



## Job Interview Etiquette: Attire, Attitude, Action

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**Starting a new job, but don't know the first thing about what to wear to the interview, or if your handshake is firm enough? Don't panic! Mary Crane\*\* to the rescue. This career consultant knows a thing or two about etiquette, and she is here to give you basic tips to help you make little changes that add up to big results.**

Read below, and print the list if you need to... so you don't blow it! After all, what you DO or DON'T do before, during and after the interview may make the difference in getting the job.

**Q:** What's appropriate to wear to a job interview? (e.g., dress for the type of job, conservative)

**A:** The correct answer completely depends upon the nature of the job for which a candidate is interviewing and the industry in which that job resides. If, for example, a job candidate is interviewing for a design position with the head of a women's fashion magazine empire, anyone who has seen *The Devil Wears Prada* knows: Plan to dress fashion-forward. The successful candidate will wear an interview outfit that communicates a knowledge of and ability to wear the latest fashion trends. If, however, a job candidate is interviewing with the senior partner at a conservative law firm, that candidate should plan to dress in a conservative suit with understated accessories.

No matter the industry, nearly all prospective employers will notice a few characteristics, including:

- Your hair. Not whether you have it or not, but how neatly you have styled whatever hair you do have.
- Your shoes. Make sure they are polished and the heels are not worn down or nicked by sidewalk cracks.
- Details. An employer who sees buttons missing, hems falling, or slacks and sleeves that require lengthening or shortening may assume, "If this candidate doesn't pay attention to the details of his or her personal appearance, he or she is unlikely to pay attention to the details of day-to-day work."

## **Q:** What do you say/not say to impress your prospective employer?

**A:** From your perspective, the whole purpose of the interview is to sell YOU to a prospective employer. Begin by standing in the shoes of that prospective employer and ask "If I hire YOU, what's in it for me, the boss?" This may require the job candidate to carefully ask questions throughout the interview. Is the prospective employer most concerned with hiring someone who has loads of experience in a particular field? If yes, then, speak to your experience. Is the prospective employer not as concerned about experience, but really focused on finding someone who has the ability to be a self-starter? If yes, then sell your ability to quickly learn and run with any task. Is the prospective employer most concerned with finding a team player? If yes, then play up your ability to work and play well with others.

Interview candidates should view Google as their new best friend. Before any interview, learn as much as you can about the actual interviewer, the prospective employer and the industry. Nothing impresses an interviewer more than the candidate who begins the interview by sharing some connection, be it attendance at the same undergraduate school or an interest in a particular baseball team. With so much of this information now findable on the Internet, no candidate has an excuse for not carrying this knowledge into the interview.

Throughout the interview, make sure you demonstrate lots of eagerness and excitement about the job. Nothing turns off a potential employer more than a candidate whose attitude communicates, *"I'm really not all that interested in you or*

*your company.*" And everything you do before, during and after the interview — from the clothes you choose to wear, to the excitement in your voice when you speak about the company, to your personal follow-up after the interview — will communicate just how interested you are in a particular job.

**Q:** How should you greet your prospective employer? (e.g., handshake, certain greeting or opening statement)

**A:** Greet any prospective employer, by immediately standing as they approach and extending your right hand for a nice, firm handshake. Smile. Make eye contact. (By the way, eye contact is HUGE. Prospective employers notice candidates who don't look them straight in the eye.) After the prospective employer introduces himself or herself, for example, *"Hi, I'm Mary Crane. Welcome to our offices."* Reply by stating your name and then adding, *"Thank you for making time to meet with me today."*

**Q:** How should you behave in an interview? (e.g., how you sit, eye contact — avoid or no?, body language)

**A:** Let's start with what you should do. As soon as your interview begins, everything about you — your language, your facial expressions, your body language — should communicate an absolute interest in the position, company and industry. Make sure you bring to the interview a handful of questions that demonstrate your interest and knowledge. Use facial expressions and other non-verbal cues (head nods, inquisitive glances) that communicate you understand the interests and concerns of your prospective employer. Employ extremely good posture. Sit up straight. (Special hint: To avoid slouching, sit on the front half of any seat you are offered.)

What do you absolutely avoid? Bad-mouthing anyone or anything. No employer wishes to hire a candidate who is critical of a prior employer or a previous job. Even if you hated everything about your most recent employment experience, find something positive to say about it.

**Q:** How do you present your résumé? (e.g., in a folder, type of paper)

**A:** When going to an interview, I recommend that gentlemen and ladies carry a nice portfolio. In that portfolio, make sure you have a fresh pad of paper and a pen that writes. Throughout the interview, take notes. Again, this helps communicate that you are interested in the details of a particular position. Also, carry a copy of your résumé, printed on quality white or off-white paper. Although most interviewers will already have a copy of your résumé on hand, the fact that you have brought a "just in case" back-up helps demonstrate your preparedness.

Ladies, you may also wish to carry a handbag in which you may store car keys and other paraphernalia.

Everyone, before the interview begins, make sure you turn off your cell phone and BlackBerry.

By the way, if you have listed your cell phone on your résumé, make sure your voicemail greeting is office appropriate. (Heard the one about the candidate, who provided a cell phone number as the appropriate contact number on his résumé? When the head of recruiting phoned the number, she heard, "*John is f\*!ing his girlfriend. Don't leave a message.*")

**Q:** Do you write a thank you note — after the interview, and to thank them for offering you the job, or not offering you the job?

**A:** Yes, yes, and yes. In fact, think about it a minute: How can it possibly hurt to thank a prospective employer for taking time in their otherwise busy day to meet with you? Following the interview, make sure you send a thank you note. I prefer handwritten notes over e-mail. If the employer has communicated the intent to make a decision within 48 hours, however, send the thank you electronically. Then, if you are offered a job, follow-up with a note that communicates, "*I look forward to joining you and your team in the upcoming weeks.*" If you receive a rejection notice, don't burn the bridge that you've created. Write to that prospective employer and state, "*While I regret I will not be joining you and your team now, I hope you will keep my name in mind should another position open in the near future.*"

**Q:** Do you make small talk? (e.g., comment on objects on their desk)

**A:** Your question demonstrates that you understand the importance of connecting with a prospective employer during what may be a very short 30-minute interview. Long before the scheduled interview, I would prefer that you research the prospective employer, identify some commonalities (you know, six degrees of separation?), and come to the interview prepared to connect. Long ago, during one of my law school interviews, for example, I connected with a prospective employer by noting that the interviewer and I had attended the same high school, undergraduate school and law school.

Minus that foreknowledge, use anything in the interviewer's office — photos, memorabilia, artwork — to establish a connection. For example, if you happen to notice photos of the family sail boating in what appears to be a New England setting, you might try, "*Is that a picture of you sail boating? I just sailed the Chesapeake Bay for the first time last summer.*"

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**\*\*The above content is given to us and solely owned by Mary Crane of Mary Crane & Associates LLC.**

A graduate of George Washington Law School, Mary Crane lobbied in Washington, D.C. for nearly 10 years before pursuing her life-long interests in food and wine. Crane enrolled in the Culinary Institute of America and, upon graduation, worked at the White House as an assistant chef. During this time, Crane discovered the important relationships between food, wine and business. Her desire to share this unique knowledge yielded Mary Crane & Associates. Today, Crane travels North

America delivering high-impact, high-energy programs to Fortune 500 companies and more than 50% of the AmLaw100. She supports new employees by explaining how to quickly assimilate in today's fast-paced work environment. Crane also helps managers understand how to best recruit, motivate, and retain today's newest workers. • [Visit her Web site](#)

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