

Embarrassing Interview Mistakes and How to Prevent Them From Happening to You

Job interviews are intense enough without having to worry about mortifying mistakes. A recent [OfficeTeam survey](#) revealed some of the most egregious interview blunders that senior managers have heard of candidates making. A few of them could've happened to anyone, but the majority of the bloopers were preventable — had the interviewee been more prepared and conscientious.

Here are some of the highlights — or, rather, lowlights:

- “One candidate didn’t realize his zipper was down.”
- “One job seeker had lettuce in his teeth when he arrived.”
- “An interviewee was so nervous she almost fainted.”

Here are some other interview mistakes that occurred because the candidate didn’t prepare thoroughly, or at all:

- “When a woman was asked to tell the interviewer a little about herself, she didn’t have anything to say.”
- “An applicant showed up in sweatpants.”
- “The person was wearing mismatched shoes.”
- “The candidate called the interviewer by the wrong name.”
- “A guy didn’t know what job he was applying for.”

Some people were clueless, rude or deceitful. You can bet the following interviewees’ resumes went into the circular file:

- “The person was checking his cell phone and chewing gum during the interview.”
- “A candidate fell asleep.”
- “Someone started swearing during the interview.”
- “One job applicant was caught lying on her resume during the meeting.”
- “A candidate claimed he was late because he got lost, but the receptionist said she saw him hanging out at the coffee shop.”

How to avoid blunders and mishaps

Interview mistakes do happen, but you can minimize your chances of committing a faux pas and losing out on that great position. Here are some interview tips and other job search advice for wowing hiring managers:

1. Be truthful. This should go without saying: Do not embellish or inflate your qualifications — not in your cover letter, nor resume, nor during the interview. Even if you don’t get found out during the vetting process, chances are very good that the truth

will come out eventually.

2. Be informed. Before you customize your cover letter and again before the interview, research the prospective employer. Thoroughly read the About Us and News sections of the company's website, check out its social media presence, and see what the press has written lately about the organization. By having all this background information, you'll be better able to answer the interviewer's questions, [ask intelligent questions yourself](#) and minimize interview mistakes.

3. Be practiced. Don't go into a job interview cold, especially if you're a recent grad or have been out of the workforce for a while. Rehearse by speaking in front of a mirror or into a voice memo app on your smartphone. Role-play the interview with friends or family members whom you feel are in a position to give you realistic feedback and interviewing tips.

4. Be well dressed and groomed. First impressions matter, and hiring managers form a quick opinion of candidates based on how they present themselves — from head (tidy haircut) to toe (polished and matching shoes) and everything in between. When you don't know [what to wear](#), err on the side of business formal.

5. Be prepared. The night before or the morning of the interview, get organized. Find the address, map your route and allow extra time to get there. Arrive about 10 minutes before the appointment, and pop into the restroom to check your hair, teeth, makeup (for women) and zipper. But just as you shouldn't be late, you should also not show up too early, lest you come across as too eager. Take a few deep breaths, give yourself a pep talk, and walk in with confidence.

6. Be courteous. Your interview may be with just one person, but others are taking notes as well. Treat everyone you meet with kindness and respect, including parking lot attendants, janitors, security guards and receptionists.

Interview mistakes happen, but there's less of a chance of them if you follow business etiquette and take the time to prepare. And if you blunder, all might not be lost. How you recover and handle [challenging interview situations](#) could impress the hiring manager and land you that job after all.

OfficeTeam is the world's leading staffing service specializing in the placement of highly skilled administrative and office support professionals. The company has more than 300 locations worldwide, and offers online job search services at www.officeteam.com. For more information, contact Naz Araghian at naz.araghian@roberthalf.com.