

Six steps to a better job interview

By Peter Bowes BBC News, Los Angeles

Dress appropriately, be on time and don't lie: three of the key steps for a successful job interview

In today's world of social networks a face-to-face interview can seem outdated, but online resources can help you ace the interview and land the job, especially if mixed with some old-fashioned common-sense advice.

1. "On time is 15 minutes early"

Interview day is not the day to sleep in and miss the train.

"You never should be late for an interview," says Lauren Ferarra, a recruiter with Creative Circle, a US staffing agency in New York.

"On time is 15 minutes early. If you're more than 15 minutes early, you're going to be waiting around a while and it comes off a little sketchy. So 15 minutes early, non-negotiable, you should be in the building ready to go."

2. "This is not the time to wing it"

Try to anticipate the questions by re-reading the job description and seeing what questions they might prompt.

"To do a good job you really need to know who you're talking to," says Kristy Stromberg, of the online jobs listing site SimplyHired.com.

"Do your research on the company and the person who is interviewing you. This is not the time to wing it. You're not gambling, you're selling."

Candidates should rehearse succinct answers to questions such as "Tell me about yourself" and "What are your goals?" - the responses should be relevant to the position on offer.

"You will be asked questions about your experience. Anticipate what the company is looking for. Who do they want to hire and what types of problems are they trying to solve?"

How should you present yourself at a face-to-face interview? Peter Bowes reports

3. "People really underestimate smiling"

First impressions are vital to making a lasting impact on an interviewer. Being personable and friendly speaks volumes.

"I think the handshake and the eye contact are incredibly important and a smile," says Ms Ferarra.

"People really underestimate smiling and having that personality. You tend to be so nervous and tight in an interview, and you really want to come off and show that you are someone they want to work with."

4. Nerve control

Do clothes and shiny shoes matter?

Lisa Johnson Mandell, author of Career Comeback, says:

"Shoes are very important to the way they make you feel. I advise women to get a pair of power heels. It makes them feel really confident. They have to be comfortable for walking. From a man's perspective, when you wear a nice pair of shoes you walk more confidently."

Lauren Ferarra, recruiter with Creative Circle, says:

"You should be dressed appropriately. If you are interviewing for something in the fashion world, you should be trendy and fashion-forward. If you are interviewing in a creative world, you shouldn't be afraid to show some personality in your wardrobe. If you're interviewing in more of a corporate environment, you should be a little bit more buttoned-up and polished."

Even the best-prepared candidate can feel the jitters on interview day. Michael Weiss, a public speaking coach, says it is important that people focus on their voice to avoid sounding nervous.

"You can have a lot of adrenalin running through your body and that's when you get the wavering voice. Practise questions out loud. Do some breathing exercises, calm down and just focus," he says.

Dealing with a prickly interviewer can also be unnerving.

"You need to read the personality of the person that you are interviewing with. If they're very staid and very buttoned-up, you probably want to be a little succinct and short with your answers and mirror their personality."

As the process gets under way, the jobseeker should allow the interviewer to lead the conversation. But it should be a two-way process, says Ms Ferarra.

"Don't be afraid to jump in and ask questions as the conversation is flowing. Don't feel you need to save them all to the end."

5. Don't lie

"In today's world of LinkedIn and other social networks, it's very easy for someone to do a back-channel reference," says Ms Stromberg.

"That is, speak to people they know through a common network to check out your story. They can consult people that you have not offered up as a reference to see if you really do what you said you did. You want to make sure that story and your message is consistent."

6. Say "thank you"

Once it is all over, the only thing left to do is send an email or written note to the interviewer. According to Ms Ferarra, it is hugely important to leave a good impression.

"Make sure you get that person's card. Follow up with an email, a thank-you, and they'll remember that in the long run."