

Personal Appearance & Presence

Dress for success. If you project a serious presence, you will be taken seriously. Even if it's a clown company and everyone in the company dresses like a clown, you don't get to wear the clown suit until after you make the team. Always appear at interviews dressed at least one level above the normal dress of the organization. If the place wears polo shirts and jeans, you interview in a polo shirt UNDER a sports jacket and slacks. If you don't know what to wear, ask before you appear for your interview. That said, this is what a company normally considers a serious presence:

- A dark conservatively-styled suit. Pant-suits for women are iffy; and this is not a time for cheap polyester ties with food stains. This is a silk tie or scarf occasion.
 - An all white, professionally-cleaned, shirt or blouse.
 - Black well-polished shoes
 - Hose (women), black knee-high* dress socks (men) *flesh shouldn't show when you cross your legs
 - Limited, and only traditional, use of jewelry (it is a distraction)
 - No obvious scents (bad breath, body odor, tobacco, perfumes, and after-shaves are distractions)
 - No visible tattoos.
 - Hair and facial hair cut and styled well.
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- Arrive 10 to 15 minutes before the scheduled interview time. Have a business card to introduce yourself. If it's in your control, try to be among the later candidates to interview; there's a disadvantage in being among the first.
 - Have a 8x11 portfolio to carry an extra resume and for taking notes during the interview (that shows the interviewer that what s/he is saying is important to you)
 - Greet the interviewer with a firm handshake, a smile, and state your name slowly and clearly as you express your appreciation for their time and consideration. You might ask for his or her business card as you pass yours to him or her; you both may forget this later.
 - Do not lay anything on the interviewer's work space without first asking permission – this particularly applies to the portfolio and purses. This courtesy applies to any personal space of the interviewer.
 - Wait for the interviewer to direct you where to sit. If the seat is adjustable and you can raise it discretely, do so. Never sit with your back touching the back of the chair; rather "sit up straight" on the forward 2/3s of the seat. This posture, though uncomfortable to you, makes you look enthused, engaged (when you lean, you lean forward), and taller to the interviewer (tall is a favorable impression in every situation).
 - Avoid crossing your hands, arms, and legs during interviews; that posture projects defensiveness and insecurity. Rather rest your forearms on the front edge of the chair arms or extend your hands, palms down on your thighs. For men, feet should be flat on the floor throughout, but women may cross their ankles at an angle. This sounds very stiff but it is countered by using your facial movements and hands as appropriate to add emphasis to what you are saying.
 - Eye contact is critical throughout the interview. Staring away from the interviewer's eyes for any reason can be deadly to your job prospects. There is a reason they say your eyes are the windows of your soul. Leave the cell phone in the car during your interview.
 - The interviewer will probably lead off with an ice breaker, like "Tell me about yourself". Respond, but close your intro by asking him or her to discuss the most critical segments of the job description before you get into your work experience. This is critical step in the interview process because you will then know how to tailor every answer to fulfill the interviewer's checklist of requirements. At the close of the interview when you are asked if you have any questions, include the question, "Did I miss or fail to discuss any topics on your checklist?" You need to make sure nothing was overlooked.
 - No "dead air"; if the interviewer is not speaking, you should be. This is your opportunity to market your capabilities in a way that supports the interviewers' needs.
 - Smile and nod in agreement frequently. Engage the interviewer at a personal level early in the interview...look for personal interests you might both relate to.
 - Individualized thank you notes (or emails) to everyone you meet at the interview should be completed before you go to sleep.