



How to present yourself at an interview

By The N.M. Department of Workforce Solutions

For the Journal

Interviews are all about first impressions, so you need to dress the part. You may be seeking work in an industry that has different standards than you would see in a typical office setting. But even if the environment is casual, you still want to appear professional and prepared. How you dress and how you present yourself will definitely set the tone for the interview. The following are general suggestions to help you look your best.

Know what kind of company you will be interviewing with and take some time to research the prospective employer. To learn more about the dress code, observe the office when you are dropping off an application or paperwork, visit their website, or call and speak to someone in their human resources department for tips on what to wear.

Some interviews may require a suit, while others may be less conservative and more casual. An interview with a construction company may require vary different attire than if you are interviewing with an accounting firm. Learn about what the office culture is there, and then use your discretion to pick out an outfit that would be appropriate.

Put your outfit together a day or two before your interview. An interview is not the time to take a fashion risk or try a new trend. Play it safe with your outfit.

Wear clothes that are conservative in color, this applies whether you are wearing a print or a solid color. If you are wearing a patterned shirt or tie, stick to a small, simple pattern and steer away from bold colors, such as fluorescent orange or hot pink. Neutral colors, such as black, white, grey, and navy blue are always safe choices. Avoid short skirts and low necklines. Traditionally, skirts at knee-length are acceptable.

Try on all the clothes to make sure you are comfortable and everything fits well. Pay attention to detail, check for missing buttons and loose strings. Launder, iron, or dry clean the clothes and organize the outfit so that you have one less thing to remember on the day of your interview.

Your shoes need to be appropriate for the time of year and season as well as professional. Choose between close-toed shoes, heels, loafers or pumps. Avoid flip-flops, sandals and sneakers.

Be well-groomed. Make sure your hair is neat and out of your eyes because you want to make sure that you have great eye contact during an interview. Keep jewelry and accessories simple so that they do not divert the interviewer's attention away from your face. Wear minimal piercings and limited jewelry, also cover tattoos to avoid distraction.

Try not to wear heavy perfume, aftershave, or cologne. There is always the chance that you will be interviewing in a small space or office and you don't want to overpower the room.

If you are concerned about your breath, carry breath mints. Avoid the temptation to chew gum during your interview. Carry a notebook, portfolio or briefcase that contains extra copies of your resume, references, paper and pen. Avoid bringing in oversized bags or purses.

Dressing for the job is a great way to impress a prospective employer. Your professional dress and attention to detail will suggest to the interviewer that you are serious about this job opportunity and your future career.

This is a regular column written by the N.M. Department of Workforce Solutions. For more information, go to www.dws.state.nm.us.

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