

Job Interview Techniques for the Beginner

A skit by Dwayne Yancey

Selected from his collection, "Skits 24/7"

Cast: 1 female, 4 flexible (Change names to fit gender)

Length: 6 pages of dialogue (1262 words)

Performance time: About 4 minutes

The Story

Worried about how to interview for your first job? Relax! Here are the right – and wrong – ways to present yourself. Check out the difference between brutal honesty, shading the truth, and outright lies. And don't forget, while describing the job the employer may use these techniques, too!

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(NARRATOR addresses the audience. INTERVIEWER ONE and APPLICANT ONE are already in place at a desk.)

NARRATOR: Good evening. Tonight, we'd like to devote some time to a subject that will soon touch many in our audience — seeking a job. Whether it's a simple summer job, or that crucial first job after college, most of you, I bet, could use some pointers on how to put together a proper resume that will get the attention of prospective employers.

INTERVIEWER ONE: I see here you were Phi Beta Kappa, graduated with a 4.0 grade point average, all while taking a triple major in nuclear physics, medieval literature, and accounting.

APPLICANT ONE: *(Very poised and proper.)* That's right, madam. At Harvard. Well, I went to night school at MIT on the side for the nuclear physics part, but all the rest was at Harvard. Except for the summer program where I commuted between Oxford and Cambridge.

NARRATOR: Maybe Nicholas here doesn't need any help on the resume front. But let's meet how our other job applicant measures up.

INTERVIEWER TWO: I'm looking here, uh, your resume, uh—

APPLICANT TWO: *(In a roughneck way.)* Spike. I just go by Spike.

INTERVIEWER: Uh, yes, I see, well, uh, I'm looking here, Ms. Spike, but I, uh, I don't see any evidence that you actually ever completed school.

APPLICANT TWO: Uh, yeah, well, I dropped out, see? Well, got kicked out mostly. But that was after I quit going.

NARRATOR: Ah, our friend Spike here —

APPLICANT TWO: *(To NARRATOR.)* That's Ms. Spike to you, buster!

NARRATOR: Right. Well, Ms. Spike has just committed a common mistake — honesty! Now, there's nothing wrong with honesty. Oh no. Complete honesty has many virtues. But it may not get you the job. So let's see if Spike, uh, Ms. Spike can try again.

APPLICANT TWO: Oh yeah, I got one of them degree things. It was from Yale or Princeton or one of them fancy places up North. I just didn't bring it with me today.

NARRATOR: Ah, ah, ah — lying won't get you anywhere either. Well, maybe elected to public office, but that part comes later. Let's see, though, what happens if our friend Spike merely shades the truth a little.

APPLICANT TWO: *(Assuming a very sophisticated air.)* After my freshman year, I decided a combination of independent study and work-study would better suit my academic needs.

INTERVIEWER TWO: I see, very impressive. That shows a lot of initiative.

APPLICANT TWO: *(Back to being a roughneck.)* Yeah, yeah, I got plenty of that stuff, too.

NARRATOR: See how easy that was. So let's move on. Besides your educational background, prospective employers also look closely at your work history.

APPLICANT ONE: I started out with a lemonade stand when I was six. By the time I was 12, I had my own paper route. During the summers in high school, I worked in construction. And when I went to college, I worked in the dining hall for the first shift and in the library at night.

NARRATOR: Not bad, not bad. Let's see what Spike has to say about how she's spent her time.

APPLICANT TWO: I partied mostly.

NARRATOR: Ah, ah, ah, there we go with that honesty thing again. Let's try a different approach.

APPLICANT TWO: I worked as an independent contractor that serviced the entertainment needs of the transportation industry.

NARRATOR: See how much that better is?

INTERVIEWER TWO: I see. And what sort of services did you provide, exactly?

APPLICANT TWO: I was a truck stop hostess.

NARRATOR: I see. Well, uh, let's move on.

INTERVIEWER ONE: So, what sort of skills do you have?

NARRATOR: Ah, the old skills question. This is what trips up a lot of applicants because they often undervalue their own talents. Let's see what our precocious Harvard graduate Nicholas has to say.

APPLICANT ONE: Skills? Oh, uh, well, let's see, I'm really good at footnotes.

NARRATOR: Hmm. I wonder how Spike will handle this one.

INTERVIEWER TWO: I'm interested in what skills you might bring to the table. Any special talents you have?

APPLICANT TWO: *(As a roughneck.)* Skills? Oh yeah, I got skills! Why, you want a demonstration?

NARRATOR: Ah, let's not go there.

APPLICANT TWO: *(To the NARRATOR.)* You sure? 'Cuz I'm quite good at my trade. Or so I'm told.

NARRATOR: Uh, maybe later, OK? Why don't you just try that one again, Spike?

APPLICANT TWO: *(In a sophisticated air.)* I have first-hand experience in sales and marketing and providing customized personal services. I have a reputation among my clients for customer satisfaction. Plus I'm well-versed in the fields of diesel mechanics and massage therapy. *(Back to being a roughneck.)* You can ask any of the guys up at White's Truck Stop if you don't believe me.

NARRATOR: Needs a little work, but you get the idea. Education and work experience are important attributes, to be sure, but nowadays many employers are interested in what other traits and experiences an applicant might bring to the workplace.

INTERVIEWER ONE: I see here where you've done a lot of volunteer work.

APPLICANT ONE: That's right. I've tutored disadvantaged youth after school. I've served as a peer counselor on the local teen hotline. I've taught English as a Second Language classes to Third World refugees. And I'm active in my church delivering hot meals to shut-ins. Now that's on Mondays. On Tuesdays —

NARRATOR: Ah, a social conscience and excellent time management skills. Very impressive. Let's see if Spike can top that.

INTERVIEWER TWO: Any community service?

APPLICANT TWO: *(As a roughneck.)* Oh yeah, I done my community service.

NARRATOR: Uh, sometimes it helps to elaborate.

APPLICANT TWO: *(Still as a roughneck.)* Well, I was a first-time offender so the judge said he'd let me off easy, so I just got probation and community service.

NARRATOR: Maybe not that kind of elaboration.

APPLICANT TWO: *(With a sophisticated air.)* I've dedicated myself mostly to environmental causes.

NARRATOR: Roadside trash pick-up. Good recovery.

APPLICANT TWO: *(As a roughneck.)* You know, that deputy with a shotgun? I'll bet you dimes to dollars that thing's not really loaded. Whaddya you think?

NARRATOR: Finally, we come to the make-or-break part of the job application. The references.

APPLICANT ONE: *(Handing over a sheet of paper.)* Let's see here, I've got the president of Harvard, several Nobel laureates —

INTERVIEWER ONE: *(Studying the list, becoming frustrated.)* Hmm. All academics. No real-world experience in the bunch.

INTERVIEWER TWO: *(Studying a different list.)* Hmm, you've got an interesting list of references here. Let's see, a judge, a lawyer —

APPLICANT TWO: *(As a roughneck.)* He was court appointed.

End of Freeview

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