

theresume

Staying power

Some employers look at jumping around from job to job in a negative light, so it's important to not give this impression on your resume. It's also possible to give this impression if you include a separate listing for each title you've held with one particular company. To avoid this confusion, when listing your work history, list the dates for the entire time you were at the company, and under that heading, list the various titles you've held.

careeradvice

Appreciate it

A thank-you letter should be sent to your interviewer soon after your encounter. Be sure to include specific details that will remind the recruiter of your interview, and of what you can do for the company. Don't be lazy — you want to avoid using a canned thank-you note and instead write a letter that speaks directly to the person who interviewed you, which should include a few points discussed during the interview and information on how you feel you could contribute to the company.

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interviewtip

Whine expert

Leaving a job can be difficult, especially if you're more than ready to tell the world how you were mistreated and overworked. But if you're looking for a new job, you'll want to keep a positive attitude during an interview, even about employers who have wronged you. Most interviewers tend to stay away from those candidates who have nothing nice to say about former co-workers and supervisors, opting instead for those job candidates who maintain a professional attitude about others.

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interviewguide

Make sure the eyes have it

Strong eye contact during an interview can make or break your chances of getting the job, says Allison Hemming, president of The Hired Guns, a New York-based workforce agency. Effective eye contact with the interviewer conveys confidence, enthusiasm and trust. Without it, you may come across the wrong way. We asked our CareerBuilder experts to provide advice for demonstrating good eye contact, without appearing hypnotized.

"Human interaction is critical in the workplace," explains Hemming, author of "Work It! How To Get Ahead, Save Your Ass and Land a Job In Any Economy" (Simon & Schuster Adult Publishing Group, \$13). "If you can't look someone in the eye during an interview and have a conversation, then the interviewer will think that you have a problem communicating — or worse, that you're not being truthful with them about your work experiences."

Maintaining strong eye contact doesn't mean you have to stare vacantly at the person interviewing you. Simply thinking of the interview as a conversation with a respected friend can be a bit more relaxing and make you appear less rigid.

Helpful tips

Stanlee Phelps, co-author of "The Assertive Woman" and president and senior master coach at Lee Hecht Harrison, a career services company based in Woodcliff, N.J., has this advice:

- Taking notes gives you a reason to look away without seeming uninterested and is impressive to the employer.
- Nodding in agreement to what is being said or other appropriate changes of expression can help break up the monotonous feel of looking straight at someone for any length of time.
- If more than one person is interviewing you, be sure to turn your attention to each of them at intervals.
- Practice making and maintaining good eye contact with someone before the interview and note any differences in the quality of your communication — are you listening more attentively? Are you conveying more interest and receiving more attention to what you are saying?
- Be yourself. This will put you at ease and help you avoid seeming — and feeling — stiff and unnatural.

Pay attention

"If you have a habit of looking away while listening, it shows lack of interest and a short attention span," says Jeffrey Ory, senior communications strategist for Deveney Communication in New Orleans.

Finding the balance of strong eye contact and comfortable gestures is key. You want the interviewer to feel at ease without compromising your professionalism.

"The fine line is actually what the rest of your body is doing," Ory adds. "Good eye contact should be accompanied by a smile, or else you'll just be staring, which makes most people feel rather uncomfortable."

Ideally, you don't want the interviewer to do all the talking. By staring blankly, you denote that you are uninterested in actively participating in the interview process, thus nixing any chances of getting the job.

"The best interviews are the ones that turn into conversations where each participant volleys questions at the other person and stays engaged," Hemming says. "Be ready with a short list of follow-up questions. You'd be amazed at how a little preparation with the material can improve your confidence and your eye contact."



When candidate and opportunity collide

Although job interviews can be the most intense step of the job process, their function for both the job candidate and human resources professional is pretty basic — to make sure you're a good fit for the position.

"A successful interview is when the applicant's experience, attributes and expectations are successfully matched to the company's position," says Mike Lopez, vice president of human resources for Ivax, a pharmaceuticals company based in Miami.

Tackling a job interview successfully takes preparation, confidence and focus. Here is some advice to help you succeed at your next interview.

■ **Know you're more than halfway there.** You'll get a boost of confidence if you realize that you've already beat out other candidates to get where you are — one of the final steps of the game.

"If you submit your resume and are called in, you are more than halfway there," says Robert Gutierrez, a corporate recruiter for Perry Ellis International, a clothing and accessories company with offices in New York and Miami. "I always tell people to think as though they have the job when they interview. If you have seen the job description and thought you were qualified, and you are called in by the recruiter, you have done all these things right up until now. The only thing left now is the interview."

