

10 unusual interview mistakes, and 6 that are all too common

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Most of us can recall an embarrassing moment in our lives that was caused by nerves. Whether it was drawing a blank at a crucial time, spilling a drink on a first date or stuttering through a presentation at work, at one point or another, anxiety has gotten the best of all of us.

One of life's most notoriously nerve-racking events, the job interview, is perfect for these sorts of foot-in-mouth moments. The combination of excitement and pressure can cloud our judgment and lead us to make mistakes, decisions and comments that we wouldn't normally make.

Making mistakes is part of being human, and most hiring managers will let the occasional blank stare or fumbled sentence slide during an interview. But there are some slip-ups that you just can't recover from, mistakes so ridiculous that they'll completely eclipse any potential you may have in the mind of your interviewer.

What kind of mistakes, you ask? Well, mistakes like the ones below, which hiring managers [reported to CareerBuilder](#) as the most unusual interview mishaps they'd ever seen. (Though we're not certain all of these mistakes were caused by nerves, we're going to give everyone the benefit of the doubt here -- mostly because we can't bear to think otherwise.)

- Candidate brought a "how to interview book" with him to the interview.
- Candidate asked, "What company is this again?"
- Candidate put the interviewer on hold during a phone interview. When she came back on the line, she told the interviewer that she had a date set up for Friday.
- Candidate wore a Boy Scout uniform and never told interviewers why.
- Candidate talked about promptness as one of her strengths after showing up 10 minutes late.
- On the way to the interview, candidate passed, cut off and flipped the middle finger to a driver who happened to be the interviewer.

- Candidate referred to himself in the third person.
- Candidate took off his shoes during interview.
- Candidate asked for a sip of the interviewer's coffee.
- A mature candidate told the interviewer she wasn't sure if the job offered was worth "starting the car for."

How's that for some third-party embarrassment?

But before you ask, "What kind of idiot would ask a stranger for a sip of his coffee?" know that it doesn't take a mistake as bizarre as the examples above to kill a perfectly good interview. There are a plenty of less ridiculous but equally detrimental interview gaffes that job candidates -- even smart ones -- make all the time.

According to the CareerBuilder survey, the following are the errors job seekers make most often:

- Answering cell phone or texting: 77 percent
- Appearing disinterested: 75 percent
- Dressing inappropriately: 72 percent
- Appearing arrogant: 72 percent
- Talking negatively about current or previous employers: 67 percent
- Chewing gum: 63 percent

So how can you avoid making mistakes -- outrageous or otherwise -- in your next job interview?

Be prepared, says Rosemary Haefner, [vice president of human resources](#) at CareerBuilder. "With preparation and practice, candidates can greatly improve their interview skills," she says. Well-prepared job seekers are more confident, articulate and relaxed -- and therefore less susceptible to error -- than those who aren't.

Before your interview, research the company, conduct mock interviews with friends and practice telling anecdotes that highlight your accomplishments, Haefner suggests.