

Interviewing

Tips for a Successful Interview

The Physical Elements

Typically, we form opinions about each other within just a few seconds. Knowing this, how do you want to come across when you walk into the room for your trades interview? What qualities do you want to come across? What type of body language represents those qualities? Take the time to consider what you want your body language to look like:

Eye contact:

Position of body/hands:

What to Wear

If you have an opportunity to ask what you should wear--like at a training center, do so, if not, here are some good suggestions we've gotten directly from employers and training centers:

Look like you can do the work, but dress your best also. For the trades, this typically means:

Pants: Nice khaki or cotton pants that look like nice work pants--not too dressy, not too casual, definitely not dirty.

Shirt: An oxford shirt or a polo shirt. Preferably dark colored. No logos or writing on it.

Shoes: A nice, shined leather work boot. Leather looks dressier, but if you don't have it, wear the nicest you have.

Hair: Obviously neat and groomed, but if you have long hair, you'll want to pull it back like you would if you were working.

Jewelry: Earring should be stud earrings instead of hoops--in part because this is what would be safest to wear to work and in part because:

It is recommended that you eliminate anything that risks stereotyping. Large or excessive jewelry might not work in your favor. One training center suggested that tattoos and tongue/eyebrow studs might be okay on the job, but that they could work against you in the interview because you might be stereotyped. Long colored nails probably wouldn't be a good idea either.



You Have an Interview! How to Prepare

These steps should be taken the day or night before your interview date.

1. Research the Position

Before your interview, do some research about the position you are interviewing for. You should be able to illustrate that you know what tasks are associated with that job, and that you know what you're getting into. If you are unable to answer the question, "what does a _____ do?", or can't describe the conditions you would be working in, you will not come across as a serious candidate who wants to do this work.

2. Research the Company/Training Center

If you know the specific company you are applying for a job with, do some research about that company. This will give you valuable information about the work the company does, their philosophy, what they value, and other details that demonstrate you have an interest in their company, specifically. It also shows



initiative: that you took the extra step to learn about them. If you are applying to a Union, learn as much as possible about the work that Union performs and some specifics about the apprenticeship program.

3. Practice Answering Common Interview Questions Aloud

Be prepared with your answers. Having practiced answers to common, or expected questions will help. Practice with friends, classmates or in the mirror. Practice saying your answers out loud.

Practice being able to talk about what your experience at OTI taught you. Think very carefully about what things you learned in the class that you didn't know before. Think about both jobsite skills (for example: using a circular saw, identifying lumber/tools, using a tape measure, working with different leadership styles, etc.) and classroom skills (learning the importance of being on time, learning about planning for a work day, learning construction math, learning to incorporate feedback etc.). Being able to talk about this shows that you are an active learner and aware of your progress.

4. Map the Location of the Interview

Make certain you know where the interview is, and have determined how you will get there and how much time you should allow to arrive early. If you are unsure of the location, or concerned about timing, make a “dry run” a day or so before the interview.

5. Develop a Question to Ask Your Interviewer

Often at the end of an interview, the interviewers ask if you have any questions. Be prepared in advance for one really good question that will show that you’re interested—not just about the paycheck. Keep in mind that the interviewers might consider how you do your job search to be how you might do your job. If you’re detail-oriented and thoughtful in the interview, they are more likely to be convinced that this is how you will perform on the job as well.

The Interview

Arrive a little early, at least five minutes before the interview.

Offer a firm handshake. If your hands sweat, carry a tissue in your pocket so you can discretely wipe your hands. If your hands get cold, run warm water over them in the restroom before the interview.

Address the interviewer by name. If you do not know the name of the interviewer, ask when you arrive.

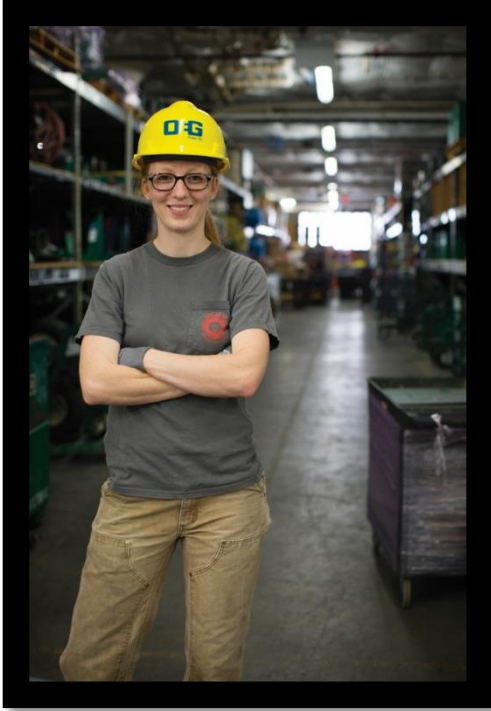
Maintain eye contact.



