

HOW TO SURVIVE THE INTERVIEW

IF YOU ARE LATE

1 Call ahead.

If you are stuck in traffic or otherwise running late, call as soon as you know you will be substantially late. Ask to reschedule, either later in the day or on another day.

2 Clean yourself up.

Use a bathroom before meeting your interviewer if you are sweaty and disheveled when you arrive. Wash your face with cold water and blot it dry with paper towels. Gargle. Check your teeth for pieces of food.

3 Apologize.

Tell the interviewer you are sorry for your tardiness, but do not overdo the apology. Do not fabricate an explanation that can easily be verified. The following are acceptable excuses, if true.

- The traffic was terrible.
- There was an accident on the bridge.
- My car caught on fire.
- I was stuck in the elevator.
- I had to take my mother/daughter/pet to the emergency room.

DO NOT SAY:

- My alarm clock is broken.
- I lost track of the time.
- I couldn't find my belt.
- I was out so late last night . . .

IF YOU ARE ASKED A DIFFICULT OR LEADING QUESTION



Always respond with a positive.

If the interviewer says, “I see you don’t have experience,” counter with, “That’s true, but I’ve always wanted to learn and I’m a quick study!”



Use personal experiences to demonstrate strengths in areas that are professionally weak.

If the interviewer asks about project management experience and you don’t have any, talk about planning your wedding or organizing a large family function (hiring vendors, designing a database, and creating seating charts based on the interests of guests).



Answer confidently.

It isn’t always what you say, but how you say it. Often, questions are designed to assess your professional attitude and maturity level more than your knowledge base. Be sincere in your responses, and act professionally—even if you don’t have a good answer. Be straightforward, even when your answer is “I don’t know.”



Memorize the following good answers to these standard hard-to-address questions:

Q: Where do you see yourself in five years?

A: At a good job in this industry, at a good company, learning and contributing to the company's growth.

Q: Why should I hire you?

A: I've got the right experience, I understand your needs, and I'm a good team player—both in the office and on the softball field.

Q: Why did you quit your last job?

A: I simply wasn't able to contribute to the company's future in the way I wanted. I'm looking for more opportunities for myself, and for a company that can fully utilize my abilities.



Prepare a last-resort response.

If you are asked the one question you dreaded, take a page from the politicians' playbook: Acknowledge the question, then move on. Say, "I'm very glad you asked that, and I'd like to give it some thought. But I'd really like to discuss . . ."

Be Aware

- Always remember the three C's: Cool, Calm, and Confident. An interview is as much about you wanting the job as it is about the job wanting you.
- Always remember the three A's: Ask a lot of questions, Appear clean-cut and well-dressed, and Act to impress.
- Avoid scheduling interviews just after lunch, when most people get sleepy and irritable.

HOW TO KNOW IF YOU ARE TANKING

1

Watch the interviewer's eyes.

An interviewer that is simply going through the motions will not make eye contact. Check for a glazed or glassy stare and heavy or droopy eyelids.

2

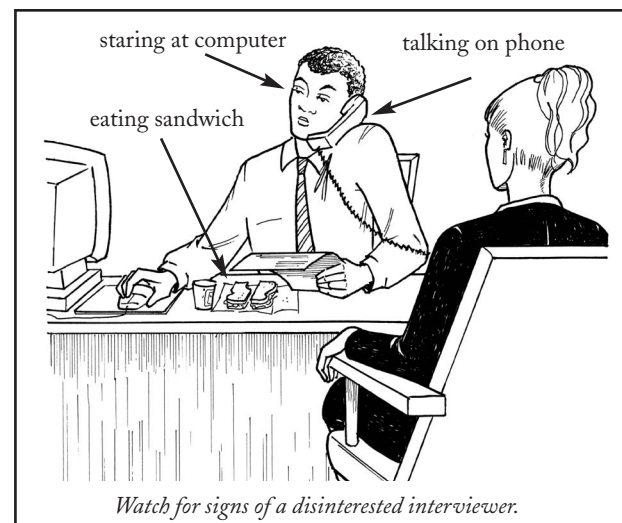
Listen carefully.

A bored or disinterested interviewer may quietly hum a tune, whistle softly, or shuffle papers repeatedly.

3

Observe the interviewer's actions.

An interviewer who is constantly checking the time, eating a sandwich, or takes lots of phone calls probably won't offer you the job.



4 Pay attention to the amount of time your interviewer speaks versus the amount of time you speak.

If your interviewer speaks more than you do, you may not be coming across very strongly. (On the other hand, some less-experienced interviewers love to hear themselves talk, and may come away with the impression that the interview was very interesting.)

5 Attempt to rescue the situation.

Your goal at this point should simply be to make it through this interview to the next phase of interviewing, where you can hopefully make a stronger impression. Pick one or more of the following statements designed to get you back in front of the interviewer for a second shot:

- “I’m so certain I’m the right person for this job, I’d be willing to bet my first month’s paycheck I’ll be your top candidate after round two.”
- “The insider knowledge I gained at [*insert name of major competitor here*] definitely gives me an edge over any other prospective hire. I look forward to talking again soon.”
- “The work I did for the CIA/FBI/NSA makes me the perfect choice for this position. I’d love to tell you more about it at a second interview, provided that you have the necessary clearance.”

Be Aware

No matter how well the rest of the interview seems to go, you may not be offered the job if any of the following mishaps occur:

- You ask if a photo on your interviewer’s desk is his daughter, and it turns out to be his wife.
- You ask to go to the bathroom three times or more, or one trip lasts more than 15 minutes.
- You don’t take off your headset during the interview.
- You receive and respond to more than two cell phone calls.
- You make a cell phone call.
- You answer, “A beer would be nice,” when your interviewer asks if you’d like something to drink.