

# Top 10 Interview Killers

When you're on a romantic dinner date, you try to avoid "mood killers" -- talking with a mouth full of food, cursing an ex-lover, or complaining about a foot ailment. During a job interview, you have to avoid similar spoilers if you want to make a good impression.

Here are 10 of the most common "advantage killers" and how you can steer clear of them during your next job interview.

- 1. Not knowing your aim.** Too often candidates think their purpose in an interview is simply to ask for a job. Your goals are to demonstrate how you are a good fit for the organization, and to assess whether the job is really right for you.
- 2. Being too needy.** Neediness is probably the No. 1 advantage-killer in an interview. Remind yourself before walking in the door: you do not need this job. You do need food, you do need air, and you do need water. Keep things in perspective.
- 3. Lousy nonverbal communication.** This is about demonstrating confidence. Your first impression makes the difference. When you enter the interview room, stand up straight, make eye contact, and offer a strong handshake with your interviewer. If necessary, jot their name on your notepad as soon as you seat yourself. Do the same for any other individual you are meeting with.
- 4. Compromising your position.** You should always participate in the interview as an equal, not a subordinate, of the person conducting the interview. Often this is a subtle matter of self-perception, so remind yourself before the interview.
- 5. Falling into the answers-only rut.** An interview is a conversation. Don't just answer their questions. That's why you've "prepared stories" to highlight your accomplishments, which will be your moments to shine. When you do answer any questions, make sure that you answer immediately and follow up with a question of your own, if at all possible.
- 6. Rambling.** Telling your interviewer more than they need to know could be fatal. Your stories should be 60 to 90 seconds long and they should have a relevant point. Focus, focus, focus. Stick with your rehearsed stories, your research, and the questions you need to ask. Don't fill up the silence with unnecessary talk.
- 7. Being overly familiar.** A good interviewer will be skilled enough to put you at ease within the first 10 minutes of the interview. That doesn't mean that they have become your best friend. Don't let your guard down. You're there to interview them and get answers to your questions. Treat this from start to finish as the professional business meeting that it is.
- 8. Making incorrect assumptions.** Points are not deducted at the interview for asking questions when you don't understand something. Don't guess at what your interviewer means. Effective interviewing is all about collecting information in real time, taking good notes, and responding only to the actual facts you've collected. If you find yourself making assumptions or guessing about something that was said, stop and ask for clarification before you answer.
- 9. Getting emotional.** At times the interviewer may hit a nerve or consciously try to provoke you into an "outburst." Don't fall for it. Clear your mind of any fears or expectations, so you can maintain a calm, open-minded perspective at all times. When emotions enter into an interview, failure follows.
- 10. Not asking specific questions.** You want to find out more about what this job is really about and whether you want it. Arrive with a list of several prepared questions about the company, the position, and the people who work there. Ask questions that begin with "what," "how," and "why." Avoid simple yes/no questions. Get your interviewer talking as much as possible, then take notes. Most interviewers are unimpressed by someone who has no questions.