



21 Major Job Interview Mistakes to Avoid at All Costs

By [Harrison Barnes](#)

There are certain people who seem to get every job they interview for and others who seem to lose the job in the interview. Interviewing has its own set of rules and is something that everyone needs to understand.

Here are the major mistakes that people make (and avoid making) in interviews.

1. Saying Something Negative About Your Former (or Current) Employer(s).

If you are looking for a job, the odds are that the organization you are interviewing with already realizes that the situation with your former employer was not ideal. That's perfectly fine. However, when you say something negative about your former employer, this makes you look angry, bitter and like someone who could not get along in that environment. The interviewer will wonder if you will have the same problems again if they hire you.

More importantly, it makes you look disloyal. If you say something negative about your former employer, then the interviewer will know you are likely to do the same thing to them in the future.

There are a number of ways to answer why you are leaving (or left) a job without trashing an employer:

- You want a more team-oriented environment
- The commute is too long
- You want more responsibility
- You've always wanted to work for the company you are interviewing with
- There is no room for advancement at your existing company
- You want to work at a larger company
- You want to work at a smaller company
- The new company is going in a direction that is exciting to you
- You have heard really good things about the new company from other employees

See the following article for more information:

- [How to Explain Job Hopping](#)

2. You Bring Up Salary and Benefits

While the amount of money the position pays (and benefits) is obviously important, it is annoying to interviewers when this is brought up early in the interviews. The employer's purpose in interviewing you is to see if you can do the job and if you will fit in with the employer (i.e., what you can do for them). In addition, when you bring up salary and benefits, you seem to be presuming you already have the job.

The employer wants to feel in control, and asking about salary and benefits takes the control away from them.

I have seen many people say something like this in the interview: "The job only pays that? I'm making much more than that right now."

If the interviewer is still trying to determine whether you are right for the job, it is not exactly a good idea to bring up your salary requirements at that point.

If an interviewer really likes you, they will ask how much you are currently making, or made in your last job, so they can offer you the same amount (or more). Additionally, your goal in the interview is to make the employer like you and want to hire you. If you start talking about money early on, you will put the brakes on that process and annoy them.

See the following articles for more information:

- [Production Assistants and Assessing Your Employer's Needs](#)
- [Parking Benefits and Falling in Love With Your Job](#)

3. Asking Any Question that Shows You Might be a Problematical Employee or Might Not Be Fully Committed to the Job

It is so stupid that people disqualify themselves from jobs by asking the wrong questions. Here are some of my favorite questions that people ask that get them disqualified from jobs during interviews:

- **Does the job involve overtime?** If you ask this question, you will show the employer that you are a clock watcher and/or working extra hours is something you do not want to do. No interviewer wants to hear this.
- **How much overtime can I work?** Conversely, many people work as much overtime as allowed so they can make extra money. Many of these same people are inefficient at work so that they can work extra hours. Hiring managers do not like to hear this either.
- **How long until I get a raise or promotion?** The employer is generally interviewing you because they have an immediate need to have someone do work in a certain position (not the position above you). When you ask about this, you are

sending a message to the employer that you may not stay happy in the job you are being interviewed for.

- **Can I work from home?** While this question may seem harmless, in some companies it can be a real deal killer. Many organizations expect people to work in the office all the time. Other companies have had horrible experiences with this and only allow people to work at home who have earned trust over years of working for the company. Most interviewers are going to want to hire someone who is going to be in the office all the time (at least at first).
- **Do you have a paternity leave policy?** Anything that shows that you are likely to be absent from the office for any length of time is a bad thing to ask about.
- **How soon after I start can I take a vacation?** Someone who is asking about vacation is already wondering about their time off. Employers do not like this.
- **Will I be challenged in this position?** What if you are asked to do a mindless project? Will the employer be able to rely on you then?

See the following articles for more information:

- [Be Committed to What You Do](#)
- [The Only Thing that Matters is Commitment](#)
- [Get Security by Concentrating on the Needs of Your Employer](#)

4. You Make the Interview About You and Not the Employer and the Work

When you are interviewing for a job, the interviewer is trying to assess whether you are interested in the job. If you are more interested in yourself than the job, this is not a good thing. The interview should be focused around how you can be of service to the employer and how you will help the organization succeed.

Many people come to interviews acting as if the employer needs to impress them. Your job is to impress the employer.

See the following articles for more information:

- [You Will Succeed in Your Job and Job Search When You Are Concerned With Giving and Not Taking](#)
- [Flow, Your Ego and Your Career](#)

5. Appearing Defensive and Angry

Many people looking for a job are angry at their former employers. They may have lost their former jobs due to layoffs or been fired by a supervisor who had it out for them. They are mad that they have to look for a new job, and it comes through in the interviews.

You need to appear excited in your interviews and like someone who wants the new job. If the interviewer finds something negative in your background, stay calm and do not get angry. Never seem negative or judgmental of a former employer.

