

What Not to Say at a Job Interview

The last thing you want to do is leave the wrong impression. Avoid these 12 gaffes that could cost you a job.

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During the dozen years I've worked in human resources for global organizations, I've seen plenty of job candidates sabotage themselves during interviews. Take, for example, Noah Ferr -- an amalgam of the less-skilled interviewees I've encountered.

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Noah made no eye contact. He inquired about being reimbursed for the \$12 round-trip expense he incurred to visit our offices. He explained that he'd fallen into his profession (the same profession for which we were interviewing him) and wanted out. He gave rambling five-minute answers to questions that could have been answered with a simple yes or no. And his handshake was akin to a near-death experience.

The takeaway: Don't be like Noah. And if you want to land the job, here are a dozen more things you should never say (or imply) at a job interview.

- 1. This suit has been in my family for five generations.** Fail to ace attire and grooming and you can sink your chances before you say a word.
- 2. You think this is disorganized. Wait till you see me on work projects.** Neglecting to bring information required on the application, or bringing too few copies of your typo-free résumé, looks just plain careless.
- 3. I'd rather watch The Worst of C-Span than research your company.** Bone up on recent new business the company has landed or write-ups about the firm in trade publications.
- 4. I expect you to provide the exact job I want on my terms -- now.** Say too much about the job you want and you risk eliminating yourself.

5. I could care less -- but not much less. You don't want an awkward silence when asked if you have any questions. Speak up.

6. If you hire me, you'd better get your own résumé up to date. Come across as overly aggressive and you may scare the interviewer into rejecting you.

7. You might want to have security frisk me before I leave. Sharing confidential information about past or present employers will make the interviewer wonder if you can be trusted.

8. I think you're not playing with a full deck. If you're asked the "What are your weaknesses?" question, the interviewer wants a straight answer. Mention one noncritical area you'd like to polish.

9. I'm just going to go ahead and answer the question I wish you'd asked. Failing to answer the question that was actually posed will frustrate the interviewer.

10. I'll be a huge drain on company morale. A negative attitude regarding your current or past employers or colleagues will make your stock drop.

11. Ask not what I can do for you. What can you do for me? Asking questions about salary or benefits prior to getting a job offer is a major turnoff.

12. Why did we meet? Candidates who leave without underscoring their great interest in being hired are quickly forgotten.

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