



REAL WORLD 101

ETIQUETTE|PROTOCOL

WORK ETHIC

New employees, fresh out of college, can either rebel or they can attempt to understand and adjust to the demands of the new work environment. Achieving success in your first job requires learning what your manager values. The following tips will give you some insight into the mindset of the typical manager and help you relate to your new boss more effectively, plus give you the perspective you need to succeed in the workplace.

Be Patient With Your Progress.... You've grown up with speed and you're used to getting what you want quickly. Consequently, you may expect raises and promotions to come equally fast. While it's true that too much patience leads to exploitation, your version of patience may differ from your manager's. You may not be able to come right out of school and jump straight up to the top. There are dues to pay in any profession, and you may have to spend some time in the minor leagues before advancing to the majors. Companies are seeking new hires who are more content with slower upward progress.

Pay Your Dues.... Don't think of paying dues as suffering. Think of paying dues as developing appreciation while learning the ropes. Managers believe that you not only need the skills but the seasoning before being promoted. To veterans, there's no substitute for time and experience. Maintain a good attitude about learning new things and be willing to invest the time it takes to become proficient. You'll also learn to appreciate what it takes to do a job well and to make better decisions.

Be More Achievement-Oriented... Complete every assignment you're given, regardless of whether it leads to more pay or promotion. Be more results-oriented. Display a sense of urgency. Finish what you begin. Don't procrastinate. Strive to achieve all your goals all the time in a first job. Even with routine tasks, never let work stack up and never postpone a project.

Stop Watching The Clock.... Nothing bugs managers more than knowing employees want to leave exactly at quitting time. If you never arrive a minute early or never leave a minute late and complain about cutting short a lunch hour or working an occasional evening or weekend, you'll be branded a slacker. Even taking all your sick days, although you may be entitled to them, is another sign that you are not serious about work.

Fun Isn't Everything.... While many young employees believe that work should be fun, many daily assignments can in fact be routine and boring. In reality, no job is 100% fun, and fun shouldn't be the sole measure of a job's value. You have to start somewhere, sometimes doing things that may be unpleasant. Veteran managers believe the career fitness philosophy: no pain, no gain. Ask anyone to name a meaningful accomplishment and they'll likely identify a tough, rather than a fun endeavor.



BEYOND KNOWLEDGE & SKILL

When asked to identify the criteria used to rate good employees, employers generally point to three general areas... Knowledge... Skill... Attitude.

Every candidate who has received any kind of training or education possesses knowledge. Most candidates who have had the opportunity to apply their knowledge, and gain some experience, have developed some level of skill.

Beyond knowledge and skill, employers also seek another rarer trait... attitude. Attitude encompasses a range of personal traits that may or may not have come from one's acquisition of knowledge or exposure to training, or from one's professional experience or impressive skill set. Attitude is about work ethic, dedication, dependability, responsibility, a sense of initiative, and a collection of traits related to effective interpersonal skills. A positive work attitude includes flexibility, adaptability, cooperation, teamwork, and a service orientation. The mindset of the candidate who possesses a positive attitude is one that seeks to go beyond the call of duty and performs above expectations.

CAREER SUCCESS

Consider these comments from Bradley Richardson, author of *JobSmarts for Twentysomethings*:

What separates the winners from the losers? What will it take for you to stand above the rest and succeed in your career? Do you think that your degree, limited work experience, and charm will make you the most desirable employee in the world? The days of just getting by on your degree are over. You need a lot more than good grades, experience, and an impressive resume to make it. There are certain skills that you won't find in class. You won't find them in the syllabus of life, and you must have them to make it today.

C+ doesn't cut it in the real world. The days of doing only what it takes to get by, or doing things less than 100 percent, are gone. Think of business as a giant pass/fail class. You must be exceptional. Doing just enough to get by or only what is asked of you is a major reflection on your work. Keep that up and you won't get very far. You must go above and beyond. You cannot afford to turn in late, incomplete, or sloppy work. You cannot afford to not return phone calls promptly. And you definitely can't afford to make excuses.



The self-motivated individual looks for projects on their own, and doesn't always have to be told what to do. These individuals are recognized first and viewed as exceptional.

Average performers don't stay around very long. There are millions of young, educated, talented, and hungry people who need work. And if you think you are secure by only doing enough to get by and collecting a paycheck, you are sadly mistaken. Everyone is expendable.

There's no place in your career for mediocrity, procrastination, sloppiness, or not paying attention to details. The competition is too tough. What makes an A+ performance? Doing more than is asked of you. Making the extra effort and seeing that the job is completed thoroughly. Taking the initiative and not waiting for someone to tell you what to do. And, most of all, doing it with a smile.

Become a Renaissance person. The most successful people are those who are well-rounded and know a little bit about a lot of things. Having interest in or knowledge of a wide range of subjects makes you a more marketable and interesting person.

Success in business revolves around communication. The better you communicate, the more success you will achieve. Polish your grammar. Make a conscious effort to clean up your speech and communicate more clearly. Improve your vocabulary.

ETIQUETTE TIPS

"Good manners at the workplace are associated with competence. Likewise, sloppy manners are equated with lack of ability."
-BETTY CRAIG (*Don't Slurp Your Soup*)

Through good etiquette and proper protocol, you can present yourself in a polished and professional manner and feel confident and comfortable. Know proper etiquette so that you won't feel awkward or embarrass yourself or others. Good manners reflect courtesy, respect, and thoughtfulness.

Initiate greetings. Introduce yourself. Be friendly and affable. Smile. Shake hands. Have a kind word. Give a compliment. Give sincere praise.

Learn to use a handshake comfortably and confidently. Become accustomed to making proper introductions ("Anna Smith, I'd like to introduce Frank Jones, my business associate. Frank, this is Anna Smith, my client from Atlanta.").

Use formal titles in addressing supervisors, clients and professional associates unless told otherwise. Among the most important phrases you'll ever use are, "Please," "Thank you," and "I apologize."

In work settings, be observant and take cues from the staff regarding dress and behavior. Learn the corporate culture. Learn the rules of the organization. Put your best self forward. Earn a good favorable reputation.

Respond to RSVPs promptly. Call ahead to notify of cancellation when you can't meet an appointment. Send timely thank-you notes after interviews, social events, good deeds and gifts.



