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## Job Interview Secret #10

# LOOK the Part! Appearance Counts



“Dress for Success.”

Most people have heard and seen this slogan on television, in magazine articles, in fashion stores. It’s become such a common refrain it has nearly lost its meaning. But for you, a wise job-hunter, it’s worth taking seriously.

Today’s culture is inundated with a ‘look’ that ranges from casual to grunge. Rarely do you see a truly smart dresser except in the pages of fashion magazines. Women often show up at the theater, office, or fine restaurant in jeans and sliders.

Some men slip into work environments looking as though they just rolled off the couch after a late-night movie. Shirts are rumpled. Pants bag or fall off hips. Hair needs a good combing. Not everyone, of course, but enough to make you wonder.

Imagine the stir you could create if you walked into a hiring manager’s office dressed appropriately for the job you wish to get.

## The “Wow” Factor



You don't want your appearance to overpower your personality, but it should reflect the person you are and the work you hope to do. Women are always attractive in pants, a sweater or blouse, and a fitted jacket. Basic flats or pumps with closed toe and heel are ideal. This is not the place for stilettos, mini shirts, bare legs or an armful of dangling bracelets. Use make-up that flatters your coloring and complexion. A friend can give you perspective. Wear your hair in a way that complements your outfit and shows off your face.

Men frequently show up for the job interview of their dreams in need of a fresh shave and haircut, an out-of-date tie, a tired-looking shirt and shoes that could stand a good brushing. Spend a little time thinking about style and color. Understated is best. Choose soft colors, pressed pants, polished shoes, a sport coat or sweater, and you can't go wrong.

The hiring manager will likely shake your hand so spend a few dollars on a professional manicure. Small details matter more than you might think.

People make up their minds about a person within five seconds of meeting him or her. Avoid squandering your chance to be hired before you even say a word. Present yourself in a way that will cause a silent WOW! You'll be able to tell if you pulled it off by the look in the hiring manager's eyes.

## Worth Every Penny



Appearance isn't *everything*. But it is something. Something important enough to consider and invest in.

Sparkling eyes, a kind smile, a firm handshake, and an attractive 'look' will go a long way to land you the result you want—an offer for the job you've worked so hard to secure.

When you *look* refreshed, well groomed, and attractive you'll *feel* refreshed, well groomed, and attractive. The hiring manager will feel at ease with you and perhaps realize before you even stand up to say good-bye that *you* are the one he or she wants to hire to fill the job opening.



## Job Interview Secret #9

# Research the Company Ahead of Time



Suppose you're looking for a job as the manager of a retail stationery store. Or you have your eye on a position as an executive assistant in a law firm or a sales representative for a shoe manufacturer. Whatever profession attracts you, you will enhance your chances of landing the job you want if you *research the company—before the interview*. Decide now to learn as much as you can about the organization. Then show up on time for the interview, prepared and eager to talk specific details.

### **HOW to do your research**



**1.** Visit the company's web site for a description, purpose statement, and details about the organization and its mission. Also do a Google or Yahoo search for articles and reviews about the firm you're targeting.



**2.** Consult the Thomas Register of American Manufacturers or other source available at your public library.



**3.** Make a list of items you want to know about, including: benefits, history, advancement opportunities, financial status, leadership, community involvement, strategic plans/goals.



**4.** Call the human resources department of the company for which you'll be interviewed and ask for company brochures, new employee packets, etc.



**5.** Consult publications such as *Forbes*, *Fortune*, *Business Week*, *Wall Street Journal* and others for their 'best of' and 'worst of' lists that provide unbiased information about a variety of companies.

These are just some of the ways to do your research ahead of time. You may find others on the Internet, in books, and by talking with colleagues. The important thing is to *do* it, not so much how you do it. You may even have an opportunity to chat with an employee of your target company. There's nothing like an insider's 'take' on the organization to help you know what to expect and know how to prepare for your interview.

