

8 mistakes to never make in job interviews

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We all know the first-date-like jitters that go with a job interview: the more excited you are for the opportunity, the more anxiety you might experience before showing up. But as you prepare to meet your potential new boss and some potential new co-workers, it's also important to remember what face you're presenting to human resources. It's their job to look out for indicators that you're not the right candidate for the gig, and performing at your tip-top shape is essential to success. And often, human resources workers don't have the sentimental attachments or industry networks that managers might have, so they're harder to impress.

Or are they?

"HR managers want to see that you're confident in yourself, your skills, and your suitability for the company and role. If you don't believe you can do the job and fit in with the company, why should the HR manager believe it?" asks business psychologist, career coach and content director, [Kate Sullivan](#). "So presenting yourself with a calm, confident demeanor is important, even if you're nervous as heck about the interview."

Avoid these red flags so you will definitely get asked back for round two. Here are the surprising ways you may be hurting your own chances.

1. You don't make eye contact

When you're looking to hire a babysitter for your beloved babe or even a dog walker for your furry companion, would you select someone who didn't look you in the eye?

It seems like a no-brainer, but when you throw in a helping of nerves, you might forget to maintain eye contact during an interview. Gazing eye-to-eye helps the HR manager know that you see eye-to-eye and that you're presenting yourself sincerely.

"If you look away instead of looking directly at the interviewer, this indicates that you are uncomfortable with the question and/or that you may not be truthful with your response," explains [Amy Cooper Hakim](#), an expert on workplaces and industrial-organizational psychology.

When you're tempted to dart your attention because you're doubting your response (or worrying if you're talking too long), slow down, breathe and keep looking straight ahead. This will illustrate your strength and maturity, instead of making you look fishy.

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2. You aren't confident

Sullivan says that while you don't need to be a world-class public speaker, a successful professional does have the ability to pitch themselves effectively. Here's the thing: if you aren't able to sell yourself to your dream company, who is going to do it for you? No one. "If you can't, the odds that you'll be able to close a sale or make an important business presentation aren't good...and that's not the kind of person most HR managers want to hire," Sullivan says.

Though you don't want to sound like you're reading off a script, consider practicing your personal elevator pitch: who are you? Why are you awesome? Why should you, above anyone else, get this job?

3. You're overly enthusiastic

Some folks clam up when their nerves get the best of them, while others become chatty and overcompensate. If your response to anxiety-laced experiences is to overcompensate with laughter, jokes and loud remarks, Hakim says to tone it down.

"If you are overly excited throughout the whole interview, then the interviewer may think that you are not being sincere or that you are putting on a show," she notes. "Overcome this by smiling, yet not doing so in an exaggerated fashion. Show your enthusiasm for the position while still being professional."

4. You dodge the tricky questions

You can probably detail your past work experience without skipping a beat. Or, when asked your advice on a topic that you happen to have a plethora of experience with, you might be able to speak smartly and directly. But what about your greatest weakness? What your besties would say about you? Your biggest mistake on the job? There's a reason curveball questions are thrown into the job interview process, and your ability to answer them —without fumbling— illustrates a lot about your character.

"Adaptability is important because every job comes with challenges; how will you respond when there's a monkey wrench thrown into your project plans?," Sullivan says. "HR managers often try to ask quirky or seemingly random questions to see how well you can think on your feet and how you respond to the unexpected as a way to gauge what you might do in a high-pressure situation on the job."

5. You don't ask any questions

In any career book you'll ever read, it'll note how important it is to come armed with questions to an interview. And though you probably had a handful when you were trying to land that first gig post-college, now that you've been interviewing for years, you might forget this mandatory step. Don't. Every job is different, and if you show no curiosity, it suggests you're not paying attention.

“If you do not have any questions for the interviewer about the position, the company, or as a follow-up to questions asked, then the interviewer may think that you are not taking the interview seriously,” Hakim says. “Overcome this by writing down two questions before the interview. Pull them out to read at the end of the interview, if you realize that you have yet to ask any on your own.”

6. You’re not showing your personality

A big part of job performance isn’t set upon strategic goals, big praise or even compensation. Instead, much of what contributes to an employee’s success and productivity is how happy they are at work, day-in and day-out. And though Sullivan says ‘culture’ might feel like a corporate buzzword these days, it’s still important and relevant.

“If everyone on the team is loud and boisterous, playing foosball after work and taking team trips to the skate park, a shy wallflower might not perform well, even if they have all the skills needed to do the job,” she explains. “Likewise, a quiet, studious team might not be the best environment for a high-energy person who thrives on constant excitement. Assessing culture fit can help both a team and an individual thrive.”

That’s why you have to be true to who you are and show your personality— not only to ensure that you’re a right fit for the company, but to determine if the company is a right fit for you.

“If you know that the company has a startup vibe with plenty of laid-back perks, you might be tempted to present yourself differently to show that you’d fit in. If you’re not the type to hang out on a climbing wall on your lunch break, don’t say that you are—admit that you’d rather take a walk or, you know, just eat lunch. It does no one any favors for you to insist that a dog-friendly environment is just what you’ve always been looking for when, in fact, you’re allergic to dogs,” Sullivan says.

7. You’re fidgeting

We all have ways we demonstrate we’re nervous, intentionally and unintentionally. A few ticks here and there are fine, but if you’re overly fidgeting during your interview, the HR manager is going to notice—and fast.

“Cross your legs or ankles to keep from tapping your toes or jiggling your leg. Don’t cross your arms—it can seem standoffish—but try squeezing your elbows to your sides or focusing on keeping your shoulders down and back,” Sullivan says. “If you really can’t help but fidget, try to do it subtly. Take out a notebook and pen as though you’re going to take notes during the interview—even if you’re not—so that you can squeeze the pen instead of tapping your fingers.”

8. You’re too rehearsed

Problem: you want to sound like you know your stuff. Bigger problem: you practice so much that you sound like a robot. HR managers want to get to know you, not the version of yourself

that you think they want to hear. Buzzwords are fine and all, but without a personality and a human to go behind them, they just sound mindless and insincere. The human brain is wired for narratives. Learn how to tell your story.

“Contrary to what you might think, jargon doesn’t make you sound authoritative—it makes you sound like you read a few too many articles on the latest hot topic in your field. It adds nothing to the conversation to tell the interviewer that you ‘10-X’d results and maximized synergies between stakeholders,’” Sullivan says. “If you really can’t come up with an answer to the question, say so. By having the confidence to admit that you don’t know something off the top of your head, then suggesting a solution, you prove that you’re flexible and that you’re comfortable enough with yourself and your skills to admit when you don’t know something.”