BAD BEHAVIOR

Embarrassing moments occur when proper behavior or protocol are not observed. Professional behavior is conduct that is polite, appropriate and mature. Making a good impression counts. To insure you will be taken seriously, treated with respect and regarded as a professional, there are certain behaviors you should avoid in a work setting.

Prejudice - The marketplace is global. The workplace is diverse. To be effective in today's society means being tolerant of others' differences. Avoid disparaging comments, malicious remarks, and even jokes.

Sexism - Sexist comments, suggestive remarks, unwanted advances, flirtatious behavior or degrading nicknames are inappropriate in a professional setting.

Gossip - Many things in a work setting are confidential. Employees possessing privileged or sensitive information should be discreet. Don't air "dirty laundry" or pass on rumors. Don't criticize co-workers or supervisors. Don't share details of your private life. Don't get involved in office politics. Don't discuss controversial or debatable subjects.

Fraternization - It is smart not to date people you work with. In management positions, avoid nepotism and favoritism by not hiring family and friends.

Drugs - Don't risk your career to drug use, on or off the job. Be careful with alcohol. Don't ever come to work intoxicated. Even outside the office, don't drink excessively in front of people whose respect you need.

Profanity - Profane or obscene language, dirty jokes, and insulting remarks can be offensive and should be avoided. Also, refrain from poor grammar and street slang.

Laxity - Image, attire and demeanor should be professional. Dress and act in a manner appropriate to the setting.

PROFESSIONAL BEHAVIOR

Professional behaviour is a form of etiquette in the workplace that is linked primarily to respectful and courteous conduct. Many organisations will have a formal code of professional conduct in place, but many do not. Believe it or not, professionalism and ethical behaviour can benefit your career and improve your chances of future success.

Being conscious of how you treat co-workers and clients, and ensuring a positive workplace attitude can help you to improve your productivity and effectiveness in the workplace. In general, professional behaviour comes down to ethics and dedication. Although possessing the necessary skills to do your job effectively is essential, having an understanding of what constitutes professional behaviour will help you develop your own high standard of work habits that could contribute to future career success. Here are our 12 tips:

1. **Honesty:** always act openly. Never share confidential, privileged or client information unnecessarily, and don't tolerate or justify dishonest conduct by others. Report any conflicts of interest immediately.
2. **Respect:** maintain a respectful attitude to others at all times, even during stressful times. Don't lash out at colleagues or disrespect anyone (senior or otherwise). Always use appropriate language (verbally and in writing) and don't swear. Apologise for errors or misunderstandings, and keep your personal opinions of others private.

3. Meetings: arrive on time and be prepared by reviewing the agenda or meeting notes in advance. Make contributions to discussions where appropriate, and don't take over when someone else is trying to talk. Respect the meeting convenor or chair, follow the appropriate format, and ask considerate questions.



4. Communication: speak clearly and in language others can easily understand, act courteously and use good manners when engaging with others. Follow any company guidelines regarding content, read information provided before asking questions, listen to others when they are talking or explaining, and don't engage in office gossip. Be careful of language and tone in written communications, and don't copy in others unnecessarily when emailing (but don't intentionally exclude others either).

5. Time Management: don't be late to work, instead arrive a few minutes early to settle, get your coffee and greet co-workers. Follow lunch and break schedules by leaving and returning on time. At the beginning of every day, review your schedule so you know what time you have to be where, and what workload you have on that day.

6. Integrity: act ethically and do the 'right' thing at all times, always report suspicious people in the office, misconduct, or other violations of company policy. Remain impartial keeping any personal bias and intolerances out of the workplace.

7. Safety: understand the company safety policy and report any maintenance or other hazards immediately.

8. Corporate Goals: have an understanding of your company's missions, goals and objectives and the role that you play in achieving those.



9. Dress: dress in clean, appropriate clothing. Follow any dress code standards or guidelines and if there aren't any, avoid clothing that is revealing, provocative, or includes offensive language or pictures.

10. Accountability: take responsibility for your work and actions, do what needs to be done, and don't leave it for others. Be honest if things go wrong, or you don't finish something on time, then work out an effective resolution to move forward. Seek help early if you need it.

11. Teamwork: you often need to work with people that you may not necessarily like. Set aside differences to work well with others since teamwork sometimes even outweighs performance – with people who work well with others often advancing based on that aspect.

12. Commitment: dedication and a positive action to your role and the organisation can carry you a long way. Plus, dedication from employees is often contagious with others being inspired to go the extra effort themselves.

Essentially, being professional is about giving your best at all times. Think about how your behaviour will be perceived by others and make sure to understand and follow company codes of conduct where they exist.



SOCIAL ACUMEN

Companies seek to hire candidates who not only possess the proper qualifications but also fit into the culture of the corporation. Are you one of us? While competency counts, the ability to get along with people makes a great difference in the workplace. Do you fit in here? Can we work with you? The most successful people in any work setting are those who have earned a reputation for being easy to work with. Relationships are critical to success. Strong interpersonal skills, a cooperative attitude, and a collaborative spirit aid in establishing one's credibility in a professional environment.

An understanding of professional behavior, social protocol, conversation skills, and business etiquette can be as valuable to you as your credentials. Be aware of the subtle nuances that exist in the social interactions and small talk that take place at receptions, retreats, conventions, cocktail parties, and other such events.

Typically, in an effort to foster good relationships with co-workers, colleagues and clients, finding common ground or shared interests is vital. Business is oftentimes transacted over lunch or dinner or in any number of other social settings. Deals are made on the golf course. Colleagues might be talking business while drinking coffee, sharing drinks, playing cards, attending a sporting event, or engaged in some recreational or community activity.

When mixing business with leisure, you can relax and be personable, but try to maintain a professional attitude. The event is not really about eating or golfing. The focus is on business. The recreational or social activity is simply the catalyst. Be gracious and accommodating.

And here are some conversation tips... Learn people's names. Display genuine interest in the other person's activities. Ask questions. Don't be self-centered. Don't dominate the conversation. Be a good listener. Be careful with small talk. Be discreet. Keep comments neutral and generic. Be careful with jokes and humor. Avoid offensive, sensitive or provocative subjects. Don't talk about politics or religion.



