



10

**How Do You
Make the Best
Impression in an
Interview?**

How Do You Make the Best Impression in an Interview?

When does a job interview begin?

Job interviews often begin before you meet a potential employer. Think of them as starting when the employer reviews the application or resume. Next steps can be a telephone conversation, telephone or virtual interview, email exchange, in person interview or online assessment.



Checklist for Success: Creating Your Response to “Tell me about yourself”

Your telephone etiquette has to be work-ready. The interview process starts when you pick up the phone.

- When you are looking for a job, remember to ALWAYS answer your phone in a polite and friendly way. The voice on the line could be a potential employer. Never start by accusing the caller, “Why are you calling?”
- Your voicemail message must be work-ready. Record a work-ready message that is clear and simple and includes your name and phone number. While you are job hunting, leave off the cool music and casual message.
- Check for messages regularly and delete as needed so you never have a “full” mailbox.
- Have your Resume and/or [Personal Data Form](#) in front of you before you pick up the phone and be prepared to answer questions. Treat every phone call like an interview, it may be one even if you were not told beforehand.
- Take and make all calls in a good place to talk without a lot of background noise from the TV, music, pets, family or people passing on the street.
- Sit up straight and smile, you can hear a smile over the telephone.
- If you are employed and must talk during work hours use your personal phone and step out of your workplace to take, or make, a job search call.
- If an employer calls you and you are not prepared to speak, are in the middle of something, the phone connection is not clear, or it’s just too noisy, ask to reschedule the conversation. Say, “I’m really interested in speaking to you about this job but I am finishing up an appointment. Can we schedule this conversation later in the day or tomorrow?”
- If you are driving, only answer the phone with a hands free device and pull over to complete the call.
- Whenever you leave a message for a recruiter or potential employer, clearly state your name and phone number and when you can be reached. “Good afternoon, this is Bill Smith returning Sandra Foley’s call. I can be reached at 914-555-1212 and will be available the rest of today and tomorrow until 2 pm. Thank you, I look forward to talking to you.”





Take the Extra Step: Write Down Names, Titles and Contact Information

Write down the names, titles and contact information from voicemail messages you receive, telephone conversations and emails. Asking for the right person and knowing who you are talking to will make you look and sound more work-ready. Keep track!

Responding to Employer Email and Text Messages

Your first contact in the hiring process may be in an email or even a text message. Respond to these as soon as possible. Check your response for correct spelling and grammar; make certain your contact information is included and be enthusiastic about the potential opportunity.

Here's a sample of a response to an email:

Dear Ms. Foley,

Thank you for considering me for the Cashier position at ABC Audio. I am available this Wednesday at 1:30 pm, and I look forward to speaking with you to discuss this position.

Please let me know if I can provide any additional information before we meet on Wednesday.

Sincerely,

Bill Smith

914-555-1212

billsmith@gmail.com



If you can't make the appointment that the interviewer requested, your email should look like this:

Dear Ms. Foley.

Thank you for considering me for the Cashier position at ABC Audio. I have a scheduling conflict for the date and time you requested. Please let me know if any of the following dates/times work for you (list available dates and times.)

Thank you again for your consideration, and I apologize for any inconvenience.

Sincerely,

Bill Smith

914-555-1212

billsmith@gmail.com

If an email includes instructions to set up the interview using an online platform, follow the directions carefully. Write down the date and time and save any access codes or information you will need to follow up.

Employers may also contact you by text. Respond with shortened versions of the emails above.

For example:

Ms. Foley, I am available for an interview on Wednesday at 1:30 pm and am looking forward to meeting you.

Never respond to a request for an interview from a work email or work number.



True Stories: That Wasn't a Real Job

If you receive an email that looks suspicious, there are no names of the company, they ask for a fee to sign up for a test or training program, don't say where the job is, or they are offering a huge bonus, skip it. If it looks phony it probably is. Check the company and person's name to see if they are real. LinkedIn is a good place to search. Check the sender's email address; if it's not from a company, temp agency or recruiter, delete it.



As soon as you make appointments, write them down in your calendar.

