



Establishing Rapport



You are finally ready to walk into that Big Interview (*pun intended*). If you've done everything suggested so far, you should feel confident and just on edge enough to be on your game.

You've made a good first impression with your clothing and your physical presence, and now you **need to establish rapport** with that person across the table.

You must try to form a connection with each interviewer in the process. First of all, it's good for both of you if you can make the interview a pleasant experience and find some common ground to discuss.

Second, you want the interviewer to see **how he could work** and collaborate with you on the job. Beyond job qualifications and experiences, the final factor in many hiring decisions is: *Can I see myself working with this person?*

You won't have natural chemistry with everyone and some people may be impossible to fully win over.

If you remind the hiring manager of the brother-in-law he despises, there may be little you can do to make him your new best friend.

However, there are some techniques that will greatly improve your chances of forming a bond:

Don't use a first name

...unless/until requested by the interviewer (*she almost always will*).

Greetings should be formal

...and **help you gauge** the interviewer's preferred level of formality and personality. The dialogue will generally become more conversational after that.

Smile and show that you're happy to be there. Respond warmly to any small talk. **Don't be afraid** to reveal a bit of your personality.

Interviewer: *Did you find the place okay?*

You: *Yes, I actually worked right down the street when I was at Company X and Romano's is still one of my favorite restaurants.*

If your interviewer is quiet and unwelcoming, you can try to warm him up with a bit of professional chit chat.

You: *These offices are beautiful. I love the view of the river.*

Interviewer: *Oh, yes. It is quite nice, isn't it?*

OR

You: *It looks like it's quite a busy day here today. I really appreciate your taking time to meet with me.*

Interviewer: *It's always hectic around here! Thanks for coming in.*

Look for things that you may have in common

...with the interviewer (your pre-interview research using LinkedIn and other sources may reveal shared references like a common alma mater, membership in a professional organization, time spent working in another city, or interest in a particular hobby or charity).

Avoid making assumptions based on appearance and remark only on information volunteered.

Be enthusiastic

...about the job offered. This is not the time to play hard to get. However, keep it professional.

Carrying on too much about how you really, really want this job could make your interviewer uncomfortable.

Don't make them guess

If you are a low-key person with a dry sense of humor, that's okay, but **don't make the interviewer guess** at whether you are sincere or kidding.

The standard question: *"Tell me about yourself"* offers you an opportunity to set the tone of the interview.

Prepare a response that provides a high-level overview of why you're a great fit for the position and reveals a bit about your personality too.

Don't offer unsolicited opinions

...or advice about the company's weaknesses or recent negative press.

Avoid condescending comments and don't ask questions about potentially sensitive topics during the early interview rounds.

Be Interesting

We've said it before, but we'll reiterate: **Tell memorable stories**. Stories are great ways to build rapport, as long as they reflect your strengths and have a valid point in relation to the job you are seeking.

Stories that position you as a team player in a successful project are particularly effective.

Asking smart questions

...is one way of **showing your interest** and enthusiasm. Good questions can also draw out the interviewer and **help you get to know him**.

Ask the interviewer how he perceives the ideal candidate for this job. Ask what he likes best about his job or working for the company.