PROFESSIONAL ATTIRE

Your personal appearance is of great importance to the job interview process. The image that you present through your personal appearance creates an impression in the mind of the interviewer. Your personal appearance is determined by dress, grooming, and hygiene.

The phrase "dress for success" means that you project a professional and positive image by wearing appropriate attire to the job interview. Regardless of your career field, appropriate interview outfits generally favor a mature, conservative, understated, and executive look. Wear clothing that is consistent with and will appeal to the culture of the company. Proper interview clothing is what can best be described as corporate or business attire.

How you dress for the interview will depend to some extent on the job for which you are applying. Dress one step above what you would actually wear on the job. You should neither underdress nor overdress for an interview. Avoid sporty, cute, or casual looks. Avoid styles that are too revealing or provocative. Generally, wedding or prom attire is considered too dressy. Clothing should always be impeccably crisp, cleaned, pressed, and in good condition. Fabrics should be of a good quality.

SUITABLE CLOTHING

Both men and women should choose a simple, conservative business suit for their next job interview. Women's suits should more typically be skirt suits. Women in certain career fields may elect to wear a pants suit or a tailored dress.

Good suit colors for men and women are navy, gray, charcoal, or black. Also taupe or pewter shades for women. Favor a classic, rather than trendy, look. Solid, dark colors are better than prints. Avoid pastel, bold, or bright colors. Muted plaids or pin-stripes are acceptable. Skirts that reach the bottom of the knee or longer are appropriate.

Shirts and blouses generally should be a solid, neutral color. Men's shirts should be white, beige, or pale blue.

Women's blouses should be white, beige, or red. For women's blouses, most solid, neutral colors will work.



LOOK IMPRESSIVE

The sharp, bold, impressive look that is sometimes referred to as the “power” look is achieved with contrasting, rather than matching or blending colors. Striking contrasts can be created by mixing a dark suit with a pale shirt and a bold tie. When choosing color combinations, consider the effect created by such contrasts as:

navy suit / white shirt / red tie
gray suit / white shirt / gold tie

Keep jewelry simple and to a minimum. One ring and a watch. The watch should be of good quality. Women's earrings should be a simple stud type. No dangling earrings or clanky bracelets.

Shoes and socks should coordinate with your suit. Women should select pump-style shoes with a 1 or 2 inch heel in a shade that coordinates with the suit. Women should always wear hosiery. Men should wear mid-calf or over-the-calf socks the color of the trousers.

ACCESSORIES

Bold is the best advice when choosing a tie. Red is the best color for men's ties. Tie patterns should be subtle. Avoid patterns that are artsy, novel, or asymmetrical. Small even patterns or stripes that coordinate with your suit will work best. The tip of the tie should barely touch the top of the belt buckle. Women's neckware is crucial: a broach, pearls, a pin, a rosette, a bow, or a tie.

Belts should match shoes. Black or cordovan (burgundy) leather is best for men and women. Also, navy, taupe, or deep brown for women. All leather accessories should match. Accessories to carry should be simple and compact. A leather folder, portfolio, or small clutch purse is enough. Bring a good quality pen. Do not carry a briefcase. Travel light.

GROOMING

Be fresh and clean. Avoid cologne, aftershave, or perfume. Makeup should be light and natural. Fingernails should be cleaned and trimmed. Clear or no fingernail polish is best. Hair should be trimmed, clean, combed, and neatly styled. Long hair should be pulled back away from your face. Hide tattoos and body piercings.

DRESSING FOR THE INTERVIEW

Always wear clean and neat clothing; make sure it is pressed. Nothing will turn an interviewer off more than an outfit that looks like it's been sitting in your laundry hamper since your last job interview.

Wear deodorant or antiperspirant. 'Nuff said about that? Use little or no perfume or cologne. You want to smell good, but not overpowering. Also, more and more people find they are allergic to perfumes and colognes. You don't want to make the interviewer break out in a rash!

Have fresh breath and clean teeth. Have clean, recently cut, and neatly brushed hair.

If possible, before your interview find out how people dress at the place of employment. Dress as well or a little better ("one up"). But be careful, as overdressing may also turn the interviewer off.



Overview for Men

For business, public contact and customer service positions, wear a suit jacket, dress pants, shirt and tie, socks and polished shoes. Avoid loud colors.

For positions with less public contact, wear a sports jacket or a sweater, a shirt with a collar, dress pants (skip the jeans or sweat pants), and polished shoes.

Facial hair should be clean-shaven or neatly-trimmed.



Overview for Women

Go easy on makeup and fingernail polish -- avoid unusual colors, too heavy an application and extremely long nails.

Simple clothes and quiet colors are most suitable. Very tight clothes, see-through tops and short skirts should be avoided. Low-heeled shoes are best for professional, office, sales, public contact and customer service jobs.

Clothing and accessories do not have to be expensive to make a good impression, but they should always be in good taste and clean. They should also be toned down rather than wild or extravagant. You want the interviewer's attention to be focused on you, not on your clothes.

What to Take to the Interview

There are some essential things you will want to take along with you when you go for a job interview. For example, it's just common sense to take a pen and paper with you in case you have to write something down. But you don't want to take too much along either. The interviewer won't be impressed if you have to rummage through a backpack full of junk for 10 minutes to find that pen and paper. The fewer things you have to set down or move around, the better.

The best advice is to carry with you a small folder that contains: Copies of your resumé, to give to the interviewer at the start of the interview and for your own reference during the interview; Copies of letters of recommendation, and a typed reference sheet to be given to the interviewer; Other material relevant to the interview; Pen and paper, so that you can note the name of the interviewer, times for future interviews and other pertinent information.



General Tips

It is vital to wear the proper attire to an interview because the impression you make within the first thirty seconds will affect the duration of the interview. The following are some tips to help you "look the part." The safest look for both men and women in an interview is traditional and conservative. It is also important to dress for the position you want, not the one you have. It is always better to dress too conservatively than not conservatively enough. If possible, find out the dress code of the company you are visiting by asking someone in personnel about the dress code. Good hygiene is vital when wanting to make a good impression. Therefore, watch for bad breath, dandruff, body odor, and dirty, unmanicured nails.

Tips for Men

SUITS: The best colors for suits are navy, and charcoal through light gray. Brown is also acceptable. Avoid wearing a black suit to an interview. A two piece suit is preferable.

