

Job Interviews - 7 First Impression Tips

By Lynda Goldman

A first impression at a job interview can be instantaneous. By the time you walk across the room and shake hands, the interviewer has already formed a first impression of you.

The interviewer has noted your overall appearance, including how you are dressed, the way you carry yourself, your facial expression, and your grooming. Is this a lot to size up in an instant? Of course, but we are visual creatures. We all make these instant judgments when we meet others, whether we are conscious of them or not.

Here are some tips to help you present a polished, professional image.

- **Physical appearance:** Your physical appearance is your visual resume. Interviewers form an impression of you before you have a chance to say anything. Make sure you are appropriately dressed and impeccably groomed.
- **Prepare:** Be prepared so you don't have to search for things under pressure. Have your resume and business cards ready, and a pen and notebook handy.
- **Arrive early.** Plan to arrive about 10 minutes before the interview. Never be late. Allow enough time for unexpected delays such as traffic jams and parking problems. Find out exactly where the office is located, so you have time to get to the 30th floor of an office tower. You'll arrive fresh, rather than stressed and worried about being late.
- **Connect:** When you meet the interviewer, smile, make eye contact, say your name and shake hands. Making eye contact isn't about staring into the interviewer's eyes. It means focusing attention on the person you are speaking to. Don't let your eyes wander around the room, or try to read files on the interviewer's desk.
- **Body language:** Pay attention to your body language. We are often anxious before meeting a potential employer, and our faces may show it. Take a deep breath, try to relax, and remember to smile.
- **Spacing:** Be careful not to take over the interviewer's space. Keep your briefcase or purse on your lap or on the floor beside you. Don't spread your papers over the interviewer's desk.
- **Endings:** At the end of the interview shake hands again and thank the interviewer for taking the time to see you. Send a brief "Thank You" note the next day. It will set you above the crowd.

You are invited to use these tips to make a great impression at a job interview.

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