

# ACE YOUR INTERVIEW

Present yourself  
with confidence,  
stay calm, and  
communicate  
powerfully.

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503.593.9147

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# ACE YOUR INTERVIEW

Whether in-person or over the phone, interviews can be daunting. Unless you purposefully adjust your mindset, interviews can feel like high-stakes interrogations. And the longer you've been looking for a job, the more work it is to keep emotions and perspectives in check.

This guide will give you the tools you need to handle interviews with **grace** and **confidence**. You'll find things you can do before the interview to prepare, as well as ways to stay calm and convey confidence during the interview.

## BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

Before the interview, prepare yourself—**your mind and body**—not just your clothing or your resume or your answers to possible interview questions.

Adjust your mindset and create good habits that will help you approach and navigate the interview with confidence and poise.

The suggestions on the following pages will get you off to a good start. As soon as you begin the job search process, start practicing so that these skills are easily accessible to you in the moment.

## 1) Let go of perfection.

Commit to doing your best. That's all you can do. You **cannot** do better than your best. And chances are, your best isn't perfect.

## Stop expecting perfection.

When you expect perfection, one of two things happens:

- 1) You don't live up to your expectations and are demoralized by your "failure," or
- 2) You know it's an unattainable goal so you don't even try.

**Do what you can as best you can.** Then you will approve of your performance, even if you don't get the job. Look at each interview as a chance to improve your interviewing skills.

Whether or not you go to the next round of interviews or get the job is out of your hands. Others control the outcome.

**Focus on what is 100% within your control:  
Your effort.**

## 2) Make good posture a habit.

Good posture not only makes you **look more confident and self-assured**, but it affects the sound of your **voice**. In addition, good posture helps you **breathe** better, which makes you **feel calmer**. But when you're in a new place, facing strangers, and answering difficult questions, posture may be the last thing on your mind!

If you want access to the **power** and **credibility** good postures brings when you're in an interview, make sitting up straight a **habit**. Set reminders during the day to check in and correct how you're holding yourself. Find "hacks" that force you to use good posture; for example, one person I worked with adjusted the rearview mirror in his car so that he could only see it if he was sitting up straight. Practice good posture during mock interviews.

**The more comfortable you are with good nonverbal skills, the more naturally they will come to you when you need them.**

Before long, sitting up straight and tall will become second nature. It's hard to think clearly when your brainpower is consumed with trying to look good. Make confident body language a habit, and you'll have more processing power for the interview conversation.

### 3) Practice out loud.

Yes, OUT LOUD. Introduce yourself, tell some stories, and answer some questions out loud before you get to the interview. When you say things out loud, you get to know your content better. You're involving more of your **body** (vocal chords, for example) and **senses** (you can hear yourself), which utilizes more of your **brain**.

## How do you sound?

It's astonishing how unfamiliar your own thoughts can sound when you're hearing them come out of your mouth for the first time. What makes sense in your head doesn't always sound as well when spoken. **Your answers will be much more fluid and accessible to you** in the interview if you've said them out loud before.

Don't skip the "easy" parts of the interview either, such as introducing yourself. **The first words out of your mouth make a strong impression.** But they also come at the point in the interview when you're the most nervous—the very beginning! To avoid stumbling over your words and sounding like you don't even know your own name, practice introducing yourself. Out loud.

## Prepare your VOICE and BRAIN.

#### 4) Decide how you want to BE, rather than what you want to do or say.

When you've got an interview coming up, choose a few words (no more than three) to describe how you want to be. It could be anything:



You choose. For one minute, imagine how it looks and feels to be that way. *Keep your word(s) in mind* during the interview and your speech and behavior will naturally align.

Job seekers tend to create a script in their heads for answering questions. And by all means, do be prepared for potential interview questions. That said...

**Life rarely follows the script.**

Don't stubbornly stick to the script you prepared. *Stay present* and focus on *who you are* and how you want to present yourself.

# STAY CALM

Once you arrive for your interview, how do you stay calm?

It's natural to feel a little nervous. And in fact, a little **adrenaline can be a helpful thing**, providing you with energy and focus. Plus, it demonstrates to the interviewer that you care and are invested. But if your anxiety hijacks your brain so that you can't think or speak, that nervousness isn't doing you any favors.

Here are some tips for keeping your brain and body under control.

**1) Breathe.** Deep breathing releases muscular tension, clears your system of stress hormones, and allows you to **think clearly**. When you consciously breathe well, you are communicating—not only to the people around you, but to your own mind and body—that you are **confident, competent, and in control of yourself**.

**2) Feel your feet.** This is a trick I use to stay **grounded** when I'm nervous. Feel the floor supporting you. This also brings awareness to your whole body, which calms you down. Getting in touch with your physical senses reduces anxiety.

