



OKLAHOMA
Rehabilitation
Services



Job Seeker Survival Handbook





Let us help you ace that job interview

Most applicants are thrown into the job search, resume development and interviewing with little or no training. The Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services' Business Services Program staff is here to help through the divisions of

Vocational Rehabilitation and Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired.

We provide job-ready clients an opportunity to practice the interview process and assistance with resume development before applying for employment.



Congratulations on your decision to find your next great career

Inside you will find key tips to assist you in your job search. You deserve to have the job of your dreams. Make yourself stand out from the pack.

Get the career you want today.

The purpose of this handbook is to help you compete for any job by presenting yourself professionally in any interview.

— **Business Services Program**



You can compete with them You just have to know the secrets



Project confidence

Clean and combed hair in keeping with fashion

Dressy outfit for non-business jobs

Suit for business jobs

Tattoos should be covered and body piercing eliminated during the interview

Smiling and professional body language.



What should you wear to an interview?

- Dress for the position you want to land. Old jeans, sweatpants, short skirts or short dresses are not professional for interview attire. Wear

well-fitting clothes that are not too tight or too loose.

- Be careful with prints or patterns. Stick to solid power colors such as blacks, dark browns, navy blue and dark gray.
- If in doubt, think conservative.
- Clothing should always be neat, clean, and free of rips or tears.
- T-Shirts, hats, flip flops and athletic shoes are examples of what not to wear during an interview.
- Keep jewelry simple and minimal.
- Use perfume or cologne sparingly. Others might be allergic.



TIPS to boost your interview skills

The first few minutes of a job interview can be key to whether it will result in a job offer. A potential employee only gets one chance to leave a good first impression. Make no mistake, learning how to be comfortable and present a positive image that will be attractive to a potential employer is a learned skill. One that takes work.

Demonstrate confidence

When evaluating a potential hire, a prospective employer will often evaluate candidates based on how they will reflect the culture and image of the business. It is critical candidates present a confident and positive attitude. Remember to stand straight, offer a firm handshake and make eye contact.

Look the part

It can be awkward if a job candidate shows up at a job interview overdressed or underdressed. Always dress appropriately for an interview to make the best first impression. Job candidates should research the work culture, and if needed, call the business to inquire about what the dress code is for the job before the interview. Show up to the interview dressed appropriately and be well groomed. Finally, use

cologne or perfume sparingly because it can overwhelm a room.

Pay attention

From the moment a candidate meets the interviewer, information is being shared about the company and its culture. Communication is critical, and letting the interviewer know they are being heard and the information absorbed is critical. Reflect the style and pace of the interviewer in the conversation.

Ask questions

Most interviews will feature a moment when the prospective employer will ask a candidate if they have any questions. Often, candidates will answer "no," and that is a bad choice. The opportunity to ask questions is a chance to show interest in the job, and a chance to learn more about the work culture.

It is a chance to show enthusiasm for the job and expectations for the future.

Don't over share

The gift of gab can be an asset but rambling too much may cost a candidate the job. Sharing too much is often the result of not preparing for the job

interview.

Candidates should start by reading the job posting and matching up their skills to the expectations of the post.

Even with prep work, a candidate can be caught off guard by an interview question that wasn't expected. Preparing to answer unexpected questions can help reduce nervousness during the interview and add to the candidate's professional image.

Rein it in

Prospective employees must keep the interview professional. Job candidates are not in the interview to make friends. They should reflect the professional attitude of the interviewer.

It is important to show enthusiasm during the interview, but candidates should remember, the bottom line is about landing the job.

A candidate should back their enthusiasm with facts. It's not enough for a candidate to claim they have the right stuff for the job. They should be specific and show the employer why and how they are qualified.

When speaking, candidates should remember to use appropriate language. They should avoid using slang, and avoid referencing topics such as, religion, politics or sexual orientation – unnecessary pitfalls on the way to land a job.

Keep the attitude in check

Candidates' attitudes are crucial in the interview process. Coming off as cocky can cost a candidate the job.

They must find the right balance between confidence, professionalism and modesty.

If asked to demonstrate a skill set as part of the interview, do so with a modest confidence.

Answer questions

Interviewers often ask questions that are aimed at understanding a candidate's potential behavior in different situations. A candidate may be asked about a time where they faced a conflict or challenge at work or at home, and how they overcame that challenge.

