

## What Do Judges Look For In A Pageant Interview

The interview is really your chance to present a total picture of you as the winner to the judges. Why? As you're standing there, eloquently answering their questions, this is your best chance for the "This is the winner" bell to go off in your judge's heads. When you match beauty and brains, and especially if you can make judges laugh, positive thoughts about you will stay with the judges throughout the pageant. So, what do judges actually look for in interview?

### Well Spoken Contestants

Yes, you need to be well spoken. This doesn't mean robotic and this doesn't mean that you speak like the guys on Big Bang Theory. You just need to be able to respond coherently and present good reasons for your opinions. Judges are looking for how well you speak on your feet, too. Being able to roll with the punches to answer more serious questions followed by more lighthearted topics is a good chance to show how well you relate to other people.

### A Driven Contestant

It doesn't matter what your goals are- it matters how passionate you are and what you are doing about pursuing them. Judges do want to get to know you, so let them meet the real you. Whether you're an avid volunteer, a really talented performer hoping to get into entertainment, or are committed to your academics, share your strengths with the judges. This is your time to shine.

### A Pulled Together Look

Theresa Bucklew, long-time pageant fan and judge (and the current director of the new pageant system American Royal Beauties, based in Ohio), says that judges are checking out your look, too! She says "I am looking for someone that can speak well, but I am also looking for a contestant that has well-fitting clothes. It doesn't matter if the clothes are \$50 or \$5,000, they should fit well." If you're able to score a great find on the clearance rack, put it to good use- but make sure you take it to your favorite tailor. Stuck on where to find a good tailor? Ask your local pageant dress store- they nearly always have a go-to suggestion. Remember what was mentioned above- this is often the first chance the judges have to see you, so you need to knock them out with your one-two punch of intelligence and style.

I get a lot of email questions from young women who are preparing for pageantry with feedback that they come across "too serious" in interview. Believe it or not, being a great student and well-spoken is not enough to win the crown; you have to show some personality, too!

Use those facts to your advantage, but make sure to infuse some fun in your pageant interview. Here are my favorite tips for being a well-rounded and fun contestant in pageant interview. You do have control over this aspect, primarily with your preparation and how you structure your pageant paperwork.

## How to Answer Interview Questions Without Rambling

We've all been there, whether we're at home on the couch or watching the pageant live in the audience. You know who I am talking about. The contestant who gets tripped up by a question. The contestant who is asked a question that is way more complex than she can possibly answer in thirty seconds or less. The contestant whose adrenaline is pumping so hard that she can barely hear the question, much less contain her anticipation in answering it.



In interview or onstage question, the rambler has the potential to lose herself the pageant because she doesn't provide a concise and clear answer to the question. Short and sweet is a great way to answer interview questions because the longer you speak, the more likely your nerves are to grab a hold of you. It's at that point that the transmission from brain to mouth seems to be bringing in the "second string" or "B list" answer. Think about it- most of the time when you answer a question, you are able to get your point across in 15 seconds or so. 10-15 seconds is all a judge really needs to score your answer anyways, so why not stick with your gut and don't allow yourself to ramble. Here are a few ways to practice so you nail the interview.

### **Video Tape Yourself**

You'll be amazed at the bad habits you can pick up on a video. You'll also be more conscious of when you took too long to answer a question and how you can work to improve your answers overall.

### **Use a Timer**

Appoint a friend with a timer and a bell. Practice your interview with a person in the corner giving you that bell sound every time you take longer than 20-25 seconds to answer your question. Over time, you'll get more comfortable with the idea of answering more quickly and still getting your point across.

### **Brainstorm Possible Questions**

The more you practice and the more you know yourself, the better the interview will be overall. You're less likely to get tripped up on a question and start rambling if you have practiced a lot and have some idea of your response. The more you have gone through the mock interview practice, the less you will be phased by any one question. *(Remember though that you do not want to come off rehearsed. Practicing is needed for interview so that you become comfortable formulating answers and yes some of the questions that you get on your interview day will be similar to what you have practiced. But make sure you do not memorize an answer, instead just remember the general concept of what you would like to portray to them about that concept.)*

### **How to show your personality in your interview:**

#### **1. Be Ready With a Joke**

Being able to tell a joke or funny story is one way you can show another side of your personality in interview. Make sure your joke is PG-rated or think about a time you had an embarrassing moment that you wouldn't mind sharing with the judges.

#### **2. Make Them Ask**

Your pageant paperwork is often the judge's only introduction to you, so don't make it boring. Add some fun facts in there that will make you stand out. Even if there is limited room on your paperwork, use an introduction or closing statement to remind them that you have a spunky side.

Judges will not always ask the right combination of questions, so you should always have a way to weave your funny story in there. If it's on your paperwork or in your introduction, you have a better chance of being asked. If your paperwork is full of all of your incredible accomplishments- congratulations! However, you might want to delete some of those to make room for something unique and memorable. *(Remember if you submit the paperwork early we will look it over and give you suggestions.)*