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Presenting yourself in an interview: Gayle Laakmann McDowell

Doing well in a computer science interview is a difficult task, luckily Gayle McDowell has suggestion that will help you represent yourself fully. First, the obvious way is to be friendly and come across as a normal and interesting human being. The reason for this is people will have to work with you for a while, and if you cannot get along with others, or your personality is lacking in some way, it will create a bad work environment for everyone. She describes this part as, would I have a beer with this guy, meaning could I enjoy having this person around me. Second thing is that you have to be able to communicate with people. This one is similar to the first in that you will have to work with people in your job and if you can’t communicate it will be hard to get your tasks done.

Along with how you physically present yourself in an interview, the best way to show your skills and experience is to have a solid resume. When making your resume, she says, to try to show the two aspects that interviewers look for most; if you are smart and if you can code. She says that showing your interests in magic, tennis, or other personal interests only dilutes your resume and distracts people from what they want to see. Instead, you should only include things like relevant jobs, putting down that you worked in a gas station doesn’t show your intellect or that you can code. Second, when describing your accomplishments have the form of “accomplished x by doing y”, they want to see what you’ve done, how you did it, and what the results were. Third, list 2-4 of the most significant projects you’ve done in your career, even academic ones, and make sure to state what it was, the language used, and if it was an individual or team project. It’s even better if these projects are self-driven, it shows passion, initiative, and work ethic. The final thing to put on your resume is what languages you know, and the best way to do this is to put the language type and in parentheses next it describe your level of knowledge e.g. expert, proficient, or prior experience. And to close out her talk she says to make sure you ask questions of your own because this shows interest in the company and shows that you will be committed to this new job.