These type of probing questions are an opportunity for candidates to show their ability to communicate and reflect a professional and mature response to challenges.

If a candidate fails to relate a specific example, they not only don't answer the question, but they also miss an opportunity to prove their ability and talk about their skills.

Be confident, not needy

Candidates who seem desperate for the job often come off as less confident. A candidate needs to believe in their skills and their abilities to do the job that is in front of them. A cool confident attitude can help convince an employer the prospective employee is the right person for the job.

Before you begin:

Preparation is key

Your job application should be neat and accurate. Spend time before you apply for a position either online or in-person, writing down everything that a prospective employer may need or ask for such as:

Last three employers:

Name, address, phone

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Schools attended:

Name, address, phone

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Three professional references (supervisors/not friends or family):

Company (they work for), name, title, phone number

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Three peer references (co-workers/not friends or family):

Company (they worked with you at), name, phone number

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Application rules:

When filling out an application there are a few things that are very important and if not followed, could cost you a job.

- Dress professionally — you never know who will give you the application or come out and speak with you.
- Use black or blue ink pens only.
- Slow down, take your time and write legibly.
- Fill out every blank completely. Answer every question. Never leave a

question blank. Instead, if it does not apply to you, write N/A for not applicable.

- Always spell out a word and never abbreviate such as Ave. (Avenue) Dept. (Department) etc.
- Never write: "See resume" and not answer the question.
- If an application asks for an address, know the entire physical address, street number, street name, suite, city, state, zip.



Dos & Don'ts

DON'T — take anyone with you to your interview or to fill out an application. This is a big red flag to a potential employer.

DO — be 10 to 15 minutes early for an interview. But never more than 15, you want to respect their time and their busy schedule.

DO — smile when you introduce yourself, make good eye contact and speak professionally. Show them you are there and you are ready to get this job.

DO — shake their hand if they offer to shake yours. No more than two to three pumps with the handshake. Too long or too many shakes can be weird or awkward. Two to three is just right. Don't put the other hand over their hand. That is viewed too touchy and can be a deal breaker.

DON'T — talk on your cell phone at all. In fact, do not take your cell phone into an interview. Even on vibrate it is rude and disruptive and shows a lack of respect for your interviewer.

DON'T — give only supervisor's first names on applications. This shows that you are not very thorough.

DON'T — chew gum, mints etc. during an interview.

DO — make sure your interview out-

fit is appropriate, professional, clean and neat.

DO — ask the interviewer at least two to three questions at the end of the interview and thank them for their time.

DO — make good eye contact all through the interview.

DO — keep all answers strictly professional and about your professional strengths and sell yourself.

DON'T — talk yourself out of a position. Keep your answers descriptive and give good work examples, but know when to stop. Sometimes less is more.

DON'T — bad mouth a past employer or co-worker even if it was a bad experience. Always refer to the great work experience you gained.

DO — discover a common interest to discuss with the interviewer. People try to hire people they like.

DON'T — have a voicemail that is not professional. When you are looking for employment, it is very important that you reflect a professional image. No music in the background or children with cute messages.

DO — clean up your social media.

*You are in your interview,
and they are drilling you with questions...*
NOW IT'S YOUR TURN!

It's always a good idea to be prepared with at least three interview questions that you could ask the interviewer at the end of the interview. Telling an interviewer that you don't have any questions shows that you were not prepared, lack interest in the company and could show you are lazy.

Some sample questions are:

1. Why is this position available?
2. When do you expect to have a hiring decision made?
3. What does a typical day look like for this position?
4. Can you describe your company culture?
5. Don't ask about salary, benefits, days off, sick policy, 401K, or promotions in a first interview. Save that for later stages of the interview process.

If those don't work, write your own

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

I had my interview now what?

Purchase a box of blank thank you cards and handwrite your appreciation for the interviewer taking time to meet you. Write a message such as "I look forward to hearing from you concerning your hiring decision."

You should also always answer your incoming calls professionally during the time you are

searching for work.

If interviewer gave you a day and time to follow up, make sure you follow up on time and don't be late.

It's a jungle out there but with a little help, you can survive the job interview process and win that job.



Business Services Program



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www.okdrs.gov/bsp

Check out web links for job listings:

www.linkedin.com

www.tapability.org

www.indeed.com

www.simplyhired.com

www.glassdoor.com

www.okjobmatch.com



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