

Job interviews – part 1

by Jamie Keddie

Level: Intermediate and above

Time: 60 minutes

Objectives: For students to discuss and share personal experiences of job interviews. To equip students with basic knowledge of standard (British and US) interview etiquette.

Procedure

- Write the following book titles on the board and ask your students if they can guess what the missing nine-letter word is.

Perfect answers to _____ questions
by Max Eggert

Brilliant _____: What employers want to hear and how to say it
by Ros Jay

Perfect _____: All you need to get it right the first time
by Max Eggert

Successful _____ skills: How to present yourself with confidence
by Rebecca Corfield

Answer = *interview*

- If your students can't identify the mystery word, reveal it with a game of hangman.
- Ask your students what type of advice they would expect to find in books of this nature. Brainstorm with your class and write up a few ideas on the board.
- Optional:** Have your students look up the book titles on www.amazon.co.uk. Ask them to report back to the class and add to the list on the board if you need to.
- Give out copies of Worksheet 1 (Job interview do's and don'ts) and have your students complete it (individually, in pairs or in small groups). If possible, let them have access to bilingual dictionaries during

this activity. If not, answer students' vocabulary questions on demand.

Note: The answers to this exercise are to be found on Worksheet 2.

- Let your students mingle and compare their answers.
- Give out copies of Worksheet 2. Have your students pair up and share their own interview experiences.
- Ask your students to complete one of the writing tasks at the end of Worksheet 2.

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Job interview do's and don'ts

The following list contains:

- 16 do's (i.e. things you *should* do during, or in preparation for a job interview)
- 14 don'ts (i.e. things you *shouldn't* do)

In each case, decide which is which and write either *Do* or *Don't* in the space provided. The first four have been done for you.

- Do arrive for your interview 10 minutes early.
- Don't ask about salary and benefits (holidays, etc) until the subject is brought up by your interviewer or until you have received an offer.
- Don't be late for the interview.
- Do be prepared for typical interview questions.
- _____ chew gum or go to the interview smelling of smoke.
- _____ come across as being too laidback or overly familiar.
- _____ make negative comments about previous employers (or anyone else).
- _____ dress smartly and appropriately. If in doubt, it is always better to be overdressed.
- _____ exhibit a positive attitude. Project confidence and energy, and enthusiasm for the job.
- _____ find out as much as you can about the employer or company before the interview.
- _____ go to the interview looking scruffy, untidy or underdressed.
- _____ have intelligent questions prepared to ask the interviewer. Having done your research about the employer in advance, ask questions which you did not find answered in your interview.
- _____ lie or be untruthful.
- _____ listen carefully to the interviewer's questions and answer them honestly and without prolonged hesitation. In order to buy thinking time, repeat the question before answering it.
- _____ make sure that you know the exact time and location of the interview, how to get there and how long the journey will take.
- _____ make sure you are clean and well-groomed.

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- _____ make sure you take a handkerchief or packet of tissues.
- _____ speak too much or appear desperate for the job.
- _____ remember body language and posture: Sit up straight, look alert and interested, maintain good eye contact with the interviewer and smile.
- _____ respond to questions by saying things like, “Hmm, that’s a very good question. Let me think ...”
- _____ sell yourself – stress your achievements and avoid mentioning any negative information about yourself.
- _____ shake hands firmly.
- _____ slouch or fidget in your chair.
- _____ speak too quietly (a strong voice projects confidence).
- _____ switch off your mobile phone.
- _____ take a seat until you are offered one.
- _____ talk in terms of what you can do for the employer rather than what the employer can do for you.
- _____ waffle or go off at tangents.
- _____ walk into a private office with a dripping umbrella.

Glossary

achievements	successes
to come across (as being)	to seem / appear
dripping	very wet
to fidget	to make nervous movements, especially with your hands
firmly	not weakly / with some strength
well-groomed	if you are well-groomed, you look like you take care of your appearance
hesitation	a moment of thought but no action
laid-back	relaxed
overly familiar	too friendly (for example, calling someone by their first name in a formal situation)
posture	the way you sit or stand
scruffy	the opposite of smart (see <i>smart</i> , below)
slouch	to sit on a chair with a bad posture (see <i>posture</i> , above)
smart	well-dressed
to go off at a tangent	to start talking about something unrelated
untidy	disorganized
waffle	to speak a lot but say nothing

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Discussion sheet

Discuss the following with your partner.

1. In general, how do you feel about job interviews? Do you do well in them or does the idea of a job interview fill you with fear?
2. Do you remember how many job interviews you have had in your life? In how many of these were you successful?
3. Look at the list of *Things you should do* in the box below. Can you recall any personal job interview experiences in which you failed to do any of the following?

Do's (things you should do)

- Find out as much as you can about the employer or company before the interview.
- Make sure that you know the exact time and location of the interview, how to get there and how long the journey will take.
- Be prepared for typical interview questions.
- Have intelligent questions prepared to ask the interviewer. Having done your research about the employer in advance, ask questions which you did not find answered in your research.
- Make sure you are clean and well-groomed.
- Dress smartly and appropriately. If in doubt, it is always better to be overdressed.
- Make sure you take a handkerchief or packet of tissues.
- Arrive for your interview 10 minutes early.
- Switch off your mobile phone.
- Shake hands firmly.
- Remember body language and posture: Sit up straight, look alert and interested, maintain good eye contact with the interviewer and smile.
- Exhibit a positive attitude. Project confidence and energy, and enthusiasm for the job.
- Listen carefully to the interviewer's questions and answer them honestly and without prolonged hesitation. In order to buy thinking time, repeat the question out aloud before answering it.
- Talk in terms of what you can do for the employer rather than what the employer can do for you.
- Sell yourself – stress your achievements and avoid mentioning any negative information about yourself.

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4. Look at the list of *Things you should not do* in the box below. Can you recall any personal job interview experiences in which you did any of the following?

Don'ts (things you should not do)

- Walk into a private office with a dripping umbrella.
- Be late for the interview.
- Chew gum or go to the interview smelling of smoke.
- Go to the interview looking scruffy, untidy or underdressed.
- Take a seat until you are offered one.
- Slouch or fidget in your chair.
- Speak too quietly (a strong voice projects confidence).
- Waffle or go off at tangents.
- Make negative comments about previous employers (or anyone else).
- Ask about salary and benefits (holidays, etc) until the subject is brought up by your interviewer or until you have received an offer.
- Come across as being too laidback or over familiar.
- Lie or be untruthful.
- Speak too much or appear desperate for the job.
- Respond to questions by saying things like, "Hmm, that's a very good question. Let me think ..."

5. Think of three ways in which you could improve your interview skills in the future.
6. Have you ever had a job interview in a language that is not your mother tongue (English, for example)? How did it go?

Writing

Write about a memorable interview experience you have had (minimum 150 words). You could choose any of the following:

- Memories of my first interview.
- Memories of a disaster interview in which everything went wrong.
- Memories of my most successful interview – what I did well.
- Memories of the interviews I had for my current job.