

# Why You Need a Good Handshake

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Before you head out to the interview, check your suit for lint, your résumé for typos, your teeth for spinach and your hands for a firm grip. A new survey finds that all of your years of experience and the hard work you put into preparing for an interview can disappear if you extend your hand and offer a languid shake.

A dead fish handshake can be just as dooming as ripped jeans and a neck tattoo when it comes to landing a job, says the survey conducted by Greg Stewart, a business professor from the University of Iowa in Iowa City, Iowa.

## **Why is a good handshake so important?**

Because you're being interviewed the second you walk through the door. Everything from your appearance to your body language sends signals to interviewers about you and your fit in the company. They're looking for anything to distinguish you from the pack, so they will let the handshake set the tone for the rest of your meeting.

"Job seekers are trained how to act in a job interview, how to talk, how to dress, how to answer questions, so we all look and act alike to varying degrees because we've all been told the same things," Stewart reminds. Your handshake is one of the few interview components that are unique to you.

"We probably don't consciously remember a person's handshake or whether it was good or bad. But the handshake is one of the first nonverbal clues we get about the person's overall personality, and that impression is what we remember," Stewart says.

For the survey, 98 students went through mock job interviews. Handshake raters, who did not reveal their purpose, were introduced to students and shook their hands. After the interviews, the hiring managers scored how well the job seekers performed and the handshake raters graded the handshakes separately. The scores were compared and showed that those students with high scoring handshakes were the same ones the interviewers viewed most hireable.

The correlation between handshakes and favorable impressions goes beyond an interviewer's preference for a firm grip. Interviewers perceived students with good handshakes as being more outgoing and having better interpersonal skills.

## **What is a good handshake?**

Interviews are filled with opportunities for overthinking. Which tie exudes confidence? Which hairstyle says professional yet approachable? How early should I arrive so that I don't seem too eager or too disinterested? And now you're probably wondering just how to go about crafting the perfect handshake. Chances are you probably already know the answer.

One of the first lessons of Business 101 is to have a firm, personable handshake, and that's exactly what interviewers favored. The handshake that received the best responses involved a strong grip, maintained eye contact and deliberate pumps up and down. A lazy handshake makes you appear disinterested, sort of like a five-fingered yawn. If you're overzealous, however, it's distracting and annoying.

On your next interview, as you walk into the room and flatten the creases in your crisp suit jacket, remember to give the same attention to the hand you're extending.