SHIRTS: Always wear a long-sleeved shirt that is white, cream, or pale-blue, preferably a solid color without stripes.

TIES: The tie should complement your suit, but not match it. The width of your tie should be between 2 ¾" and 3 ½". The tie should extend to your trouser belt, the size of the knot should be small, and never wear a bow tie.

SHOES: Shoes should be either black, burgundy or brown leather.

SOCKS: Socks should complement the suit, either blue, black, gray, or brown.

ACCESSORIES: Avoid wearing religious or political insignias. The watch you wear should be plain and simple. Belts should match and complement the shoes you wear. If you carry a briefcase, a leather one is your best bet. Preferably, you may want to carry a leather or leather looking notebook to hold copies of your resume and for note taking.

JEWELRY: Minimize your jewelry. A wedding band and a small pair of cuff links are appropriate. Anything else and you will be over doing it.

Tips for Women

SUITS: A solid, pinstripe, or plaid suit is best. A conservative pants suit, or a skirt with a coordinating solid black or navy jacket is also appropriate. Colors most suitable for an interview include charcoal, medium gray, steel gray, black, and navy blue. The skirt should be no shorter than 2" above the knee. A one-piece business dress with a matching jacket is also acceptable interview attire.

BLOUSES: Blouses should be solid in color, preferably white or cream.

SHOES: Shoes should be leather. The best colors to wear are black, brown, navy, and nude. Stay away from multicolored shoes.

ACCESSORIES: If you carry a briefcase, do not carry a purse. Or carry a leather or leather looking notebook to hold resumes and take notes. Belts should complement or match the shoes you wear.

JEWELRY: When it comes to jewelry, less is more. Minimize the number of rings that you wear, possibly only an engagement ring or wedding bands. Wearing a necklace and earrings are acceptable as long as they are subdued. A bracelet is also acceptable.

MAKEUP: Natural is the key word concerning makeup. Your eye makeup, blush and lipstick should be subtle.



BUSINESS CASUAL

For social events and other after-hours activities hosted by employers, students are encouraged to dress appropriately. First impressions are always important. The typical dress code for such events is “business casual.”

In general:

Business casual is classic not trendy. It is not cocktail or club attire. It is not playful, sporty, or cutesy. Business casual is mature and understated. It favors a crisp, clean, and neat, look.

For men:

Open-collared shirts or knit polo or golf style shirts. Twill or oxford button-down shirts. Dress pants or khaki Dockers-style slacks. Sport coat, vest, or sweater. Coordinating accessories.

For women:

Appropriate dress, pantsuit or slacks, Acceptable-length skirt. Casual blouse or knit top. Coordinating accessories.

Please avoid:

Jeans of any color or any denim apparel. Shorts, leggings, stretch pants, miniskirts, cargo pants, and overalls. Clothing that is too revealing or provocative, including bareback clothing and clothing with exposed cleavage or plunging necklines. Low cut pants or short shirts that expose the stomach. Exercise, sports, or beach apparel. Athletic shoes, sneakers, hiking boots, flip-flops, or sandals. Tee shirts, tank tops, and midriff tops. Clothing with words, slogans or big flashy logos. Hats or any headgear. Worn or dirty apparel.

Grooming:

Be fresh and clean. Avoid cologne, aftershave, or perfume. Makeup should be light and natural. Fingernails should be cleaned and trimmed, clear fingernail polish is best. Hair should be trimmed, clean, combed, and neatly styled. Long hair should be pulled back away from your face. Hide tattoos and body piercings.



THE JOB INTERVIEW

A job interview is a presentation, a performance, and an audition. If you are granted an interview, it means you have successfully grabbed the attention of an employer who has decided to meet with you in person, face-to-face. The employer has some idea that you might be qualified for the job, otherwise he would not be committing valuable time to seeing you.

EMPLOYER'S NEEDS

Approach your interview from the employer's perspective. It is important that you focus only on relevant traits and attributes. You should tailor your presentation so as to emphasize your specific qualifications as they relate to the requirements of the job in question. Target all of your comments and remarks to the employer's concerns. Put yourself in the employer's shoes.

Keep focused on what you can do for the employer rather than what the employer can do for you. Keep in mind the specific needs, interests, values, and biases of the employer. Address the issues that you know the employer cares about. Match your qualifications to their needs. Make your comments employer-centered rather than self-centered. Speak the employer's language. Be sure all your statements answer the underlying most important underlying question: "What can you do for me?"

PREPARATION

Do your homework. Prepare in advance for your job interview by doing some in-depth research. Gather useful information about the employer. Be informed and knowledgeable about the company and the job.

Plan ahead. Organize and outline your main ideas in advance. Determine your key qualifications. Spell out specific details of your background and credentials and commit to memory the major points of your presentation.

Rehearse your presentation by conducting a mock interview. Practice formulating and expressing your responses.

PRESENTATION

Dress appropriately. Arrive on time. Maintain good eye contact. Observe proper protocol and good etiquette. Use proper grammar. Offer a solid handshake. Be alert. Listen carefully.

Bring along a portfolio containing a collection of impressive examples of your work, letters of reference, and awards. Bring extra copies of your resume.

PERFORMANCE

Relate a few relevant stories, testimonials, or anecdotal examples as a way of providing supportive evidence of your skills and abilities. Telling stories also allows you the opportunity to communicate positive feelings and emotions, a sense of enthusiasm, pride, and dedication.

Ask appropriate questions. Prepare a few good solid questions in advance. Don't ask about salary and benefits. Ask questions that reflect your professional attitude and motivation. Express an interest in wanting to learn more about the company.

The goal of an interview is to get a job offer. The purpose of the interview is to determine whether you are the right fit for the job. Your interview, then, will be as much about your personality and attitude as it will be about your qualifications and credentials.

To be successful in a job interview means putting your "best self" forward. Preparing for an interview involves sharpening your communication skills, anticipating certain questions, projecting confidence, maintaining a positive attitude, displaying enthusiasm, emphasizing your best attributes, expressing your personality, and creating a good first impression. It is important to stress your skills, abilities, and strengths. You must clearly and confidently communicate your accomplishments and achievements.

WRAP UP

At the end of the interview, make a closing statement. In that statement, you can express gratitude for the interview and summarize your main points. Indicate how your qualifications match the needs of the company. State confidently your assertion that you can make a worthwhile contribution to the company. And then, finally, ask for the job.

