts and fear of failure can damage a job interview. Be calm and aware of any nervous behavior (nail-biting, hair twirling, etc.). Do some deep, slow breathing exercises before entering the meeting room and think of this experience as just another chance to practice your interview skills.
5. Unfreeze your face...SMILE! Smiling exudes a positive attitude, confidence and can make the interview more rewarding for both parties. Show your enthusiasm for the opportunity to meet with the potential employer. Think back to how excited you were when you received the call for this interview—just don't dance around the office like you did at home.
6. Practice good communication skills. It is important that you exhibit professional communication skills during the interview. Speak clearly and effectively, listen attentively, maintain eye contact and resist distractions that may steal your attention.
7. Practice answering questions. Anticipate questions that may be asked during the interview and prepare answers beforehand to some of the more difficult or sensitive questions. Ask a counselor for help.
8. Follow the interviewer's lead and stick to the point. Listen carefully; sometimes an interviewer will rephrase a question to check for alertness and consistency. The interviewer is also interested in experience and attitudes that might affect your performance on the job. Avoid discussing details of your personal life.
9. Express your interest in the job. Ask if you can call back at a certain time to find out about the decision.
10. Send a thank you letter within 24 hours. Thank the interviewer for his or her time, and stress your desire for the job. Restate your qualifications and mention a couple things you learned during the interview.
11. Okay—we lied. One more tip. If you are a CPCC student or graduate, visit CPCC Career Services. Check our resource library, attend a workshop or sign up for a mock interview. Consider sending your "Thank You" note via email to ensure it arrives quickly. Schedule an appointment to talk with a career counselor about interviewing strategies. We're here to help!

## Handling Illegal Interview Questions

Some questions are prohibited by federal law. Many times, interviewers ask inappropriate questions because they are unaware of the law. Some questions that seem illegal are not because they relate directly to the position's essential job functions. It is important to research the job functions and the company before you interview.

Illegal questions commonly focus on the following:

- Religion
- Ethnic Origin
- Age
- Race
- Marital Status
- Disability

A smart job hunter is aware of illegal questions, knows the available options and stays cool and collected while responding. Here are some options to help you maintain professionalism.

- Try to determine the interviewer's motivation by asking, "I wonder why you would ask that question?" Based upon the response, decide whether or not to answer. Remember, some interviewers do not realize that they asked an illegal question.
- Decline to answer politely by saying, "That question makes me feel uncomfortable. I'd rather not answer it."
- Contact the nearest Equal Employment Office if you feel you were denied a job due to discrimination. However, be aware that although you may have a legitimate claim, it can be difficult to prove.
- Answer an illegal question if you choose.

For more information on illegal interview questions, visit CPCC Career Services.