The better prepared you are the more confident you'll feel while talking with the hiring manager—and the better he or she will feel about you for having taken the time to learn about the company.



## Job Interview Secret #8

# Preparing for a Job Interview—Mentally

- Be on time.**
- Dress for success.**
- Be prepared to answer questions.**
- Know the company.**
- Be a good listener.**
- Communicate clearly.**

You know the drill. These are all good tips to put into practice before you go in for that all-important interview for the job of your dreams.

However, one thing that is rarely talked about is *mental* preparation. Getting your mind in gear before the big day is even more important than how you dress or the list of questions you have in your pocket or purse.

A hiring manager will be able to tell at a glance whether or not you are up to the job he wants to fill. Are you calm, focused, able to concentrate, and eager to engage? Or are you nervous, fidgety, self-absorbed, concerned with your appearance, and too shy or too talkative?

## Mental Push-ups



To prepare yourself for the time you're on the hot seat, do a few mental push-ups the night before and repeat them in the morning before you pull out of your driveway.

**Push-up #1** Sit still for ten minutes in silence or with quiet music in the background.

**Push-up #2** Review your best traits: adaptability, organizational skills, leadership.

**Push-up #3** Affirm yourself. I, John (or Mary), am capable and likeable.

**Push-up #4** Think positive thoughts. I am the one to fill this opening.

**Push-up #5** Release the results to the universe. I accept the outcome for my good.

Finally, check your mental heart rate. If your mind is pounding with stress, racing with questions, or confused about some detail, STOP and then start all over again with Push-up #1. Stillness is better than any other antidote, medication included.

When you feel confident, clear-minded, and committed to the task in front of you, then you can be sure you are on target for a great interview. You'll be able to walk into any office and establish a good rapport with the hiring manager within moments.

So put your mind over the matter at hand—the job you want and the interview that can take you there.



## Job Interview Secret #7

# Be Prepared! Secret Tools to Bring to an Interview



You know the importance of dressing professionally for an interview and showing up on time ready to discuss the job you're eager to fill. However, it's equally important to come prepared with essential documents—tools that most employers will ask to see.



**1.** Your social security card, necessary to secure employment and payment once you're hired.



**2.** Your current state-licensed driver's license or a government-issued identification card to show that you are the person you say you are.



**3.** Your resume of past work experience, typed and printed out on standard white paper. Some job seekers

believe they will make an 'impression' if they choose colored paper or sheets with decorative imprints. You will stand out—but for all the wrong reasons. Furnish the interviewer with information about your education, training, and former employment. Include only those details that apply to the work you wish to do. This is not the place to mention your teenage job as a baby-sitter or newspaper carrier.



**4.** A completed job application with all pertinent information filled in correctly, clearly, and legibly. Don't make the hiring manager 'work' to read your handwriting or printing.



**5.** References. Typically, an employer likes to see three good references from former employers, long-time personal friends, or others who know you well and can speak to your character and work ethics. Be sure to ask their permission ahead of time. Avoid using relatives.



**6.** Transcripts. Some employers may require an official copy of your transcript of educational credits, course work, degrees earned, post-secondary classes, as well as any professional acknowledgment you received such as an honorary degree or certification in a particular field.

Step up to the opportunity of a lifetime—the interview you've worked so hard to land. Then cinch the deal by arriving on time, dressed appropriately, and equipped with these six items. You will be received and welcomed as the professional candidate you are. Then wait for those two words you're eager to hear. "You're hired."



## Job Interview Secret #6

### **Behave Yourself. Present Your Best Self!**

It's easy to get overwhelmed by all there is to do when it comes to preparing for an interview—dressing, assembling documents, planning answers to potential questions, knowing something about the company. To avoid going over the edge, take time for some rest and reflection. Think through your career goals. Then make a list, and check it twice!

If finding new employment is on that list, remember that every great job starts with a great interview! So plan now to take stock of yourself, your presentation, your ability to express yourself, your standards for the company you work for. Take strategic steps to insure a bright future.

