Six Ways to Make a Good First Impression

1. Shake hands when you introduce yourself.
2. Sit down only after your interviewer invites you to do so.
3. Stand up when anyone is introduced to you.
4. Say “Thank you”—at the beginning, at the end and once again in a written note.
5. Speak clearly and make eye contact.
6. Smile: It shows you are inviting and friendly, confident but not cocky, able to be relaxed and personable in a potentially stressful or intimidating situation.

Tips

Your resume is perfectly printed on high quality paper and you've practiced answering every offbeat interview question your roommate can pitch at you. Here are a few more tips to prepare you for the big event.

Scout it out

There are several reasons to pay a visit to a company before you have your interview.

- You will know how to get there and how long it takes.
- You will see how people in the office dress.
- You will meet the receptionist and learn his name. This is also a good person to ask about the company in general.
- You can pick up any literature on the company that may be provided in the reception area: annual report, sales brochures, newsletter.
- You can find out the name of the person who will interview you, if you haven't been told already.

Be on time

There are no exceptions to this rule. If necessary, perform a trial run to see how long it takes to get to your destination. If an unforeseen emergency arises (the subway breaks down between stations), call as soon as possible: apologize, explain and offer to reschedule. Even that may not save the situation.

Dress appropriately

In the old days, a coat and tie or suit would usually do the trick. Now, offices run the gamut from shorts and sandals to "office casual" to traditional suits. Do your homework. Either call or visit to find out what the office dress code is. A visit will let you see what your future colleagues wear to work. A good bet is to dress slightly more formally than the average. In other words, if most people wear slacks and a sport shirt, wear slacks with a coat and tie. Everyone in coat and tie? Wear a suit. Everyone in a suit? Wear your Best Suit.

Grooming

Neatness is as important as wearing appropriate attire. Your shoes should be shined and your clothes should be pressed and spotless. No hanging threads, tears, or missing buttons. Hair should be freshly combed and nails clean and trimmed. Women should keep makeup simple and hairstyle tidy. Use an extra swipe of antiperspirant, but lay off the cologne.

The Name Game

Nothing is more awkward than having people ask who you are! Introduce yourself to the receptionist and give your name! "Hi, my name is Mary Smith. I have a 10 o'clock interview with Jane Doe." Make a note of the receptionist's name. Be sure to know the name of the person interviewing you. "How do you do, Ms. Doe, I am Mary Smith. Thank you for seeing me today."

Handshakes

"Stand up straight, look 'em in the eye, say their name and give 'em a firm handshake," was my Dad's recipe for making a good impression. If you are in doubt about this principle, practice with a friend. Have your friend look off in the distance and offer you a limp hand. Have your friend look at your feet and mumble something. Have your friend squeeze your hand and pump your arm enthusiastically. Now have your friend look you in the eye and give you a firm handshake. What do you think? Now, buy your friend a cup of coffee.

Say thanks

At the end of the interview, stand, thank the interviewer for her time, look her in the eye and shake her hand. A short note of thanks—nothing fawning—is also appropriate.