

Interviewing Tips for Public School Positions: 10 Don'ts

10. *Don't come in shorts and t-shirt.*

You are a professional seeking a professional position. Men, that means a shirt, tie, and sport coat. Women, that means a top and matching skirt, or a pantsuit. Bottom line: you are trying to impress your potential employer.

9. *Don't be extremely nervous. Sweating is not to your advantage.*

Everyone is nervous at a formal interview. That's natural. Stay as calm as you can. Take charge of your feelings and reactions. Avoid the repetition of "um" or "ah." Ask a friend to honestly point out any nervous habits.

8. *Don't be a pest after the interview.*

Send a thank-you note. Period. Don't keep calling asking whether a decision has been made. It is entirely appropriate, however, to ask at the conclusion of the interview whether a decision date has been set.

7. *Don't try to be the comedian.*

Be highly cognizant of the use of slang. Use proper, formal English to express yourself. Show proper respect for the interviewing team, which will usually consist of the principal, department heads, and fellow teachers.

6. *Don't say you'd rather be outside working in the garden.*

This is almost a direct quote from an actual interview. This would only be a good response if you realized this district or job is not going to be a good fit and you want to end the interview.

5. *Don't offer one-word answers.*

See #4 ...

4. *When asked "Tell us about yourself," don't start with "Well, I was born..."*

You'll want to find a happy medium between saying too much and saying too little. Speak confidently without rambling. Watch the body language and facial expressions to see how interested the team really is in you and your answers. And as always, honesty is the best policy. If you don't know the answer to a particular question, ask them to restate the question, or just say you've had no experience in that area. Don't bluff.

3. *Don't have a shoddy resume. Proof your resume, please!*

Or have a friend do it for you. And work hard on that cover letter. It introduces you.

2. *Don't bring your parents.*

As funny as this may sound, some parents of your generation have taken it upon themselves to insure that all goes right with the world, and this means calling, e-mailing, and even requesting meetings with the principal to discuss their child's qualifications for the job.

1. *Don't come late and say you didn't know where to go!*

Be aware, however, of the double standard: You are expected to be on time, but the interview may be late.

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10. Know some facts about the district. It will impress the interview team.

Some examples: "I see on your web site that ... I was reading in your local paper that ... I see that you have several late starts or early dismissals for staff development...I see that the average class size is ..."

9. Have a firm handshake.

Your appearance, your posture, and that handshake are your first impressions. Use a firm handshake when you're first introduced and also at the conclusion of the interview. For men, this is particularly important.

8. SMILE.

You only make one first impression. Your demeanor and personality will be defined within the first 90 seconds.

7. Repeat the names of each interviewer and make eye contact.

As you shake hands, look each interviewer directly in the eyes and repeat his/her name. While answering questions, look at all the interviewers. One of the biggest faux pas a candidate can make is to look only at the person who asked the question. The team makes the decision, and it is your job to impress the team. Using names, smiling and making eye contact will do just that.

6. Be prepared to answer this question: "What are your strengths?"

5. Be prepared to state your limitations, but use them to your advantage.

4. Take notes during the interview.

Have paper and pen. Many times the questions are multi-faceted with several questions wrapped into one. Instead of saying "What was the question again?" taking notes shows the interview team that you came prepared and are organized.

3. At the end of the interview when asked: "Do you have any questions for us," have some questions ready.

Here are some examples that you might use: What qualities are you looking for in the candidate you select? Why is this position open? What is the anticipated teaching assignment? Will there be a mentoring program in place to assist a first-year teacher? Where do you anticipate the district to be in 5 years? Why do teachers like to work in this district/building/grade level?

2. Be willing to coach or be an advisor—of anything.

Coaching is not limited to sports. It means fine arts, speech, theater, student activities, anything.

1. Be nice to the secretary!

Seriously. Make conversation with her. She will certainly talk to the principal, so make a good impression.