Here's what your calendar might look like now:

Job Search Calendar Week of October 18, 2021				
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
11 AM Return call to Freda Mendez from Home Depot 914-222-3434	2 PM Phone Interview Sandra Foley, GM ABC Audio	10 AM Write thank you note to Sandra Foley for Interview	10 AM Interview for Inventory job with Howard Landon, Service Manager Miller Ford, 222 Main St, Southchester 914-333-3535	10 AM Write thank you note to Howard Landon and Mark Peyton for job interviews at Miller Ford



Take the Extra Step: Know How to Get There

If your interview is in an area you don't know, take a practice trip to learn how to get there. Try to make the drive or take the bus or train near the time of your scheduled interview so you will learn about any problems with traffic or crowds.

When you know where you are going, it will be easier to be on time and be more relaxed for the interview.

What should I wear?

The way you look can make or break your chances of getting a job. Grooming and hygiene are probably the first things a potential employer sees. You want an interviewer to remember that you are qualified, neat and enthusiastic.





Checklist for Success: Dress for the Job You Want

- Hair must be neat. A haircut before an interview can help make sure your hair is neat. It's not the time to try a new hairstyle that you may be self-conscious about.
- Your face, hands and fingernails must be clean.
- Men should be shaved or have a neatly groomed mustache and/or beard.
- Wear a shirt or blouse. Stay away from tight, revealing sweaters or t-shirts.
- Pants or skirts should be a dark or neutral color.
- Avoid clothing with advertisements, jumbo logos or graphics.
- Wear clothing that fits the work environment; a jacket or blazer for a law office, work boots for a construction site.
- Keep jewelry to a minimum; it should not be distracting.
- Remove multiple earrings, gauges, and facial piercings, in case they are not allowed.
- Cover tattoos for conservative industries; banking, health care and some direct customer service positions; they are fine if you are interviewing for a bartender or barista. If you learn it's a tattoo-friendly workplace, you don't have to cover up for the second interview.
- Take off hats, hoods and coats indoors.



Take the Extra Step: Sit Down in Those New Clothes

If you do get a new outfit for the interview, try it on and sit down to make certain you can sit comfortably. If you are not comfortable or spend time tugging at your clothes, it will make you nervous. It will also distract the interviewer.

Model Workplace Appropriate Behavior

Your behavior makes an impression as soon as you walk in the door of a potential employer. Everyone you meet may have a say in hiring. Impressions carry forward throughout the interview process.

Do's And Don'ts For Making the Best Impression When Interviewing	
Do	Don't
Prepare for an interview even if you are going to ask about openings, or drop off an application or resume. Someone may want to interview you immediately.	Stop by wearing sweats and in a rush on your way to play basketball, or take your child to school.
Use Chapter 11 of this Toolkit to prepare for potential interview questions.	Wing it, figuring you can answer any question.
Wear a mask properly if it is a workplace or community requirement, and make sure it's comfortable.	Put your mask on only if you are asked and wear it below your nose or adjust it constantly from the face covering part while talking.
Face the person and be polite to everyone you meet.	Assume the first person you meet is just a clerk and treat them rudely or suspiciously.
Smile and make eye contact whenever you meet someone.	Offer a handshake.
Know the name and title of the person you are scheduled to meet for any interview.	Walk in and say, "Someone called me for an interview, they were Stan or, Stuart, I'm not sure."
Speak clearly at a medium volume. Practice with a mask on.	Raise your voice so it can be heard 20 feet away.
Maintain good posture. Stand and sit up straight! Practice sitting straight in a chair with both feet on the ground.	Cross your legs so the interviewer can see the bottom of your shoes, slouch or lean forward looking like you want to leave as soon as possible.
Take a seat as directed by the interviewer or receptionist.	Pace in the reception area or sit down before the interviewer.
Listen attentively.	Interrupt the interviewer.
Bring something to read in case you need to wait.	Compulsively check your phone, play loud video games or complain about waiting for an interview.
Be energetic and friendly. It's natural to be nervous and you can even say, "I'm nervous."	Be critical, negative and jumpy.
Silence your phone and put it out of sight.	Take out your phone when it rings, or keep it on vibrate. The buzzing of vibrate can be heard and you will react when you hear it.
Treat a telephone interview just like an in person interview. Be prepared for questions, get dressed, sit up straight and smile.	Treat a phone interview like it's not real; stay in your pjs, be distracted by the TV or your cat, ask the interviewer, "I applied for so many jobs. What is this for again?"
Write down the details of any follow up appointments or emails.	Complain about how many interviews, or tests, a potential employer is asking for.