Always send a follow-up letter immediately after the interview as a way of thanking the employer and reiterating your interest in the job.

"I've met individuals who have saved lives, built nations, or unlocked the mysteries of the universe... and the most easily observable thread which connected these persons was their ability to present well in a job interview."

-WINSTON CHURCHILL

"The core message about interviewing is that you have to do a good job of selling yourself. Through your appearance, demeanor, and the way you answer questions, you have to convince the interviewer that you possess the skills and personal attributes necessary to be successful in the job."

-MAX MESSMER

"A job interview is a business meeting between a job candidate and one or more interviewers. The purpose is to determine whether a match exists between what the company requires and what the candidate offers."

-JOHN LA FEVRE

"It is not the person who is the most qualified that gets the job. The person who gets the job is the one who interviews best"

-EDWARD SULLIVAN

"Everything you do in a job campaign will be wasted if you don't convert interviews into job offers. Be informed about potential employers. Control your interviews. And tailor your communications and the image you project to what each firm is seeking."

-ROBERT JAMESON GERBERG

INTERVIEW PREPARATION

PLAN AHEAD

It is vital to your presentation that you prepare in advance. Being prepared for a job interview will help you to feel more comfortable with the process and more confident in yourself. It is important that you project a sense of confidence that arises from good solid advanced planning and thorough preparation.

RESEARCH

Prepare for your job interview by conducting in-depth research. Gather useful background information and data about the company you intend to interview with. Learn as much as you can about the employer. Be informed about the job. You must present yourself as knowledgeable of their business, their market, their customers, their competition, their product, and their line of work.

Do your homework. Where can this valuable information be obtained? The public library, chamber of commerce, business publications, industrial guides, company literature, annual reports, employee handbooks, magazine articles, and on the company's website.

MAIN IDEAS

Know who you are and what you have to offer. Know the qualifications for the job. Know your sales pitch by heart. Plan your spiel in advance.

Determine your key qualifications. Identify your unique strengths, abilities, and skills. Write them down. Learn them. Organize and outline your main ideas in advance. Commit to memory the major points of your presentation.

Compose a list your traits accordingly:

Your knowledge, including education, training, degrees, and certifications
Your experience, including all relevant employment and activities
Your relevant or transferable skills
Your personality traits or soft skills
Your goals and motivations

SHOW & TELL

It is recommended that candidates carry a leather portfolio to the interview. In it you can store extra copies of your resume, your reference list (or reference letters), and perhaps a copy of your college transcript. Also, the portfolio should contain blank paper to jot down any notes.

If appropriate for your particular field, also prepare a presentation portfolio containing a collection of impressive examples of your work, your resume, letters of reference, and awards. A presentation portfolio is a tangible collection of artifacts and samples that will help your interview come alive. You should refer to it (using it like a prop) during the interview, flipping to specific pages and pointing out specific examples.

ATTITUDE

Throughout the job interview, the successful candidate will seek to project an acceptable image to the interviewer. Additionally, it is critical to exhibit the right attitude and personality. Since the interview process tends to be subjective and personal, all preparation in this regard involves five simple attitudinal principles... Be respectful... Be relevant... Be confident... Be positive... Be genuine.

STORYTIME

Recall a few relevant stories you can tell during the interview and compile a list of these stories beforehand. These well-chosen stories or anecdotal examples should reflect your past experience, set you in a positive light, and provide supportive evidence of your skills and abilities.

Many interviews will ask content-based or scenario-based questions so as to solicit stories from you. They may say, "Tell about a time when..." or "Give me an example of..."

Also, telling a story allows you the opportunity to communicate positive emotions and feelings, a sense of enthusiasm, pride, and dedication about your work. Telling stories makes you more memorable to the interviewer.

QUESTIONS

It is important that you ask questions during the interview. Ask the kind of questions that indicate your interest in the company. Ask job-related questions or questions related to your functions and performance. Ask questions that reflect your professional attitude and motivation. Don't ask self-centered or self-serving questions. Don't ask about salary or benefits. Compile a list of questions beforehand.

REHEARSAL

To alleviate any stress and to achieve some level of personal comfort, it is suggested that you practice your presentation. Physically rehearse what you will say in the interview. Conduct a mock interview. Anticipate questions you will be asked. Practice formulating and expressing your responses.

BAD INTERVIEWS

Employers have indicated many possible reasons why job interviews fail... Poor personal appearance, bad grooming, weak handshake, no eye contact, bad grammar, lack of energy, arriving late, poor social skills, being sarcastic, being too familiar, negative attitude, too talkative, quirky mannerisms, unprepared, unfocused, disorganized, too casual, lack of courtesy or protocol, too nervous or shy, excuse-making, too conceited, too aggressive or overbearing, lack of maturity, lack of confidence, self-centered.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Preparing for a job interview involves anticipating the questions employers are likely to ask. It also involves rehearsing what you will say by practicing the manner in which you formulate and express your responses. A big part of your success in the interview will be based on how well you answered the questions. Consider the following list of possible interview questions and think about how you might answer them.

FOR STARTERS

Tell me about yourself?
How would you describe yourself?
Why should I hire you?

SAMPLE QUESTIONS

Why did you decide to seek employment with our company?
What do you know about our company?
What do you think it takes to be successful with our company?
What do you see yourself doing in five years?
What are your long-range career plans?
Why did you choose this occupation?
What do you consider to be your major strengths?
Name one of your greatest accomplishments?
How have your past experiences prepared you for future success?
What have you learned from your participation in extra-curricular activities?
In what ways do you think you can make a worthwhile contribution to our company?
How have other people described you?
What are you looking for in the ideal job?
What really motivates you to perform?
How do you determine or evaluate success?

CONTENT QUESTIONS

Be prepared to answer content questions related to your field of expertise. You may be asked about your philosophy or theoretical methodology. You may be asked your opinion of critical issues in your field. You may be given a scenario and asked what you would do in a particular situation. You may be presented with a problem and asked to solve it. You may be asked to tell a story.

Tell me about a time when you...
Give me an example of...
What would you do if...

BE CAREFUL

Be cautious in answering questions that call for discussion of potentially negative subjects.