As a bonus, when you're aware of your feet and feeling grounded, you almost can't help but have **good posture**! That stability will lead to fewer nervous tics—rocking back and forth, drumming fingers, fiddling with things, tapping feet—which can make you look insecure.

3) **Keep your hands free.** Avoid folding your arms, clasping your hands, or putting your hands in your pockets. Even if you're on the phone, when no one can see you, be sure that your hands are available. When you lock down your hands you lock down your thoughts. You will **think more freely** and **sound more confident** if your hands are available to move.

4) **Pause before answering questions.** Don't be afraid of silence. You will sound better if you take a second to **breathe** and **think**. Come up with a few phrases you can use to acknowledge the question before you pause and breathe. "Great question; let me think about that" or "Hmmm... that sparks several thoughts..." or "I'm going to consider that for a second," with a short pause buys you time.

**With these skills, you can STAY CALM  
under pressure.**

As if normal nerves weren't enough to deal with, **interviews rarely go exactly as expected**. Sometimes you get lost and show up late. Or you spill coffee down your shirt. Or the interviewer asks a question out of left field you have NO idea how to answer. These tips will help you manage surprises, mistakes, and difficulties, too.

And as a bonus: When you're breathing, grounded, and able to think, you sound more **credible and self-assured**.



# COMMUNICATE WITH CONFIDENCE

Staying calm is the first step to communicating with confidence and acing the interview. If you can't handle the stress of an interview, how will you handle stress on the job? By using the previous skills to stay calm, you demonstrate to the interviewer that **you are capable, trustworthy, and can fit in to the work environment.**

If you've had practice staying calm under pressure or aren't feeling particularly nervous, here are some additional skills that will help you **convey confidence** and **own the room** in an interview.

## First: Claim Space

Whether you're on the phone, video chatting, or in person, be **aware of the whole room.** Make eye contact (if possible) with your interviewer while remaining aware of the entire space.

A small sense of space communicates a small focus and small sense of self. If you're in your own little space bubble, your nonverbal communication contracts to fit within it. **Open up** your sense of space and your posture, gestures, and body language will naturally open up, too.

Open body language demonstrates that you have nothing to hide and do not feel threatened. In other words, it communicates that you are **trustworthy** and **confident.**

## Second: Avoid Softeners

Speak with authority when stating your experience and opinions. Avoid couching your statements in softeners such as these:

- “I think...”
- “In my opinion...”
- “I feel like...”
- “Maybe we should...”
- “I just wanted to ask...”

It sounds like you are saying:

- “I’m not sure...”
- “This is just my opinion, and you’ll probably disagree...”
- “I have no thoughts, only vague feelings...”
- “My suggestion is not that important...”
- “I need permission to express myself...”

If you are truly expressing opinions and feelings, say so. Most of the time, people say things like “In my opinion” or “I feel like” to tone down what they’re about to say in order to save face if the other person disagrees. This diminishes your credibility and sounds weak. Be willing to state facts as facts and present your expertise as expertise.

Don’t verbally downplay your comments.

## Third: Vary Your Voice Patterns

Make sure that your voice pattern **matches** the content of your message. When you're establishing credibility and want to be taken seriously, **curl your voice down** at the ends of your statements. This is the voice pattern you'll use most frequently during an interview. It communicates **confidence** and **authority**. It conveys, "I know what I'm talking about. You can take me seriously."

If you're telling a story, your voice needs more variety and lilt. And when you're asking questions or seeking input, it's appropriate to curl your voice up at the ends of statements. If you have a habit of curling your voice up at the end of every statement (a voice pattern called up-talk or up-speak), practice using that voice pattern more judiciously.

**For most of your interview, speak authoritatively.**

Most likely, **you already use both voice patterns** every day. The key is to vary your voice tone and use each at the right time. If you always curl your voice up, even when you're making a definitive statement, you'll sound clueless. If you always speak in a flat voice, you come across like you have no personality. If instead, your voice pattern matches your content, your verbal and your nonverbal communication align and your **credibility skyrockets**.

# READY, SET... LET GO

You now have many tools at your disposal to make interviews go more smoothly.

You don't need to try them all or do them perfectly. Choose a few skills that feel the most accessible to you. Gradually put them into practice in everyday life.

Prepare, practice, and then... let go.

## TRUST YOURSELF.

Trust the work you've done. Trust that you'll have what you need when the time comes.

Your interview will not be perfect, but perfection isn't the goal. You can ace the interview without being 100% perfect.

The goal is to present yourself with confidence, stay calm, and communicate powerfully.

With these tips, you can now do that.

Change your communication,  
change your life.