See the following articles for more information:

- [Do Not Be Vengeful: Let Hurt and Anger Go Through You](#)
- [Experience a Breakthrough by Confronting Your Pain](#)

6. Providing Too Much Information That Gives the Employer Reasons not to Hire You

Many people provide more information than they should in interviews. Incredibly, I have seen people tell me in interviews things like:

- **They are former drug addicts.** I've actually hired two people who told me this in interviews under the belief that they had cleaned themselves up and deserved a second chance (most employers would not do this). Both ended up relapsing and it was not a good situation. Keep this sort of information to yourself.
- **They just got out of prison.** I interviewed the person who told me this in my living room while my children played in the next room. I was frightened and did my best to tactfully end the interview.
- **Their stepdaughter and stepson are both 16 and are having a sexual relationship in the home.** This particular "final" interview was held in a nice restaurant in downtown Los Angeles, and my wife came along with me to the interview. She was visibly shaken for days after hearing the details of this one.
- **That they spent two years in a psychiatric hospital.** This was a strange interview. The woman seemed very well put together and normal. This made me more leery of hiring her.

You should also not talk about:

- your church or religion,
- your divorce,
- your marital status,
- why you lost/got fired from a job (unless asked),
- that you grew up very wealthy or poor,
- any diseases you may have had,
- non-visible disabilities,
- any medical diagnosis you may have received,
- sexual abuse/rape you have experienced,
- violent crimes you were a victim of,
- recent deaths and tragedies in your family, or

- your sexual orientation.

Just keep this information to yourself. It is never a good idea to provide any of this information because it can be polarizing to people. It also could reflect on the employer in a way they do not want to be associated with, and this is not a good thing.

Many people like interviews because they are a chance to talk about themselves.

- An interviewer is not your friend.
- An interviewer is not your confidante.
- An interview is also not a therapy session.

An interview is a chance to show the employer what you can do for them and sell your strengths (not weaknesses).

See the following articles for more information:

- [How to Answer the Tell Me About Yourself Interview Question](#)
- [Do Not Be Controlled By Your Need to Feel Significant](#)
- [Employers Want to Hire You](#)

7. Getting Caught Off Guard and Admitting It

There are all sorts of reasons you could be caught off guard. For example, the interviewer may mention things like:

- The job requires a great deal of travel
- You are expected to work most weekends
- You will need to have various responsibilities you were not aware of
- You will have to train and mentor people

Regardless of what it is, you need to keep your cool and not make a big deal out of it when the interviewer brings this information up. Your job is to get the job and not create doubt in the employer's mind about your suitability for the position. You need to appear self-confident and in control when you are interviewing. If you get flustered or do not project self-confidence, this will hurt you.

See the following articles for more information:

- [A Success Turn Around Formula That Works](#)
- [Self-Esteem and Lunch Room Tables](#)

8. Not Dressing Your Best

Dressing well for interviews is extremely important. It shows that you respect the employer, take the interview seriously and that getting hired is important to you. Employers want to see this, and it helps you stand out. Also, when you dress well for interviews, the employer can see how you would represent them in the business world.

Despite the fact that there are countless casual dress workplaces, you still need to look your best and dress up for interviews. Nothing telegraphs more unprofessionalism than not looking your best for interviews.

See the following article for more information:

- [What is the Appropriate Way to Dress for an Interview](#)

9. Showing Up Late

This is a major mistake. If you show up late for the interview, your odds of getting the job are generally close to zero. Most companies expect their employees to be punctual, and an interview is a tryout for whether you will show up on time if you are hired. Being late also sends the message to the employer that:

- You plan your time poorly
- The job may not be important to you
- You do not value the employer's time

See the following article for more information:

- [Show Up on Time](#)

10. Showing Up too Early

I generally have a pretty tight calendar where every minute of my day is planned out pretty rigorously. A major issue that I have is when people show up very early for interviews. If someone shows up in the lobby 20 minutes before an interview, I feel like it would be rude of me to make them wait. It inconveniences me and throws off my day. The employer has invited you to their office at an appointed time and not 30 minutes before. When you show up even 10 minutes early, you may inconvenience the interviewer, and this starts everything off on the wrong foot. Why would you want to piss off and inconvenience an interviewer before you have even met them?

11. Making an Inappropriate Joke/Comment

Sexual and racial comments come up often in interviews. These are all huge "no-no's". Even if you sense the interviewer is the sort of person who would appreciate your humor outside the office, making inappropriate comments in an interview will

almost certainly disqualify you from further consideration. Employers get sued all the time, and advertising that you are a lawsuit waiting to happen is not a good way to get a job.

