

# **Interview Do's & Don'ts**

**Century College Career Services  
Room 2402W – 651-779-5774**

You've done it! Your job search has been successful enough to get you noticed! That means that both your resume and cover letter have done the work they were intended to do --- get you in the door and an opportunity to interview. Now what? It's now up to you to sell yourself to the employer in a face-to-face encounter. The following list of "Do's" and "Don'ts" should help you to prepare for your interview. Remember, practice makes perfect and as you gain more experience interviewing you should get better with time. Role playing and mock interviews are also very helpful preparation tools to enhance your interview skills.

## **Do's:**

**Do** know yourself. Thoroughly review your resume, cover letter, skills and attributes obtained from your experiences (professional, personal and otherwise) and education.

**Do** know what you want. Know what your goals are, what type of position you are looking for and why you are the person for the job.

**Do** research the company. It is important to know something about the organization in which you are interviewing with. If possible, find a way to incorporate this knowledge into your answers. Try to make it flow into conversation rather than bringing it up bluntly just to show you did your homework.

**Do** practice answering typical interview questions. There are several resources (books, articles, websites, handouts, etc.) that outline several types of questions and most commonly asked questions.

**Do** dress for success. Make sure you look neat and professional and remember that you only get one chance to make a first impression.

**Do** know where you are going, and how to get there, ahead of time. Go to the location before the day of the interview. Make sure you give yourself plenty of time and allow for traffic, weather, etc.

**Do** show up prepared. Arrive a few minutes early! Have copies of your resume, cover letter and references with you. Have something to write on, preferably in a portfolio or briefcase. Have a pen with you that you are sure works and doesn't leak.

**Do** prepare questions of your own. Make a list of questions you would like to ask when given the opportunity in the interview. Make sure the questions are intelligent questions regarding the position, the company and/or the industry.

**Do** your best to be aware of your body language. Communicate clearly and articulate your ideas. Listen carefully in order to ask any follow-up questions that may arise. Show enthusiasm and make sure you use appropriate eye contact.

**Do** thank them for their time and let them know of your interest. Make sure you send a thank you card immediately following the interview. Keep it brief and to the point showing appreciation for their time and consideration and re-emphasizing your interest in the position.

### **Don'ts:**

**Don't** go out and buy a new suit if you don't have to. You may very well have something in your closet that will work just fine. Make sure that clothes fit comfortably and look neat and professional. In most cases you will want to wear a suit, or at the very least a shirt/tie and dress pants for men and blouse or sweater and dress pants/skirt for women.

**Don't** dress as if you were going out on the town with friends for the night. Dressing more conservative is the way to go for an interview. Less is more when it comes to jewelry, make-up and perfume/cologne.

**Don't** wear clothes that make tattoos visible and don't show off multiple body piercings. While you want to be true to who you are, an interview setting may not be the place to show your personal style and flare. Remember first impressions weigh heavily and there is always time later to assess how much of your personality you want to reveal in the workplace. There is a time and place for everything. Remain professional.

**Don't** use too much body language including hand gestures, etc...as it may be distracting during an interview. Try to relax and use a good combination of both verbal and nonverbal communication.

**Don't** talk too fast. You also don't want to drone on and on either! When asked a question take a brief moment to organize your thoughts. Relax and talk as if you are engaging in a conversation. Share what you need to in order to answer the question completely; don't share your entire life story!

**Don't** use slang in a job interview. You want to portray yourself as articulate, intelligent and confident. Save the slang for talking with your friends.

**Don't** refer to past job experiences, supervisors and/or colleagues in a negative manner. Instead use it as an opportunity to let them know you were ready for a change, a new opportunity, advancement, etc.

**Don't** give a potential employer a personal email address that has a non-professional address ([surferdude@yahoo.com](mailto:surferdude@yahoo.com), [partygirl@hotmail.com](mailto:partygirl@hotmail.com) ). The same goes for phone numbers. If you give out your cell phone number make sure your voicemail doesn't sound like you are calling the dance club downtown or a 900 number, the message should identify who they are calling, be short and professional.

**Don't** lie in an interview. While you want to always keep in mind that you are trying to sell yourself to the employer, be honest about weaknesses, experience, etc. However, you also want to be able to answer questions successfully and say what an employer wants to hear. Be sure to work on ways to answer a question positively and honestly without coming off as something you aren't. This doesn't make for a good fit for you or the employer.

**Don't** get personal. Remember, this is a job interview. While you want to reflect your personal attributes to some extent, a job interview isn't the place to bring up any personal information including family, religion, social interests, etc. Keep it professional and job related.

**Don't** arrive late. Do all you can to be early! If you are really early then sit in your car, go to the restroom to make sure your tie is straight or your hair looks ok, get a drink of water, etc. Be sure to arrive approximately 10 minutes early and check-in with the appropriate person.

**Don't** get too nervous! Remember, you are interviewing them as well. Think of the interview as a two-sided conversation, you are both trying to learn about the other and what they may have to offer. Also think of an interview as a learning experience. Practice makes perfect. The more interviews you go through, the better you will get! To be a little nervous is to be expected. In fact, it might help to keep your adrenaline going and to keep you on your toes!

For more information on interviewing skills and techniques visit the Career Services website or contact Dara Hagen, Director of Career Services, at 651-779-5774 or [dara.hagen@century.edu](mailto:dara.hagen@century.edu).