

Nail that job! 7 tips for traveling for an interview

Congratulations! You've been asked to come in for an interview. Traveling to meet with a potential employer is no vacation, but it doesn't have to pack on additional stress.

"Be prepared for the interview itself. Traveling is stressful enough. You don't want to have to worry about both traveling and the interview," said Patrick Skelly, IBM program manager for university recruiting.

1. Know where you're going

Your flight and hotel room will likely be arranged for you, but don't view your potential employer as your travel guide.

"Candidates, even if inexperienced travelers, should not ask lots of questions about how to get from point A to point B," Skelly advised.

Figure out how to get from the airport to the hotel ahead of time. Call the hotel and ask about transportation options. The hotel might have a shuttle service. Do some research ahead of time, and you shouldn't have any problems.

2. Pack light, pack right

Unless your interview is a weeklong ordeal, forgo checking luggage. That way you don't have to stress out about the airline losing it. Find out the size limitations for carry-on luggage.

Make a list in advance of everything you need to bring and check it off the night before you go.

Bring a small portfolio and pen to the interview to take notes. Bring extra copies of your resume, list of references and business cards.

Also, make sure you have an extra outfit in case you spill something or find a stain. Pack anything with spilling potential in a separate bag. You never know what the cabin pressure will do to your shampoo bottle.

3. Carry cash

Make sure you have some cash on hand for taxis. Take at least \$150, including single dollar bills for tipping.

Be sure to get receipts for any travel-related expenses. You will probably be reimbursed. However, don't ask about being reimbursed during the interview.

"Candidates are always worried about reimbursement, but most candidates with common sense will focus on the interview and not the reimbursement factor," Skelly said.

You'll get your money back eventually. You don't want to make it seem like that's the first thing on your mind.

4. Get some sleep

Visiting a new city is exciting, but now is not the time to explore the nightlife. If you get the job, you'll have plenty of time for that.

If you oversleep, you probably won't get the job. Call the hotel ahead of time and ask for the complimentary turndown service. A comfy bed with a little chocolate on the pillow can go a long way. Get a cup of hot tea (decaf), and get a good night's rest. You'll thank yourself in the morning.

5. Set the alarm -- and the backup

Do not oversleep. Set the alarm in the room, and bring a battery-operated alarm in case the power goes out. Ask the front desk for a wake-up call. Ask your mom to call you in the morning. Whatever you do, don't be late. Give yourself enough time to get up, have breakfast and get ready without feeling rushed.

Being too early is not good, although being late for an interview always starts off on a bad footing, regardless of the reason. We recommend approaching the receptionist about five to seven minutes before the scheduled interview.

If regardless of good planning, circumstances occur that make you late for the interview, it is important to call as soon as possible to let the interviewer know that you will be late.

6. Pack a snack

Pack a light snack on the day of the interview. You never know how accessible food will be, and you don't want to be distracted by a growling stomach. If your interviews last all day, you'll have some breaks built in. Take time to eat. You will be more alert and energized on this important day.

When you do get hungry, don't raid the hotel's minifridge. "Several years ago, a client told me that a candidate cleaned out everything in the minibar of his hotel room. The client was paying for the room, and it was charged to a master account the client had. When the candidate left town, he left the client with a \$150 minibar tab."

7. Be prepared

Keep all of these pointers in mind, and you can avoid some potentially stressful situations. Remember to be courteous, professional and conservative. You can't go wrong keeping these things in mind.

So pack your bags (don't forget both shoes), be confident and enjoy this opportunity. You can always reward yourself with a vacation when you return from your business travels. Good luck!