12. Giving a Long-Winded Answer to a Simple Question

I've seen people spend 10 minutes answering a question that could have been intelligently answered in less than 30 seconds. There is no worse time suck than a person who shows up in your office and drones on and on when they could answer the issue in a few seconds. You need to get to the point when you are asked a question. You should respond to questions with a bit of detail, but not so much detail that your interviewer starts to get bored. If your interviewer starts looking off in the distance or appears disinterested in your answer, you should stop talking and wrap it up.

See the following article for more information:

- [The Five Musts of Interviewing](#)

13. Not Understanding the Company and What it Does (or Only Understanding it Superficially)

When you are interviewing with a company, they want to feel like you have taken the time to learn about them. This shows you care about the job (and your career). You should be interested in whatever it is the company does. If your interviewer has taken time out of his day to speak with you, the least you can do is research the company so you know how you can contribute to what they do.

See the following articles for more information:

- [Look at Your Job \(or the Job You Are Seeking\) from Your Employer's Point of View](#)
- [You Need to be Relevant to Your Employer](#)

14. Acting Desperate or Begging for the Job

I have seen people tell me they wanted a job so badly that they started crying. Other people have told me that if I do not hire them, they will be living on the streets, lose their homes, or have their cars repossessed. This sends alarm signals to the employer about things like:

- Your stability
- Your ability to plan
- Your reliability

In addition, the employer is not concerned about your needs: The interview is about the employer and what is important to the company.

You need to project confidence in interviews. You need to show the employer why they need you and not the other way around. You need to sell yourself. If you appear desperate or very available, the employer is likely to be turned off.

See the following articles for more information:

- [Treat Yourself Like a Quality Product](#)
- [Why You Need to Be Calculating](#)

15. Not Asking Questions

Many interviews end with the employer asking if you have any questions. If you do not have any questions, the employer will think that you are not serious about the job. In addition, the employer may think that you found the interview so boring that you do not want to know anything else.

The right questions can demonstrate you are a really good candidate for the position and show how serious you are about the job.

See the following article for more information:

- [How to Answer the "Do You Have Any Questions for Me?" Interview Question](#)

16. Appearing Nervous or Anxious

Some people, when interviewing for a huge opportunity, get extremely nervous. It is not uncommon for people to break into a sweat, or even have breathing problems in interviews. You need to project competence and confidence in interviews.

When you seem nervous or anxious, it sends the wrong message to the employer and makes them wonder if you are someone they could put in front of important clients or senior management. You are interviewing to be a representative of the employer, and they need to see that you can keep your cool.

See the following article for more information:

- [Remain Calm](#)

17. Lying or Exaggerating

If you are an attorney interviewing with a major law firm, and they ask you if you have ever done a trial, you say you have, and they find out you have not, you will not be hired. You simply cannot lie in interviews. You should also not exaggerate your experience. It is better to tell the employer you have related experience, are a quick learner and have always done well with

See the following articles for more information:

- [Never Ever Fib or Push the Truth on Your Resume or Interviews](#)
- [Can You Be Trusted](#)
- [Tell the Truth](#)

18. Not Trying to Identify with The Interviewer and Company During the Interview

Interviewers want to see if they will be comfortable working with you. It is important that you do your best to identify with the people you are speaking with by being open and connecting with them. Interviewers are far more likely to hire people they feel comfortable with than people who seem they may be difficult to get along with. One of the most important things you can do in any interview is to connect with the interviewer.

See the following articles for more information:

- [The Importance of Fitting In](#)
- [You Need to Stop Competing and Seeing Differences Between You and Others](#)
- [Be Vulnerable and Authentic](#)

19. Talking About Other Places You Are Interviewing, or Answering Questions About this Improperly

It is a bad idea to bring up other companies you are interviewing with. It shows the employer that you may not be their first choice and gives the employer reasons to potentially dislike you (many employers do not like people from their competing companies). If you are asked this question, you should be very careful. Bringing up a less prestigious company may make the employer think that you are desperate for a job. Bringing up a company far more prestigious may make the employer think that you are their second choice.

See the following article for more information:

- [How to Talk About Other Interviews in Your Interview](#)

20. Not Having References Available for Immediate Contact

Employers will often ask for references in an interview. If you do not have references available to contact immediately, this looks very suspicious and strange. People who do good work and are thought well of typically have references readily available.

Before you go out on an interview, you should have numerous references already prepared. This makes you look very competent and impresses employers.

See the following article for more information:

- [The Importance of Endorsements, References and Getting Others to Cheer for You](#)

21. Letting Your Cell Phone Ring

I've seen people texting in the middle of interviews and answering their phones. This is a horrible idea and is almost certain to get you eliminated as a candidate for the job. Turn off your cell phone. Your focus in interviews needs to be 100%. If you answer your cell phone during an interview, the employer will think that you are someone who will talk on the phone during work.

See the following article for more information:

- [The Importance of Being Present](#)

Conclusions

I've tried to provide you with as much information as possible about mistakes to avoid when you are interviewing. Mastering these elements can ensure your success when interviewing and make you more likely to get the job.