



Prepare for a Winning Interview!

Blaine County Extension



You only have ONE CHANCE to make a good **first** impression! Your people skills, manners, attitude, and appearance will play a major role in how adults, your peers, judges, and even your future employers see you. 4-H interviews give you the chance to learn and refine important life skills that will be needed some day when interviewing with potential employers. Here are some tips to help you prepare for a **winning interview!**

Dress for Success!

Your clothes say a lot about you. Be conservative when dressing for an interview. This is **NOT** the time to wear the latest trend or fad. Solid colors (rather than prints or florals) present a more serious, business-like appearance. It's always a good suggestion to dress up a notch, which shows that you care and are taking the interview seriously.

Make sure you dress for the setting—this includes the weather and room temperature. You don't want to be too hot or too cold. Don't wear an extra jacket unless you have to. Chances are you will get too hot and/or begin to fiddle with it while interviewing. Extra clothing and even jewelry can become distracting or just something to fidget with—which takes the focus off of you. Being well groomed is very important in how you present yourself, especially during an interview.

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Check out the following Do's and Don'ts of appropriate Interview Attire:



Do's

Clothing: A dress or a skirt with a nice blouse; dress shirt and dress pants—(boys, wear a coordinating tie—solid color or with a pattern). If wearing socks, wear dark ones that match the pants. Nice western attire (dark jeans, western button-up shirt—long or short sleeve, and cowboy boots) is acceptable.

Shoes: Medium heel pumps, nice sandals or closed toe shoes; dress shoes, or cowboy boots.

Jewelry: Wear simple jewelry (not the time for a fashion statement). Keep earrings simple and to a minimum. If you must wear facial piercings, wear **SMALL** studs or hoops that are subtle and visually pleasing.

Hair: Keep your hair out of your face by either how you fix it (pulled back, hair clips, etc.) or by getting a haircut. Keep your hairstyle business-casual (no formal up-do's). At the very least, comb your hair!

Overall Appearance: Be well groomed. This includes makeup, nails, posture, etc. If you are going to wear makeup, keep it minimal and natural. Your hands and nails should be cleaned. If you wear nail polish, make sure it's freshly painted and a nice color that matches your outfit.



Don'ts

Clothing: Avoid low-cut tops, high-slit skirts, short skirts or shorts. No bear-shoulder shirts (spaghetti straps). Make sure your top is long enough to cover your stomach when you reach your arms up. If not, wear a longer tank top underneath. NO baseball hats, jeans, casual clothes (short sleeve t-shirts), ties that are not appropriate for a business setting (ex: sports or cartoon features). If you wear a cowboy hat, take it off for the interview (you should always remove your hat when indoors).

Shoes: **NO** flip-flops or tennis shoes. No worn out or dirty shoes. Avoid wearing high-heeled shoes. You should be able to walk naturally and with ease in whatever shoes you choose to wear.

Jewelry: Avoid wearing facial piercings, especially tongue and lip piercings.

Hair: NO “bed head” or uncombed hair. No dirty or un-fixed hair. You should NOT have a sweat mark or indent from a hat.

Overall Appearance: Avoid heavy makeup or strong perfume /cologne. Make sure your face is clean. No chipped nail polish or obnoxious colors. Avoid dirty hands or nails.





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Prepare Yourself

The more prepared you are, the less anxious you will be during the interview...and thus, the better you will DO.



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Practice Interview Questions

Use practice/sample interview questions to help you prepare for your interview. It's better to practice some questions that the judge *may* ask than be caught off guard during the interview.

- Use a full-length mirror to evaluate your posture and gestures while you practice introducing and seating yourself.
 - Know how much time you will be allowed for the interview and what you are expected to bring.
 - If you feel nervous, simply be aware of it and accept it. Most interviewers will be expecting you to be nervous—They will be taking notice of how you handle your nerves.
 - The interviewer(s) will ask you about yourself and your project. So relax—no one knows YOU better than you do. Plus, if you worked on your project, you should have no problem telling the judge about your exhibit and your experience.
 - Answer questions directly and honestly. Most interviewers can tell if you are bluffing and don't really know the answer. They don't expect you to know everything, and they'll respect you if you are honest with them.
 - Allow the judge to direct the interview, but be ready and willing to do the majority of the talking. If you are nervous talking to a judge—practice being “judged” by friends or family. The only way to get better and more comfortable is to practice. Being shy only goes so far. At a certain age, you need to be able to communicate (with ease) with others—whether that be in an interview situation, or public speaking. 4-H is a GREAT opportunity to build these IMPORTANT life skills!!
- NO Cell Phones! Turn it off...
or at the very least turn it to
SILENT (not just vibrate)**
- Tell me about yourself and your 4-H experience.
 - Tell me about your exhibit. What did you do to complete this?
 - How/Why did you select this project?
 - Where did you go for more information about your project?
 - What did you want to accomplish with your project? Did you accomplish your goals? What did you do to accomplish your goals?
 - What have you learned from your experiences in this project?
 - How much time did you devote to your project?
 - What is the value of doing a project such as yours? (nonmonetary value)
 - What did you learn from this project?
 - What was the most important thing you learned in this project?
 - How have you helped others in your community through this project? How could you help others?
 - What was the greatest challenge you faced in your project? What solutions did you come up with to overcome your challenge?
 - What would you do differently if you could do this project over?
 - Do you plan to continue this project next year? Why or why not?

Winning Interview Tips

- **Prepare for expected questions**—it's better to be over prepared than underprepared.
- For Project Interviews, **bring your Project Books** to show the judge how much of the project you've worked on besides the exhibits you've brought.
- **Wear “business-casual” attire** Keep clothes and hair neat and tasteful.
- **NO Cell Phones!** If you have your cellphone with you, turn it off or to silent—NOT just vibrate.
- **Arrive on time!** Be at least 15 minutes early. This allows you to get settled before your interview. Take a few minutes to make sure you have everything you need.

- **Introduce yourself** as you walk up to the table. This shows good manners and confidence.
- **Shake their hand** firmly (if offered) when you introduce yourself **AND** as you leave— along with thanking them for their time.
- **Don't chew gum** or have anything in your mouth (such as candy).
- **Speak loudly and clearly.** Don't mumble or talk to softly—the judge needs to be able to hear you, and understand you.
- **Sit up straight** on the edge of the chair
- **Pause to think** about the question **before giving an answer**
- **Be enthusiastic** about 4-H and about your project
- **Be yourself!**