



10 Common Interview Mistakes You Should Avoid Making

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1. Failing to Prepare

Preparation is key to any interview. A lack of preparation gives you a major disadvantage over other candidates and will cost you a job before you have even walked in the door.

Many candidates spend the night before an interview doing last-minute preparation and stressing out, which means they end up looking tired, worn out and increasing the chance of forgetting something vital. Looking tired will leave a bad impression on the interviewer. Always get a good night's sleep before the day of an interview and make sure you have your CV, [cover letter](#) and any additional documents or items you need to bring.

On the day of the interview, remember to plan ahead and arrive around 10-15 minutes early, as arriving late could kill your chances of getting the job. Make sure to have breakfast, and go to the toilet before you get there. Last but not least, make sure to turn your mobile off before going into an interview. If it rings in an interview the interviewer will not be impressed, and if you answer it they definitely will fail you.

2. Failing to Research the Organisation

If you are going to interview for a particular company, make sure you know everything you can about them. Spending a couple of hours the night before

researching the organisation and role will give you confidence going into the interview. Some interviewees will have conducted little to no research.

At the very least you **must** have researched what the organisation does and what the role being offered asks for. Then research the size of the company as well as its working practices and any other information you can find about it. Finally, research the industry they operate in and how it is evolving to recent developments.

Usually, reading a couple of newspapers will throw up a story surrounding their industry, or alternatively you could set up a [Google Alert](#) of the organisation.

Using such knowledge in an interview will demonstrate your [commercial awareness](#) and leave your employer with the impression that you know what you're doing.



Research as much as you can about the company beforehand.

3. Poor Presentation

No matter what the organisation that you are applying for is, **always** dress professionally. Even if the office is having a casual Friday or the interview is in a

relaxed setting, you need to dress smart unless the interview expressly states that the dress code is something different.

Dressing down will leave your interviewer with the impression that you are poorly organized and unprofessional. This is where preparation will once again help, as you need to set out your clothes the night before, and make sure they are ironed and cleaned.

At the same time, body language in an interview is very important. When you get there, make sure you give the interviewer a firm handshake and smile. In the interview itself, maintain eye contact with the interviewer and make sure you keep your hands on the table. An interview is stressful – you will need to fight the urge to fidget, but it's worth it.

4. Taking Too Long to Answer Questions

Many questions that interviewers will ask are deliberately open. However, if you spend too long on a certain question, you can steer off track of the purpose of it, go off on a tangent, and leave your employer confused about your answer.

On the other hand, a simple yes or no response is usually terrible. The appropriate response to an interview question should be roughly 3-4 minutes long and should be clear and concise. It should also demonstrate all of your experience and [competencies](#) to further pitch yourself.

5. Not Structuring Your Answer

A [competency-based question](#) is one that asks you to describe a particular skill, such as [communication](#), [leadership](#) and [problem solving](#) and your answer to such questions are key to the success of your interview.

Example questions may include:

- **Gave an example when you've led a team**
- **Tell me about a time when you failed to complete a task or project on time, despite intending to do so**
- **Describe an achievement that you are proud of and tell us why. What did you find challenging?**
- **Tell me about a time when you improved the way things were typically done on the job.**

Many people fail to recognise the importance of such questions or don't know how to answer them, which is typically done using the **STAR method**:

- **S**: Situation
- **T**: Task
- **A**: Action
- **R**: Response

Every employer looks for such a method when an interviewee answers a certain question, so make sure you demonstrate specific competencies that you have, and how they are relevant to the task that you faced.

6. Stressing Out

An interview is one of the most stressful experiences of your working life, and you need to remain calm throughout it. If you've prepared well it should take some of the pressure off, but when you're in the interview, remember that the interviewer is not your enemy. Talk to him or her just like a normal person would.

Don't drink too much coffee beforehand as it will increase your stress levels, and avoid Dutch courage too, as it lowers your visuo-spatial skills (and the interviewer may smell alcohol on your breath). Finally, don't smoke right before an interview - no matter how tempting it is.



Interviews always involve stress - it's about learning how to manage it.

7. Arrogance

Confidence is key to any interview or presentation, but seeming too cocky will make the interviewer hate you. Stay humble about your achievements, no matter how good they are, as there will always be another person within the company who's achieved more than you.

Refraining from the use of excessive technical jargon and multi-syllabic words will show your employer that you can stay humble, as well as communicate on a number of different levels dependent on the situation. Furthermore, if you worked in a team on a project, don't elevate yourself above the rest of your team and make it seem like you did all the work (even if you did) but rather recognise the importance of your contribution within the team.

8. Criticism

If you are currently employed and the interviewer asks why you are leaving, be polite and humble. Criticising your previous employer will leave a negative impression on the interview. Saying that you want a change in company or that you want to be part of a bigger or smaller company is perfectly understandable and suitable. However, saying that you hated your previous job or employer will make the interviewer doubt your motivation for the position and your manners.

As with previous employers, don't criticise any other candidates who have applied for the same position as you. Some may be hopeless, but in most jobs you will have to work within a team and criticising those around you will only serve to create future conflict within the workplace.

Even if pushed, don't criticise any of the other candidates during the interview.

9. Not Asking Any Questions

At the end of the day, you are not just applying to a job because you want to please your employer. You may also have your own questions to ask, and by asking them it not only demonstrates your confidence but also proves to the interviewer your motivation towards the role.

Recruiters can and will fail a candidate for not asking questions or asking poor questions, and so it is key that you ask them. However, these questions should not be personal or about topics you already should have researched. Rather, ask about the work environment and the future of your career.

Example questions can include:

- **How would you describe the work culture here?**

- **What do you enjoy most about working here?**
- **What would you expect from me in the first 100 days on the job?**
- **What training and professional development opportunities are available?**

Questions such as these will demonstrate your commitment to the role and will help to ensure you the position.

10. Not Following Up

No matter how well an interview goes, it is always vital that you follow up on it.

Make sure you get an email or number on the way out of your interview, so that you can check how you have done if necessary. Even if you fail to get the job, they should be able to provide feedback for you.

Occasionally, you may not be successful because someone else was more qualified for the position. Usually, though, there is something that you could have improved upon – and in that scenario, you will be glad that you asked for the advice.

Even if you don't make any of the mistakes mentioned on the list, there is still a chance you won't get the position. The best thing to do is practice with mock interviews, either with friends and family or by going to a mock interview centre to best hone your skills.