■ **Research more than you think you need to.** Don't just scan the company's Web site for a few minutes before you leave the house. You'll need a more in-depth understanding of the company to have a successful interview.

"Go onto the corporate Web site. Look at the latest press releases. If you are applying for a financial position, look at the financials of the company. Look at who our competitors are," Gutierrez says. "The effect of this is

that it tells me you are interested in us, that you are prepared and showing a higher level of awareness of our company. One of the questions I always ask is 'How long did you prepare for this interview today?'"

■ **Keep your cool.** Don't let your nerves get to you — your interviewer will watch your interview demeanor for clues to how you might behave in work situations.

"If someone is sitting on their hands or on edge during the interview, I get the immediate sense of their discomfort with the situation," says Alison Hadelburg, a corporate recruiter for San Francisco-area law firms. "You see it more with entry-level positions, because the candidates are much more unsure of themselves. That's why those who speak with confidence are always better off."

■ **Be prepared to talk about yourself.** Don't be afraid to blow your own horn. After all, your job during an interview is to let the company representatives know they can't live without your contributions. Based on your research, try to make sure you connect your talents with the company's needs. You may be asked for specifics regarding your accomplishments and abilities — make sure you are ready to provide them.

"Some of my pet peeves are candidates taking credit for accomplishments that they were not directly responsible for, or not being prepared to articulate specific examples of direct contribution to a project or accomplishment during the interview," Lopez says.

■ **Don't forget the basics.** "Maintain good eye contact, smile, sit up straight and remember to turn off your cell phone. When arriving and leaving, shake the interviewer's hand firmly," says Laurie Casey, director of human resources management for the Benihana restaurant chain. "When leaving, thank the interviewer by name: 'Thank you for your time today, Mr. Smith.' Follow up with a thank-you note."

Careful with the questions

Many people have pre-job interview habits, whether it's taking your lucky suit to the cleaners or simply researching the organization you applied to. Part of that ritual can include anticipating questions an employer is likely to ask and preparing a strong, well-worded response. But what if those questions cross the line into personal territory?

Inappropriate questions during a job interview are more common than you might think. In fact, you may have been asked an illegal question and not even have known it.

"I think it happens more out of ignorance than out of malicious intent," explains BJ Gallagher, organizational consultant and author of "Who Are 'They' Anyway?" (Dearborn Trade Publishing, \$14.95). "So many managers who are in a position to interview and hire people have not had adequate training on how to interview effectively and legally. Not only do they make dumb mistakes and inadvertently ask illegal questions, they also ask questions that don't really tell them whether or not the candidate can do the job!"

Law and order

The legality of these questions depends on the wording that the potential employer uses. For instance, asking, "How old are you?" is illegal, but asking if the candidate is over 18 years old is not. Asking, "Are you a U.S. citizen?" is illegal, but "Are you eligible to work in the U.S.?" is legal.

"Good interviewers describe the position to the applicant and then ask the applicant open-ended questions to determine not only their ability to do the job, but to gauge their character and commitment to the job as well as their ability to communicate," says Mike Wietzychowski, partner of the Philadelphia-based Schnader, Harrison, Segal & Lewis LLP.

Be prepared

Arming yourself with tactful and diplomatic responses to these questions will come in handy.

"One way is to try to address the employer's fear," explains Andrea Kay, career consultant and author of "Greener Pastures: How To Find a Job In Another Place" (St. Martin's Press, \$6.95). "If the employer asks whether you have children, the fear is that you'll be late, call in sick a lot or spend too much time on personal calls. The fear is about your level of commitment and ability to do your job."

To address that fear without making the situation into an issue, Kay suggests saying, "I understand that you would want someone in this position who is committed and flexible. Let me assure you that I am very committed to my work and would not seek to disrupt the business of this company."

Next step

If the employer has asked inappropriate questions and you do not get the job, then it is possible to take legal action, however, those laws differ from state to state.

"You could certainly file suit or file a grievance with the local labor relations board," Gallagher says. "Your grievance would be that you were not hired because of some non-work related issue — like marital status, child-bearing age or sexual orientation — and they got their info by asking illegal questions."

But whether you got the job or not, first ask yourself if it's worth the trouble.

"The best preventative step is to go to an interview fully prepared and earn the job on your merits," Wietzychowski says.