

How important are first impressions in an interview? Without a doubt, they are critical! In fact, some studies suggest that an employer often decides whether or not to hire a person in the first few minutes of the interview. At the very least, first impressions are an important consideration in the hiring process. By following some simple strategies, you will be on the road toward making the best possible impression you can on the employer.

Before the Interview:

- **Research the position**, employer, and community so you can confidently discuss formal and informal issues throughout the entire interview.
- **Review how to find the interview location and parking arrangements.** Leave sufficient time to arrive 10 minutes ahead of your scheduled interview.
- **Dress appropriately.** Even in today's casual work environment, choose to wear a business suit when going to a job interview. Unless an employer specifies in advance, opt for a very professional appearance. When in doubt, err on the side of conservatism. A job interview is an opportunity to show the employer that you "fit" with the organizational culture. See the Ready Reference on Dressing for the Interview.

On Arrival:

- **Be polite and respectful** to each person you meet.
- **Greet people by name**, Give a firm handshake, and if you do not catch the name, ask for it again.
- **Introduce yourself** to the receptionist and explain who you are as well as the purpose of the meeting.
- **Establish good eye contact** with everyone you meet.
- **Smile, relax, be enthusiastic** and eager about the opportunity to meet with the employer. Be yourself!

Nonverbal Communication:

- **Lean slightly forward in your chair** and make good eye contact throughout the interview. This communicates genuine interest in the position and what is being said.
- **Eliminate repetitive**, nervous behaviors, such as nail biting, foot wiggling, or gum chewing.
- **Pay attention** to the tone and volume of your voice and be aware of your facial expressions.
- **Be prepared** with a pen and portfolio to take notes when appropriate.

In the Interview:

- **Use the interviewer's name** as often as possible. Use Mr. or Ms. unless invited to use the first name.
- **Establish rapport** with the interviewer, particularly in the first few minutes of the interview. Express appreciation for the helpfulness and hospitality of those who have greeted you. Observe and comment on your surroundings. Do not be in too big of a rush to get down to business; however, if the recruiter appears to be ready to start the interview, always follow his or her lead and avoid distractions.