



# Interviews: Taboos

Don't undermine your hiring chances by overlooking what NOT to do.

## Life is like a baseball game.

"When you think a fastball is coming, You gotta be ready to hit the curve." — Jaja Q

You passed the cover letter and résumé litmus tests. Now comes the third and most important step of the job search: The Interview. Everything you've done has been leading up to this moment. And while you may have all TO DO's down pat, the game isn't over yet. Errors can still keep you from scoring a home run.

## Strike #1 — Before the interview no-no's

**The wrong message.** "hotmama@..," "Hey, Dude! Leave a message...," and "...here's me at Spring Break..." can leave negative impressions for recruiters emailing, telephoning, or checking social networks to learn more about job candidates. Photos, poor spelling, even blogs may reveal more about you than is appropriate. Be sure your email address is suitable for your job search. End your outgoing message with a "thank you," and watch what you post online.

**Being late.** Not knowing the interview location, the best route to avoid travel delays, or a good parking place if you're driving can kill the interview before it even begins. Be safe: Do a trial run.

**Fools rush in.** Don't arrive sweaty and disheveled. 15 minutes before is standard to calm down and collect your thoughts. If you're really nervous, give yourself 30 extra minutes: 15 minutes outside in your car to calm down, then walk in early.

**Attire that speaks louder than your résumé.** Don't accessorize to excess. Avoid heavy scents. No clothing stains or wrinkles. Ladies, wear stockings and don't try a new hairdo right before the interview: You need to feel familiar and comfortable with yourself. When interviewing for a financial firm, don't try to out-dress the suits.

## Strike #2 — During the interview no-no's

**No pulse.** Get a grip; no anemic handshakes, please, or fist pumping. A firm, friendly handshake with a smile and eye contact is appropriate.

**Loose lips sink ships.** Avoid sharing too much personal information or just talking too much. The gift of gab may be seen as glib. Don't be so conversational that you come across as being too casual or rude. Resist the urge to be humorous or cocky. Witty, yes. Smug, no.

**Be self-erasing.** Modesty is not a virtue here. Confidently relay your skills and achievements, but do so without trumpeting.

**Winging it.** No impromptu performances! Don't be lazy. Practice beforehand, but avoid sounding stiff.

**"Show me the money!"** Let the recruiter bring up the topic of salary and benefits.

**Being clueless.** Yes, be sure you're interviewing for the right job.

**Poor body language.** Don't slouch, scratch, stare, chew, or smoke. Sit up; be attentive. Resist fidgeting with rings and clothing. Let your mouth do the talking, not your hands. Also, be aware of the interviewer's body language: Don't overstay your welcome.

**Airing dirty laundry.** No negative talk about personal woes or previous employers. Emphasize your strengths and qualities, not your weaknesses.

**Missing the point.** Listen carefully and understand the question before answering. Address *their* needs.

**Failing to ask intelligent questions.** Yes, you are interviewing the company as much as it is interviewing you.

**Lying.** Don't. Period.

## Strike #3 — After the interview no-no's. You're out!

**No thanks.** Thank the recruiter when done. Ask about the next step. Send a thank you in writing within 48 hours. It's courtesy and indicates interest in the job.



## i n a nutshell:

For the interview, don't:

- Be late
- Fail to practice beforehand
- Dress inappropriately
- Talk too much or lie
- Overlook body language
- Speak negatively of yourself or others
- Sabotage yourself online
- Be unfamiliar with your résumé or the company
- Fail to ask questions
- Leave your cell phone on
- Fail to thank the interviewer

Remember, you are responsible for your own career success.