### **Interviews Don't Just *Happen!***

They begin and end with you—even though a man or woman or even a panel of interviewers is sitting across from you in an office. Keep in mind that today's hiring manager is more interested in who you are as a person than who you are as a professional. Something called 'behavior-based' interviewing is becoming the norm.

Employers are looking at a candidate's past performance as a predictor of future behavior. They are not only interested in your background and experience, but also in the way you treat others and how you interact with a team or department employees, as well as how you've handled sticky situations that called for logic and leadership.

## Truth or Consequences

Following are some of the hard-edged questions and directives you might receive in a behavior-based interview.

Give me an example of a specific time you took charge of a situation that was out of control.

What goal have you set in a workplace and how did you achieve it?

How have you performed above and beyond the requirement of the job you held?

Provide an example of how you bailed yourself and others out of what appeared to be a hopeless situation.

What specifically have you done to alleviate a problem with a difficult co-worker or superior?

Expect to provide details, dialogue, and a description of what occurred and how it was resolved.

## A Year Without Fear



Give worry a good swift kick. Stand in front of a mirror and speak positive words to yourself. “You are a good manager.” “You are the one people turn to in a tough situation.” “Care more about people than problems.” “Believe in yourself.” “You are admired.”

Next, jot down a few personal stories that illustrate situations and times when you successfully resolved conflict, stood up for the truth despite criticism, or used your creativity to negotiate a challenging relationship. Then go over the job description to get a feel for the requirements, standards, and expectations of the person who is hired. Picture yourself on the job, handling day-to-day operations, fielding calls, making decisions, and dealing with co-workers.

Finally, check your emotional pulse. If you're smiling and feeling comfortable and well suited to such a job, then go for it. If you feel stressful, confused, or overwhelmed, consider setting this opportunity aside and going for another one that is a better match for your skills and strengths.

Equipped with practical insight and emotional clarity such as this, you can walk into any interview and establish a good rapport with the hiring manager.

Afterwards, all that's left is the question only you can ask and answer for yourself. "Is this the job for me?"

Happy job-hunting. Here's to the placement of your dreams in the coming months.





## Job Interview Secret #5

### What NOT To Do During an Interview



You've probably heard of many things to do in order to have a successful interview. There are also some things not to do. They deserve to be considered, as well. Once you've gone over all of them, you'll be better able to relax, make a check-list, review it, practice asking and answering questions, and then walk into the meeting with confidence and enthusiasm.

#### What are some of the things not to do during a job interview?

##### 1. Don't be late.



The hiring manager may keep you waiting beyond the agreed-upon time but nevertheless, you show up on time. Give yourself plenty of time to locate the office, sit in traffic, if necessary, stop in the restroom, have a snack, and breathe!

##### 2. Don't smoke or chew gum.



Focus your attention on the interviewer and his or her questions. This is your opportunity to make a great first impression. Cigarettes and chewing gum don't belong in an interview. Avoid hard candy and cough drops, as well. If your mouth goes dry, sip plain water.



### 3. Don't come with expectations.

You may have a picture in your mind of how you want the interview to go and the results you hope to achieve. Look at it—then leave it behind. It's best to go in with a clean sheet. Prepare yourself and also make room for the unexpected. Sometimes our best ideas turn out to be less satisfying than ones that take us by surprise.



### 4. Don't 'wing' it.

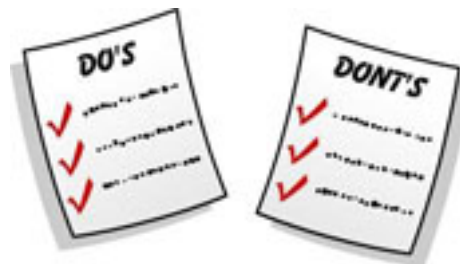
Show up prepared to talk about the job you hope to get and your qualifications. Bring written notes, if that will help you stay focused. And make a list of questions you have about the company. Know what you're getting into so you can provide both the hiring manager and yourself an honest and forthright conversation that will be good for both of you.



