

7 best ways to make the worst impression in an interview

So you landed a job interview, congratulations! Being asked to attend an interview is a great achievement, so pat yourself on the back. Now you face a new challenge: making an excellent first impression.

According to SEEK research, these are the top seven things people do in job interviews that leave the worst impression. Learn from their mistakes and you'll be well on your way!

1. **Not showing passion or interest in the role**

The best way to leave the most negative first impression with a potential employer is to not show enthusiasm for being there – 20% of people surveyed rated it as their number-one. If you're impolite, unfriendly or simply give off the impression that you don't want to be there, you're wasting both the employer's time and your own.

"A firm handshake with a big smile will do wonders when you first meet your interviewer," says Nick Deligiannis, Managing Director of Hays in Australia and New Zealand. "Some small chitchat from the reception area to the interview room will show that you're friendly and have good interpersonal skills."

2. **Being late**

19% of hirers surveyed by SEEK said being late is in their top two things candidates can do to leave a negative impression at a job interview.

There's really no excuse for being late, although many of us have been there. Deligiannis says being prepared is paramount. "Anticipate factors that may make you late, such as traffic, and make sure you leave the house earlier than you normally would. Look up your route the night before and arrive at least ten minutes early."

3. **Bad-mouthing your previous employer**

"Some interviewees will badmouth their previous employer when asked why they're looking for a new role. Practice phrasing your answer positively, as speaking negatively about your previous employer can make you look like someone who blames others for problems rather than seeks solutions," says Deligiannis. And it makes you come across as very unprofessional.

4. **Not doing your homework**

Research the company online and ask your recruiter where your role fits into the

business, Deligiannis recommends. “By better understanding the company you can choose relevant examples from your work experience to show you’re the right fit.”

Have questions for the interviewer – ideally challenging ones. “It’s one of the most important parts of the interview,” says Mike Dickson, Director – New South Wales at Six Degrees Recruitment. “Make your question relevant – reference people, brands, have an opinion and challenge and engage your interviewer.”

To really blow your competition away, “be the person who invested the time and effort to align the business need (i.e. the job requirements) with your skills and experience,” says Matt Harrison, Founder and Managing Partner at Hope & Glory. “By doing this, you’ll put yourself at a huge advantage.”

5. Appearing untidy

“It’s important to look and act professionally for job interviews. The interviewer will also consider how you dress when deciding if they want you to represent their organisation,” says Deligiannis.

“Dressing professionally is often not so much about the actual clothes as it is about being neat and tidy in overall appearance. For example, wear a neat, ironed shirt, and clean, tidy shoes,” says Deligiannis. It’s about showing respect for others and yourself, and knowing the company. You shouldn’t wear a suit to a company that is known for its laid-back culture.

6. Being on your phone

Once again, this is about respect. The interviewer is taking time out of their day to meet with you, so the least you could do is give them your undivided attention. Checking your phone during a job interview sends a message that you don’t care; that you have other places to be.

So it should go without saying, but “don’t take phone calls or even leave your phone sitting on the table,” says Dickson. “The interviewer will not think you’re important, it’s just rude.”

7. Bringing food or drink to the interview

It’s fine to bring a bottle of water to your interview – sometimes we need to travel with water, especially if it’s hot outside. But don’t spend the interview fidgeting with it, and don’t bring any other type of drink or food with you.

Unless it’s a more informal interview and the employer has asked to meet you at a café –

and they are eating – wait until afterward to have that snack. Food and drink is distracting to both you and your interviewer, and after all, don't you want to be on your A game?

Job interviews are great opportunities to prove yourself and make a positive impact, so go forth and wow those employers.