Take the Extra Step: Bring 5 Copies of Your Resume

If you submitted a resume, bring 5 copies with you to an interview. Carry them in a folder so they are neat. When you meet a new person you can offer the resume in case they don't have it in front of them.

The Interview Process; Assessments

Many employers use assessments as part of the interview process. These may be skills tests like a typing test or math test. They can also be geared towards finding out your attitude about work or psychological tests. When you are asked to do these, usually in an email, note if there is a deadline to get it done. Use the link in the email to complete the process. Don't overthink the test or try to game it, thinking about what an employer might be looking for.

Can I really be interviewed by video, on my phone?

Yes, employers are increasingly using video interviews for all kinds of jobs. Video interviews were on the rise before 2020 and became commonplace when meeting face to face was difficult or no longer an option. You don't need fancy equipment for a video interview. You can use a computer, tablet or smartphone for these virtual interviews.

Virtual interviews may be conducted live using Facetime, Zoom, Skype, Google Hangout or Meet or Microsoft Teams. Employers also use specific software. There are lots of these and include Spark Hire, HireVue, VidCruter and JobVite to list just a few. These platforms allow for live video interviews and also one way pre-recorded interviews where candidates are given a question in writing, or in a video, and record their responses on the platform.





Checklist for Success: Ace the Virtual Job Interview

Prepare for virtual interviews, they are here to stay.

- Read all instructions very carefully and save the email with these and any links.
- Whenever possible practice using the format. You may find instructions for practice in the email. Use the device you would use for an interview. It's easy to Facetime yourself, set up a Zoom meeting, or Skype with a friend.
- Dress for an interview and not halfway. You may get up and the interviewer can then spot your sweats or boxers.
- Sit up straight in a chair. When you practice you can see how this looks.
- Have lighting behind your screen, not behind you. Too much light behind you will make it difficult to see you.
- Check your background. Interviewers know you will be home but they should not be peering into a messy room. Make your bed, organize the shelves, put away the dishes.
- Avoid the virtual background option unless you have a green screen and complete set up. You will look unnatural and can come off as fuzzy around the edges.
- Have your resume or [Personal Data Form](#) in front of you.
- Don't move around a lot or constantly adjust your screen; it's really distracting. Set it up and check well before the interview.
- Prop your phone or tablet on something; don't hold it in your hand so the video is unsteady.
- Close other applications on your device as they use up bandwidth, particularly on a PC, and can make the connection unstable.
- Check the volume on your microphone.
- Face the camera on your device and speak in a moderate tone.
- Put your phone on mute and make certain any person or pet in your household can't hop in and disrupt the process.



Interview by Chat?

Yes, there are employers who conduct interviews by Chat. Treat these just like a telephone interview; be prepared and answer questions completely (avoid abbreviations). Sometimes scammers may intercept a Chat function or a pop-up may occur on your screen unprompted. If you are asked for a social security number, W-4 or banking info, or any other mysterious offer, delete it. If you think it might be legitimate, then search the name of the company or recruiter and give them a call or send an email.

Thank you for your time. Can I have your business card?

At the end of every interview thank the person for taking the time to meet you. Ask for a business card so you can send a thank you note (See Chapter 12) and have contact information to follow up. For a virtual interview, get the contact information and correct title to send a thank you note.

Thank the person you speak to on the phone. Thank the person you meet when you drop off a job application. Good manners will always make a good impression.

Review your notes after an interview

Reread the questions and answers that you prepared in your notebook. You may want to change some of your answers. You may also want to add in any new questions that you were asked in the interview.

Workshops on interviewing

If you hear of a program about how to be interviewed, sign up and go to the class. Even if you have had 20 interviews, you may learn something new at a workshop.





Chapter 10 To Do List

- _____ Practice work-ready phone etiquette.
- _____ Respond to email and requests for an interview quickly.
- _____ Use your calendar to keep track of names, dates and times of interviews.
- _____ Pick an interview-ready outfit.
- _____ Learn the Dos and Don'ts for making a good impression.
- _____ Practice virtual interviews.



Need Help?

The Westchester Library System offers workshops, resources, and one-to-one counseling to guide your job search and improve your interviewing skills. Find out more at [FirstFind.org](https://www.firstfind.org).

