

Interview Etiquette

First impressions do count. Your resume earned you a job interview. Now, business etiquette will add some polish to your presentation.

Etiquette—good manners—is based on the idea that certain social behaviors put people at ease and make interaction pleasant. Here are seven rules for interview etiquette:

1. **Be on time.**

Or arrive 5 minutes early. Being late says you're disorganized and not very good at time management. Drive the route to the organization the day before your interview so that you know exactly how long the commute will take.

2. **Turn off your cell phone.**

And leave it in your car. You don't want to be distracted as you offer your expertise to an employer, and an employer doesn't need to know your ringtone sounds like Beethoven's Symphony #5.

3. **Respect those already employed.**

It doesn't matter whether you're interviewing to be an entry-level employee or the next CEO of an organization. Be polite to everyone you meet, including the receptionist. You never know who may be asked, "So, what did you think of this candidate?"

4. **Dress like you mean it.**

Dress in business attire, even if you're interviewing in a business-casual office. Suits for men; suits or dresses for women. Go easy on the aftershave or perfume—better yet, don't wear fragrance at all just in case someone you are about to meet has allergies. Go light on the jewelry—earrings, a watch, and nothing else. No T-shirts, tank tops, or flip flops.

5. **Be handy with your handshake.**

Hand out. Clasp the extended hand firmly, but gently. Pump once. Release.

A flimsy handshake feels like dead fish and is unimpressive. A bone-crunching grasp may crush your potential boss' tennis swing and your chance of getting a job.

Practice ahead of time with a friend.

6. **Have a presence.**

Speak well, make eye contact, sit up straight.

Use your interviewer's name (in moderation), enough to show you're awake and attentive, but not so much as to annoy the hiring manager. Looking the hiring manager in the eye as you talk shows you're confident and engaged in the conversation. Don't stare—that's rude and creepy. Sit up straight. Slouching or sliding down in the chair makes you look tired, and no one wants to hire someone who is tired before they've started the job.

7. Say thank you. Twice.

The first thank you—at the end of the interview, the last few seconds before you leave the office (and while you're shaking hands for the second time)—may come naturally. "Thank you for your time. I look forward to hearing from you," shows you appreciate that someone has taken the time to talk to you and consider you for the job.

Say thank you by e-mail to each person who interviewed you immediately after you get back to your home. Spell everyone's name correctly and use their correct titles (find the information on the organization's website).

A thank-you note does several things:

- It says you appreciated the time your potential boss spent with you.
- It suggests you'll follow up on important things (like the boss' business).
- It's a great time to reiterate (very briefly) how your qualifications are a good match and how interested you are in getting the job.

Good luck with the interview!