

5 Interview Mistakes

Have you ever said something in an interview that got you into trouble? Maybe you didn't even realize you said something wrong. Yet, suddenly, your interviewer seems a lot less interested in you, maybe even unhappy.

And, it looks like whatever you said, your chances at this job just went down the drain.

Well, even if you were just worried about that happening, here is a sample of the most common mistakes that you should absolutely avoid in your next interview:

Mistake 1. Length

The perfect interview answer should last between 20 seconds and two minutes.

That means, you should basically never answer a question with a simple yes or no. You need to share the critical details and should provide a thorough answer as required.

But you don't want to tell your life story. When you feel like you've shared the highlights, cut yourself off.

If you feel compelled to share more, you can offer the information, "If you'd like I can also describe..." but don't be surprised if the interviewer turns you down.

Too long an answer, and the interview will just tune you out.

Not to worry.

If you've crafted your answers the right way, these time constraints are very manageable.

Mistake 2. Not answering the interview question.

Now, some people think they are politicians and "*cleverly*" avoid giving a straight

answer (sleazy). More often, you may just be a bit confused about what the interviewer is asking.

If you aren't 100% sure, ask for clarification. Repeat the question back in your own words.

And, if you still don't know whether you answered the question, at the end of your response, say to the interviewer:

"I'm not sure whether my answer fully answered your question. Was there a piece of it, I left off?"

Note: The best job seekers also know the interviewer's goal in asking a question.

They answer both the question asked and the interviewer's unsaid concern. This comes from their preparing the right way for the interview.

Mistake 3. Speaking before thinking

You will likely face an interview question that you're not ready for. Whether you sink or swim, depends on how you respond.

First, get your feet under you. Otherwise, you may use lots of "Ums" and "Likes." And, your answer may lack direction or miss the question entirely.

Pause. Take a breath. If you want, say, "That's a really good question, let me take a few moments to gather my thoughts." If you're still not sure how to tackle it, break it down into pieces.

Start by answering what you feel most confident about and go from there.

Mistake 4. Providing generic answers.

A good answer gives vivid examples. An okay answer at least references yourself and the organization.

A generic answer sounds like you had a list of canned responses, played Pin-the-tail-on-the-donkey, and pulled out wherever your finger landed. Generic answers include, "I'm a team player," or "I'm really excited about the work you do here."

To avoid this mistake, you just need to prepare the right way. Gather the key facts about the organization and craft answers that describe yourself effectively.

Mistake 5: Not creating a conversation

An interview is in large part about establishing a relationship between you and your interviewers. That means you need to feel confident enough to be yourself and ask questions.

If it seems like they're just shooting questions at you on the hot seat, you'll be doing yourself a disservice.

So, when you have a question pop up during the conversation, ask it.

For example:

If they ask you, "what's the most challenging project you faced?" at the end of your answer, you can follow up with, "what are the kinds of challenges that people here encounter?"

A good interview splits the air time 50/50 between the interviewer and the interviewee.