

# What You Wish You'd Known Before Your JOB INTERVIEW

## Common nonverbal mistakes made at a job interview

From a survey of 2000 bosses

- 21% — Playing with hair or touching face
- 47% — Having little or no knowledge of the company is the most common mistake job seekers make during interviews

- 67% — Failure to make eye contact
- 38% — Lack of smile
- 33% — Bad posture
- 21% — Crossing arms over their chest
- 9% — Using too many hand gestures
- 26% — Handshake that is too weak
- 33% — Fidgeting too much

In a survey of 2000 bosses **33%** claimed that they know within the first **90 seconds** of an interview whether they will hire someone



The average length of an interview is approximately 40 minutes

## Statistics show that when meeting new people the impact is:

- 7% — From what we actually say
- 38% — The quality of our voice grammar and overall confidence
- 55% — The way we dress, act and walk through the door

## Clothes

- Bright colors are a turnoff
- 70% — Employers claiming they don't want applicants to be fashionable or trendy.
- 65% — Of bosses said clothes could be the deciding factor between two similar candidates.

## Top Ten Most common mistakes made at a job interview

- 10 Over-Explaining Why You Lost Your Last Job  
Conveying That You're Not Over It 9
- 8 Lacking Humor, Warmth, or Personality  
Not Showing Enough Interest or Enthusiasm 7
- 6 Inadequate Research About a Potential Employer  
Concentrating Too Much on What You Want 5
- 4 Trying to Be All Things to All People  
"Winging" the Interview 3
- 2 Failing to Set Yourself Apart From Other Candidates  
Failing to Ask For the Job 1

## Most common tips about interviewing

- 4 Learn about the organization  
Have a specific job in mind 3
- 2 Review your qualifications for the job  
Be ready to briefly describe your experience 1

## 5 questions most likely to be asked

- 5 Tell me about your experience at \_\_\_\_\_
- 4 Why do you want to work for us?  
What do you know about our company? 3
- 2 Why did you leave your last job?  
Tell me about yourself 1

## Interview Do's & Don'ts

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### Do:

- Research the company
- Dress impeccably
- Bring portfolio, pen, extra copies of resume
- Know the names and titles of your interviewers
- Introduce yourself in a courteous manner.  
"Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_. I have a 9:00 appointment with Mr. Smith."
- Mind your posture and walk briskly
- Offer your hand in greeting anyone – have a firm grip
- Maintain good eye contact and give non-verbal feedback
- Project enthusiasm, confidence and flexibility
- Relate your background and skills for the position
- Ask good questions
- State your strong interest in the opportunity and the company
- Thank the interviewer for their time

### Don't:

- Be late – always arrive 10-15 minutes early
- Smoke or drink at the interview or immediately before it begins
- Wear sunglasses or outerwear into the interview room
- Bring a cell phone
- Chew gum
- Read or pick up objects on the interview's desk
- Be negative – about anything!
- Ramble, mumble, or dominate the conversation
- Answer questions with simple "yes" or "no"
- Be passive or overly aggressive
- Discuss family, personal, or financial problems
- Worry about momentary silence

## Behavior Based Questions

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- Tell me about a time when you had a deadline to meet, but things didn't go as planned.
- Tell me about a time you had a disagreement with your coworker or peer; what was it about and how did it turn out?
- Tell me about a time you had to organize a project for school or work; how did it turn out?
- Tell me about a time you had a disagreement with your professor; how did you handle it?
- Explain how you have used your skills, either at school or on the job, what were the circumstances and what were the results?
- Tell me about a situation where your technical skills were needed to solve a problem.
- Tell me how you resolved a problem caused by a lack of communication.
- Give me an example of a situation in which you made a commitment you couldn't keep.
- Share a time when you were in a position to influence a decision, what happened?
- Tell me about a situation when you had to adapt to a change you didn't like.
- Describe a time when your job/school requirements changed, what effect did that have?
- Give me an example that demonstrates the extent of your motivation to get the job done.
- Give me an example of a time you lacked the motivation to get an assignment done.
- Describe a time you lacked a skill needed to get a job done, what did you do?

# How to Answer the 4 Toughest Job Interview Questions

Here are four of the toughest questions your interviewers may fire at you – and how to answer them:

**1. Tell me about a time you failed.** This is one of the most popular and [awkward interview questions](#) because it's so difficult for most people to gracefully discuss failure without worrying that they'll say something that turns off their prospective employer. Career coach Christie Mims explains that with this question, the interviewer is trying to gauge how you respond under pressure and grow from adversity. Mims suggests that the best way to answer this question is honestly. "Highlight a failure and then follow up with what you learned and how you changed," she says. "Interviewers are less concerned with the failure than how you handled it (you are human after all). They want to know that you are capable of thoughtful growth and can handle stress under pressure."

**2. Why do you have gaps on your résumé?** It's not unusual to have [gaps between periods of work](#) and unemployment – particularly in this economy. But it's important to know how to explain any gap (or gaps) appropriately. Mims recommends targeting your answer around how your particular time out of work actually benefits your employer. "A great answer is going to include positive action and an explanation," she says. "I took some time off in between jobs and focused on volunteering on XYZ project/organization, and I'm excited to bring that skill set here," instead of finger pointing: 'My company tanked and the economy is terrible,' or worse, complete lethargy: 'Things have been hard recently and I haven't really found anything.' Show that even when things get tough, you've still got gumption to keep trying."

**3. What is your greatest weakness?** Almost every professional interview includes some variation of this question, which doesn't make it any less awkward to answer. Many experts advise finding a way to turn a negative into a positive – for example, by stating that you work too hard, have perfectionist tendencies, or are too passionate. There's another possible approach, though, that David Reese, vice president of people and culture at Medallia, recommends: being honest. "Many interviewers are not really looking to find out whether a candidate's organizational skills could use improvement, or that they struggle with presenting to large groups or even leading large teams," he says. "They're trying to find out whether they have self-awareness, whether they are able to be critical and most importantly, whether they're able to tell the truth – when it's difficult."

**4. Why did you leave your last job?** A variation of this question is, "Why would you consider leaving your current job?" What's tough is that this straightforward-seeming question can become a minefield if you're not careful about the [tone of your response](#), so you need to walk a fine line when answering.

"If you left or will leave because you don't feel that you can go any farther up the ladder there (because your manager is not interested in your development or the organization is limited in what it can offer), you want to convey this in an upbeat way," says Anna Ranieri, an executive coach. "This should sound something like, 'I learned a lot at ABC Inc., and contributed a lot to my department and the company. I feel that I've gone as far as I can go there and it's time to take my next step. I know that I can do more and contribute more and continue to learn in an environment like yours.'"