What do you consider to be your major weaknesses or areas for improvement?
Why did you leave your last employer?
How do you handle yourself in a conflict?
How do you deal with criticism?
How well do you work under pressure?
What have you learned from your mistakes?
Tell me about the worst supervisor you ever worked for.
How would you handle a disgruntled customer?
Have you ever been fired from a job?
Have you ever been arrested?

QUESTIONS TO ASK

When it's your turn to ask questions in the interview, you should be prepared with a few good solid ones. Your questions should indicate your interest in the company and the job. Ask job-related questions or questions related to your functions and performance. Ask questions that reflect your professional attitude and motivation.

Don't ask self-centered or self-serving questions. Don't ask about salary or benefits. Don't ask questions that might tend to challenge or embarrass the interviewer. Your interviewer is not your sparring partner.

What will my responsibilities be?
What will I be doing in a typical work day?
Where does this position fit in the overall organization?
What role will I play in helping the company achieve its goals?

How do you see me complementing the existing organization?
What are the most important qualifications for this position?
What will my priorities be?
What are the first projects to be addressed?
What are the major problems to be tackled?
What kind of leadership responsibilities will I have?
What kind of feedback will I receive from my supervisor?
How will my performance be evaluated?
What kind of training will I receive?
What professional development programs are available?
What are the prospects for advancement?
To whom will I be reporting?
What are the company's mission and goals?
What is unique about the way your company operates?
Who are the company's major competitors?
Who are your major customers?
What plans for expansion does the company anticipate?
What new endeavors is the company actively pursuing?
What current trends affect company growth and progress?

BODY LANGUAGE

Posture, eye contact, and other nonverbal communication can speak volumes about your feelings and attitudes. Here's how to impress hiring managers with mannerisms that project confidence and enthusiasm.

Before a job interview, do you peruse magazines or review prepared notes? When the meeting begins, do you wait to be told where to sit or choose your own chair? And do you give passionately expressive or carefully controlled responses?

In each of these instances, your body language speaks volumes about how you'd perform at a company. In fact, some experts say nonverbal cues are more important than verbal ones. According to these studies, body language comprises 55% of the force of any response, whereas the verbal content only provides 7%, and "paralanguage," or the intonation, pauses and sighs given when answering, represents 38% of the emphasis.

Jo-Ann Vega, president of JV Career and Human Resources Consulting Services in Nyack, N.Y., says body language is so important that it frequently torpedoes what we say. "Our nonverbal messages often contradict what we say in words," says Ms. Vega. "When we send mixed messages or our verbal messages don't jibe with our body statements, our credibility can crumble because most smart interviewers believe the nonverbal."

Laid-off managers are a case in point. They're often so traumatized by their terminations that they appear downcast, even when discussing their strengths, says Ms. Vega. Difficult questions can throw them off balance, and their anxiety may cause them to fidget or become overly rigid, she says.

Since nonverbal communication is more eloquent, honest and accurate than verbal communication, such actions reveal your inner confidence. While words can deceive—many people don't mean what they say or say what they mean—body language is subconscious. Since it's more spontaneous and less controlled, it shows our true feelings and attitudes. Still, most people discount the importance of nonverbal communication because their education and training placed more emphasis on spoken words. To become more adept at interpreting and using body language, heighten your awareness of nonverbal signals and learn to trust your "gut" instinct. Then, when interviewing, use the following tips to accentuate body language that stresses professionalism and performance.

The First Moments

Realize that you're being judged as soon as you arrive at the company. Set the right tone by being early, then use the extra time to compose yourself. When waiting for interviewers, don't open your briefcase to review notes you've prepared. Instead, glance through available magazines or literature in the waiting area.

This creates the impression that you're relaxed before stressful events, and helps you project confidence during the critical early moments of the interview.

If a receptionist or secretary indicates that the interviewer is ready to see you, enter his or her office as though you belonged. Knocking on the door, or opening it and peeking in, shows hesitation, which may be interpreted as a lack of confidence.

Greet your interviewer with a firm, sincere handshake. More than a few candidates have betrayed their nervousness by extending limp, clammy palms, and shaking hands weakly.

Don't start talking immediately, fumble with your briefcase or dive into a chair. If you aren't invited to sit, choose a chair across from or aside the interviewer's desk. Avoid soft lounge chairs or couches, which can prevent you from rising easily. And don't ask if and where you should sit.

If your interviewer receives a phone call during the meeting, select and review material from your briefcase to give him or her a sense of privacy. Don't show annoyance about the interruption or offer to leave the office. Many interviewers purposely take calls to determine if you'll react adversely to office disruptions.

How Close Can You Get?

Like anyone else, interviewers become uncomfortable if their personal space, or preferred distance from others, is invaded. Extraverted interviewers prefer a "social zone" of between 18 and 48 inches from their bodies, while introverts need more space.

Try to gauge interviewers' preferred distance by their seating arrangements. Move closer only if they seem skeptical about what you're saying. Other attempts to seem "friendly" by moving closer are likely to be threatening. For instance, some interviewers deliberately "interrogate" applicants by sitting or standing closer than they prefer.

When emphasizing key points, project sincerity and confidence by leaning forward, maintaining eye contact and using expressive gestures. Leaning back and looking down may be interpreted as a lack of confidence.

How Do You Speak?

How you say something often is more meaningful than what you say. Use a natural tone and don't deviate from your normal speaking rate, volume, rhythm, pitch, breathiness or resonance. Secure applicants have relaxed, warm and well-modulated voices that match their feelings, allowing them to appropriately express excitement, enthusiasm and interest during conversations.

Conversely, insecure candidates can't control their voice pitch and volume. They have weak, soft, hesitant or tremulous voices, and clear their throats, use "uhs" and "ums" or other nervous mannerisms excessively. Others mask their insecurity by speaking in complex, involved sentences.

Maintain Eye Contact

Candidates with secure self-esteem alter their facial expressions to match their message, rather than perpetually wearing the same one. They smile when saying something friendly, and maintain good eye contact, which signifies openness and honesty.

Less-assured candidates don't maintain eye contact, act shy or ashamed or smile at inappropriate times. They may appear downcast or pleading, or drop their eyes and heads, giving them an untrustworthy appearance.

Be cognizant of interviewers' expressions as well. If they don't maintain eye contact, it may mean they're anxious, irritated, disinterested or that they want the conversation to end. An interviewer who looks up may be uncomfortable, trying to remember something or doesn't believe your answer.