Take a deep breath and relax.

Smile, be friendly, and show your enthusiasm, but be businesslike.
PEOPLE HIRE PEOPLE THEY LIKE.

Avoid nervous mannerisms like drumming fingers on the table, playing with hair, face, or your pen.



Establish Your Professional Attitude

Allow the interviewer to establish the tone of the interview and lead the questioning. Do not fear silence. Studying your reaction to a conversational break is sometimes an interview test.

Carefully listen to the questions and ask for clarification when needed. Give yourself time to think through the question and give your answer. Pick up clues about the kind of employee being sought, then make use of this knowledge in your answers.

Do not be a comedian. The interview is serious business and you will be ahead by approaching it seriously. Be pleasant and courteous at all times. Smart remarks and small talk are not in order.

Do not speak negatively about former employers or fellow workers.

Display self-confidence, but not arrogance. Show the employer that you know and believe in yourself. If you do not have confidence in yourself neither will the employer.

If You Are Nervous

What can you personally do to offset this?

Saying “I’m a little nervous” is perfectly acceptable in an interview and often makes the interviewee feel better. Interviewers expect most people to be a little nervous.

Take a deep breath. Slow down and try to answer the question.

Answering Questions

Use specific examples when possible. When asked a general question about yourself, find a way to bring in stories about how experiences on your last job or the time you worked for someone else so that the interviewer can get an image of you doing the work and so that they can see that you’re not just saying what they want to hear. It lends you credibility.

Show interest and enthusiasm. Employers are much more likely to hire someone with these characteristics.

Don’t point out your flaws. Focus on why you’re the best candidate for the job and let them decide.



It has been shown that responses that are kept within 20 seconds to 2 minutes are more likely to make a favorable impression. Don't talk too much.

Determine to be seen as part of the solution and not part of the problem.

Answering Hard Questions

If you're stumped, ask for a minute to think about the answer or repeat the question to gain some time, then answer it as best you can.

When possible, put your difficulties in the past. Contrast "then" and "now." Show you have overcome problems and learned from mistakes and are ready to go to work!

Do not over-explain. Be brief and end on a positive note that will lead the employer into a subject in which you have more strength.

Exiting

Now's your chance to stroll up and offer the interviewers a chance to see your portfolio neatly laid out. Include photos of work completed and make a couple of copies to leave if you can afford it.

It is always important to leave a favorable impression. Even if you are not selected for one job, you will want the employer to consider you favorably for future openings. Offer your hand for a handshake, ask when they expect to make a decision, and thank them for the interview.



Interviewing

Here is a list of possible questions that an interviewer might ask you. Think carefully about each one and write out how you would answer each one.

1. Why do you want this job?

Answers should be about your passion for this particular trade. Mentioning the money is okay, but you should be motivated by your love for wiring lights or working with sheetmetal. If answers are just about “working with your hands,” or construction in general, there’s nothing to let the employer know that you’ll be loyal to their trade. Think about the first time you were exposed to learning about the trade and what drew you to it. Was it a field trip? Watching someone else? Talking to a tradesperson? Use that experience to describe what you love about it.

2. Why should I hire you?

If you have a lot of experience, you can talk about that. However, a lot of times gumption and determination can make up for a lack of experience and it’s something that can separate you from everyone else sitting in the hallway waiting to be interviewed. How determined you? What motivated you to take our class to prepare? Also, no one is expecting you to be highly skilled; you’re an apprentice because you want to learn so your desire and your ability to learn (and the willingness to express that) can also distinguish you if you have less experience.

4. What are your qualifications for this job?

Talk about your experience, the class, the certifications, math and/or personal attributes.

5. What can you say about the apprenticeship program/company/job you're applying for?

You need to know the details about where and what you're applying for. Show them that you know what you're getting into and that you've done your homework. Again, how you do your job search is an indication of how you'll do your job. What does this job involve? How long is the program? What is starting pay? When is class if it's a program?

6. State both a strong and weak point that would describe your abilities as a potential employee.

This question is a trick question because if you answer it completely honestly, you reveal that you don't know that you should not answer it completely honestly. Every employee has flaws and often the best flaws to reveal are ones that can also be strong points. One strategy is to find a strong point and think about how it can also be a weak point.



6. What are your hobbies?

Try to choose something you do that is physical or mechanical--activities that would reveal your natural inclination for the trades.

7. Describe the skills you've gained from Oregon Tradeswomen's Pre-apprenticeship program.

