Interview Etiquette

10 Tips for Making it Count

Etiquette isn’t the lost art that some would believe, and proper etiquette goes beyond knowing which fork to use at dinner or how to fold your napkin on your lap. Interviewing is all about etiquette, in fact. Here are ten ways to show that despite today’s era of casualness, you know how to do the right thing:

1. **Show up on time.** This demonstrates that you value both your time and others’ time too. Anticipate traffic and parking delays and give yourself extra minutes to visit the bathroom to freshen up before checking in for your appointment.

2. **Turn off your cell phone and keep it out of site.** Your interviewer isn’t going to see your use of a cell phone as an indication of your importance. He’ll see it as an annoyance. Besides, whether you believe it or not, your cell phone is a distraction. You want to have all of your attention on the interview to ensure you are putting your best foot forward.

3. **When in doubt of what to wear on an interview, always overdress.** It’s better to look nicer than necessary rather than vice versa. Remember, your external appearance can make quite a statement during a short interview time period.

4. **It may be obvious, but don’t forget about personal hygiene.** It’s important to be fresh and clean when you go on an interview. Pop a breath mint just before you have the interview and make sure you take it easy on the cologne or fragrances! You don’t want your scent to be a distraction from what you have to say.

5. **Maintain professional distance.** Now’s not the time to act like the interviewer is your new best friend. Don’t get too personal with the information you share – the interviewer doesn’t need to know that the struggles you had finding a parking spot or that you were out late at a party the night before.

6. **Stand tall and be proud.** Offer a firm handshake that shows that you are confident and sit erect in your chair. Don’t slouch. You don’t want the interviewer to think that you are meek or intimidated.

7. **Remember that you are not entitled to anything.** Be an advocate for yourself, but maintain some humility too. Nobody likes a know-it-all or a bully.

8. **Keep in mind your body language.** Interviewing is not only about what you say verbally, but also about what you share non-verbally as well. Maintain an open posture and avoid crossing your arms. Avoid over-the-top hand gestures and cues that could indicate that you are bored or nervous, such as twirling your hair, tapping your foot or looking at a clock.

9. **Relax and be yourself!** When on an interview, the employer wants to get a glimpse of what it will be like to work with you. So, it’s okay to let your personality come
through. Smile a lot and have a positive attitude.

10. **Send a thank you note.** Email just isn’t going to cut it here. Promptly after your interview, send a thank you note, via snail mail, to demonstrate your professionalism and attention to detail. Thank the interviewer – by name – for her time and also add a comment or insight you forgot during the interview. This is one more chance for you to demonstrate your interest in the position and to leave a positive impression.

**What Can You Expect to Be Asked?**

You should prepare answers to the following questions, expecting that you’ll be asked them in some variation:

- Tell me about yourself.
- Why would you like to work for this company?
- What sort of skills do you have?
- Tell us about a mistake you made at work or at school and how you dealt with it.
- Is there anything else you’d like to share about yourself?

**Put Your Best Foot Forward**

Say that you’re sitting with a potential employer, ready to be interviewed. He pulls out your resume, cover letter and Facebook profile. Is this the beginning of the end, as he creates negative impressions about you based on what you’ve posted? Or are you comfortable with how you’re portraying yourself online? It’s all part of putting your best foot forward in the job search. Some other things to consider include:

- How you’d describe your work ethic
- Having realistic expectations, not a sense of entitlement
- Tailoring your resume to fit each particular job
- Presenting yourself professionally and genuinely
- Researching organizations so you can ask informed questions

Let potential employers see you at your best!