

## Top 10 Interview Bloopers & How to Avoid Them

We've all heard stories of job candidates who looked great on paper but who were absolute disasters in person. You **HAVE** to make the best possible first impression. You can learn from the mistakes of others & avoid the top ten worst interview blunders:

**1. Poor handshake:** The three-second handshake that starts the interview is your first opportunity to create a great impression. But often an interview is blown right from the start by a poor handshake. Once you've delivered a bad handshake, it's tough to make a good impression on the interviewer. Here are some examples:

- The limp hand: Gives the appearance of disinterest or weakness.
- The tips of the fingers: Shows lack of ability to be involved.
- The arm pump: Sincerity is questionable, too much like an over-aggressive salesperson.
- Even if you think you've got the handshake thing covered, don't assume it's OK. It may be telling more about you than you know. Ask for an honest opinion from friends who aren't afraid to tell you the truth.

**2. Talking too much:** Most recruiters really dislike over-talkative candidates. Some examples:

- Taking too long to answer direct questions - Impression: you just can't get to the point.
- Nervous talkers - Impressions: You're covering up something or lying; you're unfocused or ditzzy.
- To avoid these forms of over-talking, practice answering questions directly with a friend.

**3. Saying negative things about your current or past employers/managers:** The fastest way to talk yourself out of a new job is to say negative things about your old job. Even if your last boss was pure evil, **NEVER** say anything bad about him/her. No matter how reasonable your complaints, **YOU** will come out the loser if you show that you disrespect your boss. When asked about previous jobs, make sure you say something positive about your experiences ("*I learned a great deal.*")

**4. Showing up late or too early:** The first rule of job search is show up on time for interviews! Showing up too early is not good. If you're more than 10 minutes early, it seems like you have too much time on your hands. If you appear desperate, they won't think you're a good candidate. Act as if your time is as valuable as theirs.

**5. Treating the receptionist rudely:** Since the first person you meet on an interview is

usually a receptionist, this is also the first impression you'll make. They may have lower-level positions, but receptionists have big input. Frequently, that person's job is to take you into the interview. S/he can pave your way positively or negatively before you even meet the interviewer. Receptionists are almost always asked for their opinion of you, too.

**6. Asking about benefits, vacation time or salary:** What if a car salesperson asked to see your credit report before allowing you to test-drive the car? That would be ridiculous and you'd walk out in disgust. The effect is about the same when a job seeker asks about benefits or other employee perks during the first interview. Wait until you've won the employer over before beginning that discussion.

**7. Not preparing for the interview:** Nothing communicates disinterest in a company like a candidate who hasn't bothered to do pre-interview research. The quickest way to make a good impression is to demonstrate your interest with a few well-thought-out questions that show your knowledge of the organization. Check out the company's website, which has LOTS of info.

**8. Verbal blunders:** A nervous, uncomfortable candidate rarely makes a good impression. Some signs of nervousness are "verbal ticks" — umm, like, well, you know. Ignore the butterflies in your stomach and pretend to be calm & confident by avoiding these repeated phrases. One of the best ways to do this is to practice, especially with a friend. Do a mock or pretend interview with a friend, and practice telling a success story, like how you did something very well. By doing this, you will feel more relaxed during the real interview.

**9. Not enough/too much eye contact:** Either one can be bad. If you avoid eye contact, you'll seem shifty or untruthful; if you look at them non-stop, without a break, you can wear them out, or they'll think you're odd. If this has been a problem for you, practice ahead of time with a friend.

**10. Not matching communication styles:** It's almost impossible to make a good first impression if you can't communicate effectively with an interviewer. But you can easily change that situation by mirroring the way the interviewer treats you. For example:

- If the interviewer is very business-like, don't try to loosen him/her up with a joke or story. Be brief, to the point and professional.
- If the interviewer seems easygoing, try talking about his/her interests. Often the items on the person's desk or bookcase can be clues.
- If you are asked a direct question, answer directly. Then ask if they need more information.

When you allow the interviewer to set the tone of the conversation, this can greatly improve your chances of making a good impression. You can put the person at ease — and make yourself seem more like him/her — by mirroring that person's communication style. After all, people hire people they're comfortable with, and who are like themselves.

Start your job search with a resume that creates a great first impression. Then back it up with outstanding interview skills. By avoiding the above problem areas, you will make

yourself a much better candidate. And you'll end up getting the job!

**How we can help** - The Employment and Training Representatives at **Kane County Department of Employment and Education** can help you through the entire process of developing a resume and successfully negotiating an interview.

**Four Offices to serve you:**

<b>Elgin</b> – 30 DuPage Court	847-888-7900 x 230
<b>N. Aurora</b> – 2 Smoketree Plaza	630-844-6640 x 203
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