



TOP TEN INTERVIEW BLUNDERS AND HOW TO AVOID THEM

As executive recruiters, the staff at GovHR have had the opportunity to observe thousands of interviews. Here is a list of the most common missteps they see, along with tips to avoid making them.



1 Poor Initial Impression

- Smile when entering the room.
- Make eye contact.
- Shake hands with every interviewer (firm, not crushing).

2 Appearance Issues

- Project a professional image.
- Wear a suit that fits you well. Invest in a new one if needed.
- Be aware of any nervous habits you have that may creep into an interview. These can include your leg shaking under the table, saying “um” frequently, or turning red. Some of these are not controllable. If you are aware of them, though, you might be able to take steps to counteract them in advance of the interview.



3 Dated Language

- Under no circumstances should a candidate say “girls in the office” or use other language that may indicate you are not current with appropriate professional conversation.

4 Failure to Answer the Question

- Answer each question directly, give an example to support your answer, and conclude.
- If you have to ask if you answered the question, you probably have not. If you are unsure, you could say, “Can I provide you with another example?”



5 Long-winded Answers

- You must strike a balance between being succinct and getting your story out.
- If the recruiter or one of the interviewers brings up time constraints and the need to focus your answers, take heed. You can still salvage the interview if you adjust going forward.



6 Inability to Convey Your Accomplishments

- Make a few notes on a notepad in your portfolio (you must bring one to an interview) of key points you want to make – no matter what.
- If you have not had the opportunity to make all of your points, ask for a chance at the end of the interview to make a brief closing comment and then indicate you “have these other experiences you believe may be compatible with their community...”
- We all have had the experience of walking out of a presentation and thinking of what we should have said. If that happens and you feel the omission is significant, address it briefly in your emailed thank you note.

7 Failure to Prepare

- Do your research on the community/organization.
- Read the materials on their website and then include some of your observations in your answers.
- Practice answering questions you think might be asked. You don't want to sound rehearsed, but this will help you focus your answers on key points you want to make.
- Make sure your social media presence is what employers will find acceptable. Check your public Facebook page and Twitter comments. More and more candidates are not advancing due to social media missteps.



8 Use of the Word “Retire”

- Do not say this word in an interview if at all possible. Indicating that you are interested in a job because you want to retire in that area worries an interviewer who may think they will pay for relocation, get you up to speed, only to have you retire in a year or so.

9 Failure to Ask Thoughtful Questions

- If given the opportunity to ask one or two questions, do so.
- If you are not given the opportunity, ask the interviewers if you can ask a question. Be sure to come prepared to ask questions that reflect research you've done on the organization.



10 Failure to Exhibit Energy

- Show your passion for the position and for public service.
- Smile, lean forward with your forearms on the table, and engage the group with your answers.