Don't overdo eye contact with interviewers, however. A gaze that lasts longer than seven to 10 seconds can cause discomfort or anxiety. Also, don't stare at interviewers during long silences, since it only increases the tension.

Posture and Gestures

Even if you're motionless, your posture communicates a message. Managers who put their feet up on desks and their hands behind their heads are saying that they feel confident, dominant or superior, a soldier standing at attention is showing deference to authority and a subordinate who stands rigidly with hands on hips signals defiance or dislike.

Confident applicants have relaxed, balanced postures. They hold their bodies upright, walk freely with their arms swinging and take determined strides. Less-assured candidates, on the other hand, have rigid or stooped postures, drag or shuffle their feet when walking and take short, choppy strides.

Strive for posture that's as free and natural as your speaking style, but don't be too controlled or rehearsed, says Ms. Vega, who advises applicants to "let some of the passion out." When your movements are in sync with your words, you'll seem confident, expressive and controlled.

Reading Interviewers

Hiring managers also use gestures to convey specific messages. Nodding signifies approval and encourages applicants to continue talking, while leaning forward shows they're interested. Folded arms, crossed legs, picking imaginary lint from clothing or running their fingers along their noses are signs that an interviewer disagrees with you. Thumb twiddling, finger drumming and other fidgeting mannerisms mean the interviewer isn't paying attention.

Guard against using similar gestures or betraying your nervousness by clenching or wringing your hands. Other actions that convey stress include holding your legs or arms tensely, perching on the edge of a chair or playing with a watch or ring.

One caveat: Don't imagine a hidden meaning in every gesture. For example, if an interviewer rubs her nose while you're speaking, she may just have an itchy nose. Try to gauge the situation when seeking the meaning to a mannerism. Most experts look for clues in groups of gestures, not random ones.

Nevertheless, communicating the right nonverbal signals can help you convey an enthusiastic, positive and confident attitude during job interviews. And learning to read interviewers' cues can improve your prospects as well.



DINING ETIQUETTE

Guests order first. Host orders last. Take your cue from your host regarding alcohol. Drink and appetizer orders are usually placed separately from main course orders.

Your forks are on the left. Your knives and spoons are on the right. Your salad fork is on the left. Your soup spoon is on the right. Your dessert fork and spoon are above the plate. Use the larger fork for the main course and the smaller fork for salad or dessert.

Your glassware is on the right. Your bread plate is on the left. Never leave your spoon in your coffee cup or soup bowl. Place napkin on lap once all guests are seated and host or head gives cue. Place folded napkin on table upon completion of meal.

When eating bread and rolls, break off and butter in bite-size pieces. Bring food to your mouth, not the other way around. Don't talk with food in your mouth.

Never leave a lipstick mark on your cup or glass. Taste before seasoning. Keep elbows off the table.

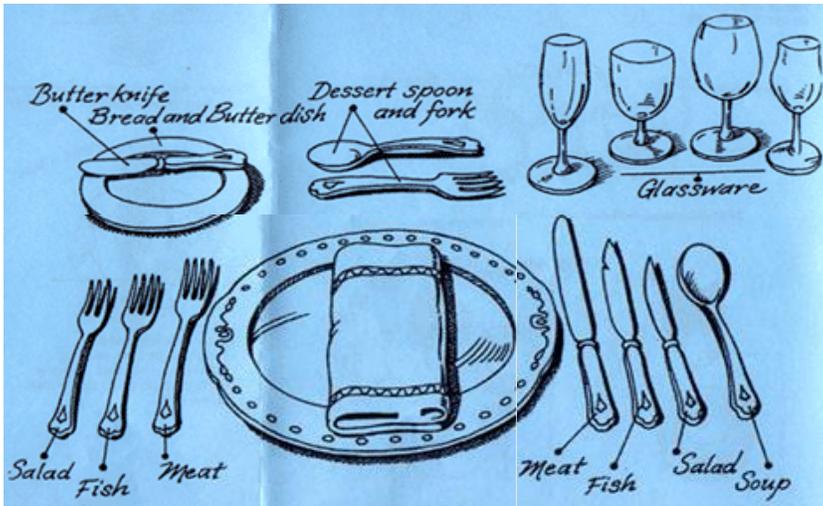
When you have finished your meal, do not push your plate aside; leave it in front of you, with the utensils centered on it, for the server to remove. Surrender your silverware after each course. When finished, place your silverware at an angle across your plate.

Be courteous to the wait staff. Don't complain about the meal or the service. Don't ask for seconds or substitutions. Don't ask for a doggy bag.

In restaurants, tipping is mandatory. A gratuity of 15-20% is customary.

TABLE MANNERS

Place Settings



Place Plate-The place plate is placed one inch from the edge of the table. If the first course is already on the place plate, the napkin is placed to the left of the forks, otherwise the napkin will be on the plate.

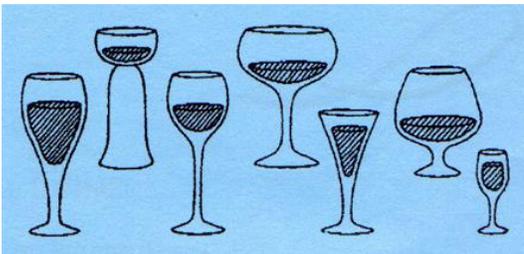
Forks/Flatware-Handles of the flatware are aligned at the bottom. The forks (no more than three) are at the left of the place plate, placed in order of use, working from the outside in. The oyster fork is the only fork on the right side with the knives, tines of the fork placed upward, across the soup spoon or parallel with the knives.

Often in North America the salad is served prior to the main course. In this case, the salad fork is positioned the furthest from the plate on the left. One would use this fork first. In the case of French style dining, the salad would be served after the main course. In this case, the salad fork would be positioned next to the plate.

Knives-Knives, no more than three, are at the right of the place plate in order of use, from the outside in, with the cutting edge toward the plate. The only spoon (for a first course) is placed to the right of the knives.

Dessert Silverware-The dessert fork and spoon are above the place plate, the bowl of the spoon facing left, the fork below facing right. In the most formal setting, the dessert fork and spoon are brought in on the dessert plate.

