



The Top 5 Interview Tips No One Mentions

Tips From Recruiters, Hiring Managers and Coaches

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By **MICHELLE GOODMAN**

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By now, we've all heard the same oft-repeated recommendations for acing a job interview: research the company -- and your interviewers -- ahead of time: Study your resume so no one can stump you on its claims. Practice your answers ahead of time. Break the ice by mentioning a hobby, alma mater or former city of residence that you and your interviewer share. Ask plenty of questions. Take notes if you have to. Look sharp. Don't fidget. Ooze enthusiasm. Be polite to receptionists and assistants. Turn off your cell phone. Don't show up drunk, gassy, sweaty or [accompanied by your mom](#). Send a thank-you note after the fact.

But what about the lesser-known interviewing code of conduct? If you're new to job hunting or you've been out of the interviewing loop for a decade or two, you'll likely have countless questions -- for example: How long should my answers be? What should I do with my hands when I'm talking? What emergency provisions should I bring? How can I let them know I'm ready to start on Monday without sounding like a total suck-up?

For insider suggestions, I polled dozens of recruiters, hiring managers and interview coaches. Their top tips follow.

Talk in Bullet Points

"Sometimes the most tricky interview question is 'Tell me a little bit about yourself,'" said Rahul Yoht, an executive recruiter with the firm [Link Legal Search Group](#) in Dallas.

"This is one of the most critical questions in any interview, not only because it is usually one of the first questions asked, but because it is one of the few times in the interview where you can take control," he said. Unfortunately, he added, "It's almost impossible to effectively condense your entire life into a 60- to 90-second response."

To avoid crossing the line between informative

answer and off-the-rails ramble, Yoht recommends "scripting out" your response and rehearsing it aloud until perfect.

"Bullet-point out the four to six areas of your life, mostly professional, that you feel will be important for the interviewer to know about," he explained. "Then refine it to where the answer takes no longer than 60 to 90 seconds to deliver."

Pay Attention to Body Language

There's being animated in the interview, and then there's punctuating every sentence you utter with jazz hands. To strike the right balance, Lisa McDonald of [Career Polish, Inc.](#), a job search consulting firm based in Fishers, Ind., recommends mimicking your interviewer "to make sure your body language does not overpower theirs."

For all the big "hand talkers" out there, McDonald offers this advice: "Put the tip of your middle finger to the tip of your thumb and press your fingernail into the pad of your thumb. This helps you be aware of your hands without being noticeable."

On the flip side, introverts should pay attention to whether they're actually making eye contact with their interviewer -- a must if you want to come across as

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reliable and confident.

"It sounds so basic, but try video-taping a mock interview and see whether or not you are actually comfortable with this," said [Corinne Gregory](#), president of SocialSmarts, a consultancy based in Bellevue, Wash. that helps people hone their social skills. "You'll probably find you are looking around, looking away much more than you think you are."

Fortunately, Gregory has an easy remedy: "Look [your interviewer] in the eyes when you begin a point, then look just below the eyes or to one side of the nose. Finish by looking the person in the eyes again at the end of your statement."

Assemble a Survival Kit

It may sound simple, but if you haven't interviewed in a couple of years, it's all too easy to leave the house without change for the parking meter or any other interviewing essentials. For this reason, experts suggest assembling a survival kit ahead of time and leaving it in your car or briefcase. Among the necessary items:

- Map (or GPS), cash, change and a full tank of gas.
- Bottled water and non-perishable snack in case your interview runs longer than expected.
- Breath mints, toothpicks, deodorant, a spare shirt, stain removal stick, hair brush, lip balm, and any other grooming items you routinely use.
- Tissues and hand sanitizer if you're getting over a cold.
- Pen and notepad so you can take notes and bring along a cheat sheet of interviewer names and titles, questions to ask and those bullet points about your career I mentioned earlier.
- Extra business cards and copies of your resume, references, work samples and any presentations you plan to give.

Ooze Enthusiasm

"I regularly hear of hiring managers who select a less qualified candidate because they liked the person's energy," said Debra Yergen, author of "[Creating Job Security Resource Guide](#)". "They liked their ideas. And they liked their enthusiasm. It's one of the top influencers in an interview."

Of course, when you've been interviewing for 6, 12 or 18 months, putting on a happy face is sometimes easier said than done. If you fall into this camp, Yergen has a suggestion: "Listen to a song or look at a picture or provide yourself a prop that you know will make you smile, laugh and feel good. Use that prop right before the interview and you won't believe the difference it will make."

Those hard-pressed to find a happiness prop might try envisioning that stack of past-due bills on their kitchen table all paid off. That ought to tease out a genuine smile.

End with a Zinger

Closing the interview can be tough. You want to let the hiring manager know you're excited about the position and you want to ask -- without sounding desperate -- when you can expect to hear from them next. But you also need to punctuate the meeting with a lasting positive impression.

One way to do so is to close with a question that shows you're already thinking about how you'll succeed in this new position. Alison Green, a management consultant in Washington, D.C. who writes the blog [Ask a Manager](#), recommends this one: "Thinking back to people who have been in this position previously, what differentiated the ones who were good from the ones who were really great?"

"This question excites managers because it signals

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that you care about being not just good, but truly great," Green explained. Even better, she said, "They've generally never heard anyone ask it before." *Michelle Goodman is a freelance writer and former cubicle dweller. Her books include "My So-Called Freelance Life: How to Survive and Thrive as a Creative Professional for Hire" and "The Anti 9-to-5 Guide: Practical Career Advice for Women Who Think Outside the Cube." Follow her at @anti9to5guide.*



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