

**Source:** How to nail a job interview: The first 12 words you say will affect whether you're offered the job. by Emma Haslett City AM



Got a job interview today? Choose your first words very carefully.

New research has suggested the first 12 words you utter will determine the interviewer's overall impression of you - and it turns out small talk is crucial.

The research, by Resurgo Trust, found people "without privileged backgrounds" can struggle with small talk - which puts them at a disadvantage.

"Most people want to ease their way into a business meeting and I think it is a perfectly natural way of starting a meeting or interview and not everyone knows how to do it," said Scott Hutchinson from Interim Partners, a management and recruitment consultancy.

"Weather is a great ice breaker but there are other ice breakers ... the first 12 words should be small talk, but perhaps about the company you are visiting. If they are in a lovely building which is well located you should say, 'This is a lovely building, it is really well located.' It is almost complimenting them. If it isn't that and it is quite an ugly building you can still turn that to your advantage by saying, 'This is an interesting building, how long have you been here?'"

There are more steps interviewees can take. A study published last year found prospective employers are particularly sensitive to body language - so candidates should avoid fidgeting and playing with their hair, make sure they smile, and have a strong handshake (but not too strong).

Rosemary Haefner, human resources chief at CareerBuilder, which commissioned the study, suggested candidates should rehearse before the big day to avoid making those common mistakes. Presumably that goes for small talk, too.

**Peter Knight Recruitment** says make sure your opening lines are natural and not forced. Saying something in an awkward un-natural way can be much worse than saying nothing at all. Saying something like "Thank you for seeing me today", "thanks for taking the time out of your schedule". When picking a subject, make sure it is something neutral or positive and definitely something which will not cause offense. Don't forget, no-one wants to hear anything negative so keep those thoughts to yourself, even if you have had a bad journey.

You only get one chance at a first impression, so make it count.