

## 10 TIPS FOR INTERVIEWS AT LAW FIRMS

### 1 PREPARE:

- Get ready with 2-4 stories that showcase your best attributes.

Figure out a way to weave some or all of them into the interview, regardless of specific questions asked.

—The more you can control the topics of conversation and run the interview on your terms, the better you will do.

—That said, never appear evasive; you must answer the questions asked fully before steering the topic to one on which you are best prepared.

- Know your resume cold.

You know that entry you drafted 3 years ago for that college internship? If it's on your resume, it's fair game. Make sure you're fresh and up-to-speed.

That goes especially for anything you've written. It's likely been forever since you read that college thesis that you feature prominently. Don't get caught looking like you don't know your own stuff.

—Personally, I once walked into an interview to find my interviewer reading an article I'd written and had not thought about in years. I looked stupid when she appeared to know what I'd said better than me.

- Demonstrate an awareness of the firm's recent cases, clients, or news.

—Raising one of these topics during an interview suggests genuine interest and initiative, but don't pretend you "know" anything more than them; approach with curiosity, not difficult questions to stump your interviewer.

—Even if you don't want to raise a current topic affirmatively, being prepared will avoid a situation where you get caught off guard by a topic the interviewer might raise.

- Investigate each interviewer beyond what's on the firm website.

Try to uncover areas of common ground that you can use to build rapport and to source questions you can ask about later that involve their careers, not just the firm as a whole.

—If the lawyer posts on LinkedIn or writes in a local bar magazine, that is information you should know about in advance.

—The more you can get the interviewer talking about themselves, the better they will think the interview went.

## ② DRESS FOR SUCCESS:

Professional attire still matters. Recommended are suits and ties, or tailored blazers over blouses.

—Consider an interesting tie to show creativity and personality or to create a convo-starter, but don't venture beyond the professional.

—Shoes don't matter for Zoom, but remember to shine them if in-person.

—Consider wearing your best color to boost your confidence and make your own complexion pop.

## ③ MAKE A STRONG FIRST IMPRESSION:

If in person, using a strong handshake is a must. Add a warm smile, locked eyes, and an energetic, enthusiastic affect that conveys positivity and optimism, and you'll be off to a great start.

On Zoom, you must focus on non-verbal cues. Greet with a smile, nod gently, ask about their day, and lean slightly forward to show interest. These actions convey confidence, energy, and enthusiasm—all qualities that firms seek in associates.

Consider practicing with a friend, for it's that important. Studies show people often form opinions within the first five minutes.

## ④ BE INTENTIONAL ABOUT ZOOM BACKGROUND & LIGHTING:

Consider blurring your background or showcasing a conversation-starting scene. (Unmade beds in unkempt bedrooms are not conversation-starting in the way I mean. 🙄) Also, during the interview, observe the interviewer's own background for potential talking points.

Ensure, too, that your face is well-lit without harsh shadows. Check your setup right beforehand, as ambient light shifts dramatically day-to-day and hour-to-hour. I have a bright light that I only use on dark days, for example, and you may need something similar.

## ⑤ BE CAREFUL WITH NOTE-TAKING:

**NEVER TYPE** during an interview: It's distracting and can seem disrespectful.

If you must take notes, use a legal pad, but always maintain eye contact while writing.

## ⑥ BE YOURSELF:

Don't be scared to relax and be yourself. You will come off much more genuine if you don't have to pretend.

7 MIND YOUR BODY LANGUAGE:

Maintain consistent eye contact and smile appropriately. Be aware of subtle facial cues:

- Gentle nodding shows engagement
- Raising eyebrows indicates need for clarification
- Minimizing fidgeting conveys composed confidence

8 ASK GOOD QUESTIONS:

Prepare thoughtful questions on a separate notepad, written **IN LARGE PRINT** for easy reference. Try using a bright Sharpie.

—> This allows you to ask questions smoothly without appearing to read them.

Listen attentively to answers, nodding occasionally to show understanding.

9 LEAVE ON A HIGH NOTE:

Regardless of how *you* may think the interview went, maintain a positive, enthusiastic demeanor until the very last minute.

10 FOLLOW-UP FAST:

Send a thank-you email within 24 hours.

—The sooner you send, the shorter it can be. You'll want to reference specifics from your conversation, and if you wait a week, your memory will fade and become blurred with other firm interviews.

—You'll also feel more pressure to write a longer, more substantive letter. Don't create additional work for yourself. Best is to pen the note as soon as possible after the interview.

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