



How to Avoid 9 Common Interview Mistakes

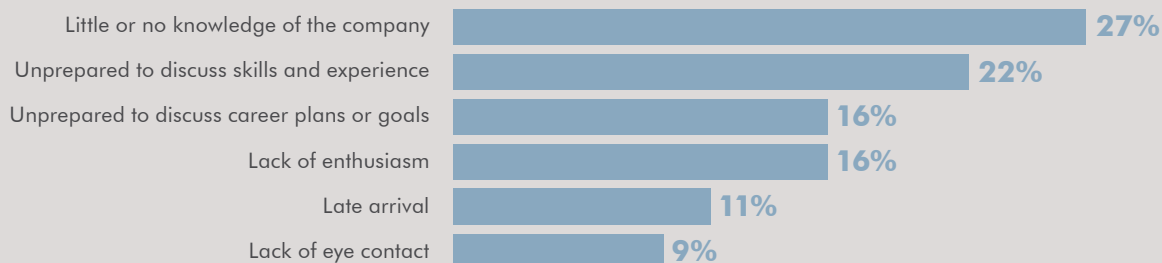
Nervous about an upcoming job interview? It's understandable — being grilled about your qualifications isn't anyone's idea of fun. But you can alleviate much of the stress by doing some prep work, such as learning how to avoid these nine common interview pitfalls:

- 1 Forgetting to expect the unexpected.** Alarm clock failures, traffic jams and coffee stains are bound to strike at the most unfortunate times. Guard against Murphy's Law by planning ahead. The night before your interview, set out your clothes, look up directions to the employer's office and get plenty of sleep. Set a backup alarm and build in extra time to get to the location. Consider bringing along an extra set of interview clothes in case you start sweating bullets on the way or your latte lands in your lap.
- 2 Ignoring your online presence.** Employers will most certainly Google you before your interview. Do the same before you start applying to jobs, so you are aware of what your digital presence looks like. At the very least, ensure that your LinkedIn profile is up to date and your privacy settings allow Facebook to present you in the best light.
- 3 Fumbling the first impression.** Initial impressions matter, but the interviewer isn't the only person you need to win over. Many managers ask their assistant's opinion of prospective hires. Showcase your interpersonal abilities by being friendly and polite to everyone you encounter, from the security guard to the receptionist. Once you're in the hot seat, follow the hiring manager's lead. Some interviewers enjoy small talk; others prefer to cut to the chase. As soon as the hiring manager appears ready to talk business, offer up a copy of your resume.
- 4 Not keeping it real.** Honesty is indeed the best policy. Embellishing the truth or coming across as inauthentic only hurts your cause. Experienced interviewers know that a candidate who claims "working too hard" is their biggest weakness is copping out. They want insights into the real you. You should present an accurate picture of who you are, what you bring to the table and what you need to work on.
- 5 Filling the void.** You answer a question, and then there's a pause. A long pause. Uncomfortable? Yep. But that doesn't mean you should keep talking. Give the interviewer time to process your response, take notes or ponder what to ask next. Many candidates, unfortunately, ramble on to fill the empty air. In addition to potentially meandering off topic or saying something regrettable, you might give the hiring manager reason to question your ability to keep your composure.

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- 6 Succumbing to interview fatigue.** While multiple interviews make for a grueling day, these meetings are typically done to see if you'll get along with prospective coworkers. Remain enthusiastic and engaged, and strive to establish a good rapport with each person. Also look at this as an opportunity to learn more about the company. The more people you meet, the more perspectives you'll get about the organization and what it's like working there.
- 7 Not considering your fit with the company.** An interview is just as much about you evaluating the company as it is about the company evaluating you. Take this opportunity to learn more about work-life balance, challenges and opportunities at the organization to help you better evaluate whether what the company offers fits in with your career goals. A study by our company and Happiness Works found that workers who feel there is not a good match between them and their employers are the most likely to leave their jobs within a year.
- 8 Forgetting to do your research.** Be ready for when the interviewer asks, "Do you have any questions for me?" In a recent Robert Half survey, 27 percent of CFOs, when asked what they think is the most common mistake candidates make during job interviews, said "little or no knowledge of the company." As soon as you set a date and time for an interview, start researching the company so you can ask informed questions. Search local newspapers, industry publications and LinkedIn for news about the company. Write down questions you have about the team or the position, so they don't escape you when the time comes.
- 9 Thanking yourself out of the job.** It's courteous to send a handwritten thank-you card or email after an interview, but make sure it's free of errors. A hastily composed, typo-ridden note will do more harm than good. Most people only write a perfunctory "thanks for your time" message, but this is a missed opportunity. After expressing your appreciation, reiterate your strong interest in the position and mention a part of the conversation you particularly enjoyed.

In a recent Robert Half survey, more than 2,200 CFOs were asked, **"What do you think is the most common mistake candidates make during job interviews?"** Their responses:



* Total does not equal 100 percent due to rounding.

Even the most poised and confident professionals can find job interviews intimidating. While the strategies above likely won't calm all your nerves, they will help you better manage this stressful component of the hiring process.

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