### 5. Don't be rude or self-centered.

In other words, come to the interview thinking and believing the best. You may win the job—great if you do—but you may not. And that's okay too. You will land the position that's perfect for you. It's simply a matter of time. Meanwhile, as you go from one interview to the next you are having opportunities to practice your skills and bone up on your personal interactions. If you do your best, the outcome that is best for you will occur.

## Review Your List of Do's and Dont's



**TAKE CHARGE of YOURSELF.** Take the active approach. And finally, don't rely on the hiring manager to do for you what only you can do for yourself. Step up to the opportunity and make the most of it.



## Job Interview Secret #4

### **Manners Matter: Brush Up on Interview Etiquette**

Manners are not only important at the dinner table (use your napkin, please), on the telephone (listen as well as speak), in a theater (refrain from talking during the performance), but also during a job interview. Yet many job seekers forget the importance of being polite. They jingle the change in their pocket, click their tongue, stare at the wall or at their lap, or cut in when the hiring manager is speaking.

Nerves can throw you off. Your heart races, your palms perspire, your mouth goes dry. You may even forget what you want to say. But none of these experiences are reasons to forget your manners. To give yourself the ‘edge’ when it comes to sitting across from a potential employer, review the following polite practices and then go over them with a spouse or friend before the in-person meeting.

#### **Poise and Polish**

##### **Arrive ahead of time.**

It may be fashionable to come late to a cocktail party but it’s bad manners to walk into an interview after the agreed-upon time. Always arrive at least ten minutes early so you can freshen up, catch your breath, sit quietly in the lobby reviewing your notes.





**Maintain good eye contact.**

You probably know what it's like to speak with someone who is shifty-eyed. You might wonder what he has up his sleeve or what she is hiding. Looking a man or woman in the eye when speaking is not only polite, it's good business practice. It assures the other person of your sincerity and genuine interest. And it will remind him or her to return the eye contact.



**Listen well.**

Focus your mind and take in what the interviewer is saying. If you miss a detail or don't understand what is said, ask politely for it to be repeated. It may help to have a small note pad and pen in your hand. Jot down items that are of importance to you. You might even tell the interviewer ahead of time that you'll be taking notes because you don't want to miss anything. That too, is a sign of good manners. You're letting the other person know that you're serious about the job in question.



**Smile.**

When we're under stress we often forget the importance of a warm smile. You can more easily engage your audience and yourself by smiling (with your eyes and heart, as well as with your lips). That doesn't mean you should turn up your mouth and never move it. Onlookers will recognize a fake smile when they see one. Be natural, offering a happy and pleasant countenance throughout your conversation—most important, responding appropriately to what is being said.



**Say thank you.**

At the close of the interview, be sure to shake hands and express in warm words how much you appreciate the time and the information you received. Remember, everyone likes to be acknowledged and thanked. Those who express gratitude will not be forgotten because it is so rare for people today to share genuine thanks. Then follow up with a thank you note in your handwriting. That will seal the deal and give you a good chance of winning a second interview—or even the job itself.



### Job Interview Secret #3

## How to Block Stress—BEFORE the Interview



Just the thought of an interview can set your heart a-thumping. Even the word itself—interview—can bring on cold hands and stomach jitters. When you enter the office and face the employer you may have yet another outbreak of stress—fuzzy thinking and nervous chatter—all of which can result in losing the opportunity to make a good first impression toward landing the job.

So what can you do to rid yourself of these unwanted behaviors? How can you appear calm, cool, and collected, and at your best?

Try these five simple stress-reducing techniques and notice how your self-esteem will rise.

