



COLLEGE OF HUMAN ECOLOGY

Interview Tips

How to get rid of filler words:

Hear yourself using filler words

If you listen to a recording of a conference call where you regularly say “Um,” you will have a natural urge to cringe. This is an important first step in ridding yourself of filler words. Try recording a presentation or listen to an audio recording of a recent call.

Replace fillers with pauses

A pause every so often adds emphasis to your words. Moreover, it gives you some time to think. It is never as long as it feels.

Chunk your information

When we lack a plan for organizing our ideas, we ramble. Presentation trainer Olivia Mitchell recommends chunking your sentences ahead of speaking them and then leaving a pause. Says Mitchell, “When you chunk, you get into a rhythm: burst of words/break/burst of words/break... Focus on that rhythm and your um’s will go.”

Make eye contact

It becomes much more awkward to say “Um” when making full, engaging eye contact with a person. In your next meeting, experiment with turning your torso and eye gaze toward each person in the room, giving your attention inclusively. If you’re on a conference call, don’t pace or stare out the window blankly, but turn your attention to your notes or script.

Plan out your transitions beforehand

One of the functions of “Um” is to tell your audience that you’re not done talking yet and need to gather your thoughts. As an alternative, have some ready transitions to use in any presentation or meeting, such as “Let’s move on to...”, “Another important consideration is...”, or even “Let’s transition to talking about...” Practicing these go-to transitions will begin to feel natural and will lessen your dependence on saying, “Um.”

Prepare!

If you have an idea of what you are going to say before you say it, you won’t have to scramble for words. Practice makes perfect. This is all easier said than done, but following these steps will make for better interviews, presentations, and conversations.

Interview Stress Management Tactics:

Mental Stress Management:

Research

Research target company thoroughly. Show them why your interests align with the position's focus!

Avoid negative thinking, focus on the positives

Stress around interviews is often influenced by our assumptions or the statements we make to ourselves about the process. Identifying and countering anxiety-provoking thoughts can help to lower levels of anxiety. Focus on the positives! Think about the strengths that you have, and accept that mistakes will happen.

Visualization

Before the interview, create a mental image of the situation. Imagine the interview in detail, as you would like it to unfold. You can think about everything from driving to the interview and walking into the building, to what the surroundings will be like. Create a mental picture of yourself meeting the interviewer. Visualize yourself feeling composed and calm. Feel the presence of the building of rapport between you and the interviewer. Hear the questions that the interviewer might ask and give your responses in a crisp and eloquent manner. See the interviewer respond favorably to you; feel confident and comfortable.

Physical Stress Management:

Use diaphragmatic breathing, or belly breathing to calm yourself down

It requires practice, know that chest breathing is easy to slip back into. This technique can take time to develop. Practice 5 minutes at a time and then gradually increase to 20 minutes. Use this technique before or during stressful events like interviews. Taking the time to notice breathing is relaxing by itself.

Progressive muscle relaxation

Squeeze a group of muscles, hold for a few seconds and then relax the muscles as much as possible. This can relieve the tense feeling and is particularly effective when combined with deep breathing and visual imagery.

Right Before the Interview:

Arrive a little early

"Early is on time, on time is late, and late is unacceptable."

Use this time to get yourself in the right frame of mind. Set your energy and focus on who you'll be meeting with, what you want them to remember about you, and what you want to ask them.

Breathe

Use some of the breathing techniques listed above to destress before the interview

Stop rehearsing

You don't want to use this time to over-prepare or rehearse responses, which can make your conversation seem scripted and not authentic. You want to know your stuff, but remember that this is still a conversation. As much as you want to work for them, they're also really hoping you're the one.

Focus on your posture

Sit in a power pose while waiting to go in for your job interview. This means you should be sitting upright and confidently. You'll come across as looking more collected and poised.

Think happy thoughts.

This may sound cliché – but thinking of pleasant things that make you smile and feel good will help put you in the right state of mind going into the interview.