

## Deliver a Knock-Out Interview

Your carefully prepared cover letter and résumé paid off. You've landed an interview. Get ready — in advance — to make a good impression.

1. **Confirm the interview appointment.** Do this one day before your interview. Know the date, time, and location of the interview. Try to find out how long you'll be there. And make sure you have your contact's phone numbers in case you have to call.
2. **Clear your calendar.** If possible, keep your schedule free of any other commitments. The interview might run over or you could be asked to stay longer. Explaining that you have to be somewhere else could create an awkward situation.
3. **Say their names correctly.** If you know the names of interviewers in advance, confirm the pronunciation and spelling.
4. **Be on time.** Don't arrive more than 10 minutes early and, most important, don't be late. Arriving late not only labels you as rude, it also makes you seem unreliable. If unforeseen circumstances arise and you must be late, do everything you can to call ahead of time.
5. **Dress to impress.** How embarrassing to come to an interview and discover you're underdressed. If possible, find out in advance what attire works. If you're still not sure, wear a suit. There's no such thing as overkill when dressing for an interview.
6. **Let them know you've arrived.** Walk up to the receptionist, smile, shake hands, introduce yourself, and state that you have an appointment. Offer your résumé or business card and wait.
7. **Shut off the cell phone.** Unless there's a bona fide crisis, turn off your cell phone or pager.
8. **Use your mouth for talking only.** Unless the interview is scheduled with a meal, nothing should be in your mouth but words. Drinking, eating, smoking, and chewing gum don't work during an interview.
9. **Prepare a short information statement.** Be ready to answer the dreaded question, "Tell me about yourself and your background." Your statement should include some information on the types of companies and industries you have worked for, your strengths, your transferable skills, and some of your personal traits. Practice saying this statement until it feels natural.
10. **Be prepared to talk about your successes and experiences.** The employer will want to find out about your past experience—successes and failures, your work ethic, and your track record. Be able to amplify every item on your résumé.
11. **Be nice.** Everyone you meet during your interview—from the receptionist to the interviewer—should be treated with respect and courtesy. The receptionist might not be conducting the interview, but his or her opinion of you might be solicited.
12. **Follow up.** Send a thank you letter within a day of the interview. Provide any documents that might have been requested, such as references, an employment application, or samples of your work. A few days later, call to express your continued interest and to see if you could offer more information.