

McCarthy**Adams**   
Recruitment Specialists

Guide

Interview dos and don'ts

# Interview dos and don'ts

## 5 things you should do

### 1. Be prepared

An interview is more important than any major presentation you'll ever make. You need to be just as prepared. Part of this is reading about the company, the industry, the job description, and the LinkedIn profiles of the people you'll be meeting. But this is just a start. Knowing yourself, your CV and work history inside-out, your strengths and weaknesses, and preparing to ask and answer questions is the hard part.

### 2. Ask insightful questions

Interviewers judge candidates on three big areas: the candidate's first impression, the quality of the answers, and the quality of the questions. Great questions can often overcome weaknesses in the other areas. The best questions focus on the impact and challenges of the role, and the relationship of the job to the business.

### 3. Convert the interview into a past performance review

If the interviewer seems to be box-checking skills and experiences, ask about the major performance expectations for the job. Then give examples of your biggest accomplishments to validate you've done work that's comparable to what needs to be done.

### 4. Prove strengths and neutralise weaknesses

Write down all of your strengths and weaknesses. For each strength come up with 1 or 2 actual accomplishments you can use as examples to prove the strength. To neutralise a weakness, describe how you converted it into a learning experience, or how you manage to deal with it.

### 5. Ask about next steps

Towards the end of the interview, ask where you stand and find out the next steps. If the interviewer is vague or non-committal, you're probably not going to be called back. In this case, ask if there is something missing in your background or skill set that the job requires. Once you know this, you might be able to minimise the concern by describing some comparable accomplishment that was previously not considered.

For most hiring managers, the interview is more about box-checking and validating skills, combined with a big dose of gut feeling and intuition. A savvy job-seeker can turn the odds in their favor by being prepared, recognizing that the interview isn't a lecture or a series of 30-second responses, and asking insightful, business-oriented questions. Preventing what can go wrong is a great way to ensure things go right.

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**1. Don't use generalities, like "I'm a problem-solver" and "I'm a real team player"**  
Generalities about strengths are ignored, forgotten, or not heard. When interviewers evaluate a candidate they recall the examples and stories the candidate used to prove a point. From these examples they conclude to what degree the candidate possesses the strength or attribute.

**2. Never say "I don't have any weaknesses"**  
Everybody has weaknesses. The point of the question isn't even about weaknesses; it's an attempt to determine your character, honesty, and self-awareness. On the surface, saying you don't have any weaknesses implies you've stopped growing, can't learn anything new and can't be coached. Openly stating a weakness, and describing how you've learned from it, indicates a willingness to get better.

**3. Don't give answers that are too short or too long**  
In an interview, you're judged not just on the content of your answers, but also the quality of how they're presented. The best answers are 1-2 minutes long. If your answers are too short you're assumed to lack ability or insight, or interest. Worse, you force the interviewer to work too hard. Interviewees who talk too much are considered self-absorbed, boring and imprecise. Worse, after two minutes the interviewer tunes you out and doesn't hear a thing you've said.

**4. Don't ask "what's in it for me" questions**  
At the beginning of the interview, assume you're the seller, even if you're the hottest, most in-demand candidate in the world. Asking self-serving questions like "what does the job pay?" or questions about benefits and related superficialities are an instant turn-off. It's certainly okay to ask about these things once the interviewer signals that you're a serious candidate for the job.

**5. Don't look at your CV during the interview**  
Looking at your CV is a sign you're either nervous (which you probably will be), or you fabricated something. Interviewers expect you to know your work history completely, including companies, dates, job titles, roles, responsibilities and key accomplishments. To help recall these important details, write them down on a few 3x5 cards before the interview.