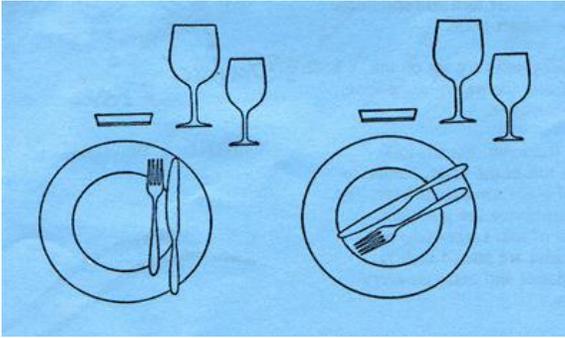
Glassware-No more than four glasses are set on the table, in order of use, for water, white wine, red wine and champagne, from the left to the right.



Full Glasses-When filling glasses, note the above diagram. Don't overfill!



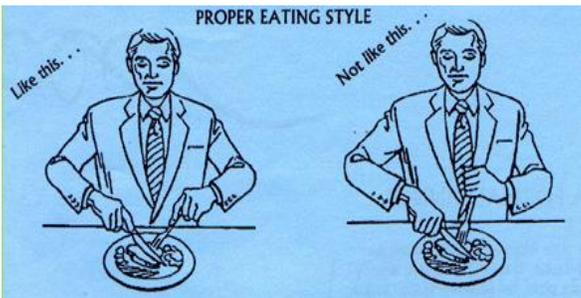
Stemware-Note the shapes of each type of stemware. They all have a unique shape and should only be used for their respective drinks. Bread and Butter Dish-The butter plate (optional) has the knife placed across the top of the plate, handle to the right, edge of blade toward the user. The salt and pepper are above the place plate, pepper to the left of salt. Larger salts and peppers to be shared are placed slightly below the wine glasses and between every two place settings.



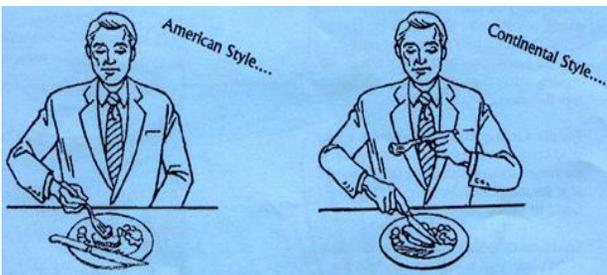
At the end of the meal, you should place your used silverware close together on the plate, with the utensils entirely on the plate (less than an inch of the silverware over the side of the plate). This is a signal to the servers that your meal is finished and the dishes can be removed.

For a formal dessert service, a waiter brings each guest a finger bowl filled with water. The bowl is set on a small lace or organdy doily (optional), which in turn sits on the dessert plate. The dessert fork and spoon are balanced on the plate in this case (instead of sitting at the top of the place setting throughout the meal.) A guest should dip finger tips in the finger bowl, wipe them on his or her napkin, and then remove the finger bowl and doily to the upper left of the place setting. He or she now moves the fork and spoon from the plate to the left and right of the plate respectively. The empty plate is now ready to receive a helping of dessert.

Proper Eating Style



The correct way to cut your meat, whether eating American or continental style, is to grasp your knife and fork in a relaxed, natural manner, never with clenched fists.



In the American style of eating, after cutting your meat, you switch the fork to your right hand, place your knife on the plate, spear a piece of meat, and then eat it.

In the Continental eating style, you keep your fork in your left hand and convey the food to your mouth after cutting each piece. The knife remains in your hand and may be subtly used to get meat or any other food.

INTERVIEW DINING ETIQUETTE

No matter where an interview takes place, it is still an interview. If a potential employer decides to interview you over a meal at a restaurant, your table manners must be up to par. The following etiquette guidelines will help get you through your next dinner interview.

Before the Meal

Long before you enter the restaurant, make sure you turn off your cell phone or beeper. The candidate who receives a call during the meal doesn't receive a call after the meal.

Before the meal arrives, be sure to actively listen to the interviewer. Paraphrase the content of what an interviewer is saying. Be sure to stay away from sensitive subjects such as religion and politics. Look for and seize any opportunity to sell yourself.

During the Meal

Eighty percent of communication is expressed through body language. Although you may be nervous, do your best to relax. Maintain an assured posture throughout the meal and, yes, elbows off the table.

Chances are good that more than one person will interview you. If this is the case, wait until everyone is comfortably seated at the table, and then place your napkin in your lap. If your napkin happens to fall to the floor, ask the server for a new one.

Browse the menu for harmless foods such as moderately priced chicken or fish. Stay away from spaghetti, peas, expensive items and anything that sounds colossal. When ordering, be courteous to the wait staff. Throughout the meal, be sure to say "please" and "thank you." Your polite attitude will foster an overall positive impression.

After the Meal

Indicate that you are finished with your meal by placing the knife and fork, on your plate, at 4 o'clock. Be sure to place the napkin on the right-hand side of your table setting. You were invited to the meal so you are not obligated to pay the bill. To offer payment would be inappropriate. Whoever invited you will pay the bill. Be sure to thank the interviewers and obtain their business cards. What would you do after a face-to-face, phone or impromptu interview? Send a thank-you letter, of course. This situation is no different, so send one as soon as possible.

Dining 101

Knowing the basics of table setup is essential and your key to comfort. You are free to drink from glasses on your right. Your bread plate is on the left. The old silverware maxim holds true: Start on the outside and work your way in. When eating a roll or bread, make sure to break it into bite-size pieces. If your beverage is served in a stemmed glass, pick it up by the stem. Once everyone's meal is served, begin eating slowly and with care. Hold your silverware with consideration. Placing a used utensil on the table is considered unsanitary and poor manners. Situate soiled utensils on the side of your plate. Keep the elbows close to your body while cutting food. Only reach for items that are in front of you. Politely ask others to pass items out of reasonable reach. When passing items, be sure to offer to your left. Keep in mind, however, if a passing pattern has already developed, go with the flow. Eat your entire meal if possible. It may seem disrespectful if you leave a large amount of food behind, and this isn't the time to request a doggy bag.

More Tips

Bring all foods to your mouth, not the other way around.

Never talk with your mouth full.

Under no circumstances should you smoke or order alcohol.

Relax.