**1.** Arrive ten to fifteen minutes ahead of your appointment. Allow for traffic, accidents, unplanned stops.

2. Spend a few minutes in your parked car listening to soft music, and deep breathing with your eyes closed.
3. Visit the restroom on your way to the interview site. Check your appearance and smile into the mirror. Drink water to keep your mouth moistened and your body hydrated.
4. Say the following affirmation silently, or aloud if you're alone. "The employer and I connect immediately. He/she sees me as the ideal candidate for this job."
5. Enter the company's lobby or waiting room and take a moment to observe your surroundings, to introduce yourself to the receptionist, and to sit quietly and review your notes.

### **Take Charge Now!**

Most important: PLAN AHEAD. Never allow yourself to make it up as you go along. Take the active approach. Stress—like wild fire—will spread quickly and consume you if you don't block it before it reaches you. Then move into the interview as a confident and balanced individual—a professional well suited to fill the job opening.



## Job Interview Secret #2

### It's Okay to ASK for the Job

The phone rings. It's a prospective employer calling, inviting you in for an interview—the very one you hoped would come through.

You're suddenly pumped up, excited, and maybe a bit nervous. You may be wondering, "Where will this lead?" Of course you want to shine, to show the hiring manager what you can do for the company, and how you can actually increase the bottom line.

So what's next? Making sure you 'stand out' during the interview. Then when you walk out of the office you'll have a pretty solid idea of the result you can expect.

### HOW to ASK!

Assert yourself to the point where the hiring manager knows you want this job.

- Smile and look him or her in the eye.
- Ask intelligent questions, showing your professionalism.
- Mention a few facts about the company to indicate you've done your homework.
- Give an example of some new detail you could bring to the job.
- Talk about the work you've done that is related to the new job.
- Mention a task or responsibility you undertook that helped the bottom line.
- Then ASK for the job.

Most important: PLAN AHEAD. Be prepared for the interview. Jot down a few notes and have them with you, ready to refer to at the opportune moment. Better to refer to a sheet of paper than to forget an essential item.

Remember: This is not an exercise in sitting, hoping, and waiting. It's a golden opportunity for you to ask for the job and to do so in a way that inspires the hiring manager to make that offer on the spot.



Take the *active* approach. Think about what you want as well as what you have to offer and make that clear during your conversation with the hiring manager. While others wait and watch, you'll ask and receive.



## Job Interview Secret #1

# The Best-Kept Interview Secret

You've landed an interview. You're eager to make a good impression. You hope to be offered the job. You know you will be asked a lot of questions and you hope you give all the right answers.

However, did you know that the best-kept secret regarding interviews is this: You ASK questions too. Don't stay on the defensive. Play the offensive too. After all you might have this new job for a long time. You want to be certain the company is a good fit for you too.



To get the result you want, be sure to *ask questions*—*during* the interview. Plan ahead. Think about what you'd like to know. Then jot down a list of questions on those topics. Here are some examples:

What would you like to know about my skills and experience?

What could I expect from a typical day in this position?

What challenges might I face during the first six months?

May I give you an example of something I'd like to bring to this position?

What is the company policy regarding vacations and holidays?

Do you accept some telecommuting from your employees?

How do you handle overtime?

Does your organization participate in any community service?

When do you expect to hire a person for this job?

### **Closing the Interview**



Once the interview is over and your questions have been answered, wrap up your time with a friendly closure.

Express your thanks.

Exchange business cards.

Offer to provide more information, if needed.

Look the hiring manager in the eye and shake hands firmly.

Follow up with a written thank you note.

Be clear. Be calm. Be courteous. The more professional and prepared you are when you go into an interview, the greater your chance of achieving your goal—a job offer!

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Jimmy Sweeney is the president of CareerJimmy and author of the brand new “Secret Career Document” job landing system. Jimmy is also the author of several career related books and writes a monthly article titled, “Job Search Secrets.” Visit Jimmy on the Web at [JobInterviewSecret.com](http://JobInterviewSecret.com) and discover his breakthrough strategy that will have you standing out from the competition like a Harvard graduate at a local job fair... DURING your next job interview!

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