

How Do I Handle Pageant Interview Questions?

What about the Onstage Interview? Who writes those interview questions?

It depends on the pageant but frequently the judges write those questions based on information which you provide on your fact sheet/ resume or based on topical current events in the news. You can prepare for the onstage interview in the same way you prepare for the offstage interview – give the judges interesting facts about yourself on the preliminary information sheets and stay up-to-date on current events. It's not enough to know that something is going on in the world. You also have to know what you think about what is going on.

Here's an easy way to practice answering current event questions.

When you are riding in the car put a news channel on the radio. When you hear a report on a current news event pretend that a judge just asked you what you thought about "fill in the news event" here. Turn off the radio and practice answering the question. Out loud. You will be surprised how much difference you find between answering in your thoughts and answering aloud.

How do you handle stage fright when a question is asked?

Use the same techniques you use for stage fright in general (see question above): positive self-talk (I know how to answer this) concentrate on something other than telling yourself you feel nervous (the answer to the question) and breathe.

Pause for a moment to organize your thoughts before you start to speak then take a deep, slow breath. It's better to be silent for a moment than to start babbling an incoherent or disorganized response. Do not repeat the question as a ploy to gain time to think. You have the time and it is easier and faster to think in silence. Repeating the question makes you appear nervous.

When preparing for an interview for a beauty pageant, how can I avoid being too rehearsed?

One thing many contestants often forget to do is simply to listen. Listen to what the judges are asking. Don't start to think about your answer before you hear the entire question or you risk missing the essence of the question. Nerves can sometimes make words pass straight through your mind without actually registering so you need to make a special effort to concentrate.

Answer only what the question asks and stay within any limits placed by the question. Be truthful. The judges usually do not have a definite answer in mind for the kind of questions asked during the onstage interview so there is no one "right" answer. Only you know the exact correct response to the question because it is your response! Be honest with the judges, use answers from within yourself and your answer will sound sincere.

What is the correct way to answer political questions? Do you make a guess at the party affiliation of your judges, or just answer the question?

I never know the best way to respond to interview questions about our president or my political views.

See above answer. There IS no "correct" response to political questions. It is a mistake to try to second guess the judges' opinions on an issue and feed it back to them. For one thing – most pageants use a panel of judges and it is a good bet that there is more than one opinion on the panel.

Judges are not looking for a contestant who can spout their particular political philosophy back to them. They are looking for a contestant who can think on her feet, communicate well and represent the image of the pageant.

If you happen to hold an extreme political viewpoint that you know would not represent the image of the pageant well you might consider tempering how you express that. Otherwise, be yourself and don't worry about matching your opinions to the judges' outlook on life. Let the judges see who you really are, just make sure it is the very best you that you can be.

Besides being up-to-date on current issues, how else can I prepare to stand out during the onstage interview?

Practice your speaking voice. Sounding like a winner comes from using an excellent speaking voice. A voice that is a monotone, high-pitched, nasal or childish takes away from the winning image. Studies have shown that if people don't like how you sound they are likely to tune you out, no matter how excellent your message is. If judges don't like how you sound they are not going to want you to represent the pageant.

If you win the title you will spend a good part of the next year speaking to groups, organizations and individuals. The judges will not be able to picture you doing this successfully if your speaking voice is disagreeable.

No matter what your voice sounds like now, it can be improved. If you think you have a serious problem you might want to consider going to a speech or theater coach for vocal improvement. They can help you work on things such as diction, intonation and placement to help your voice be the best it can be.

One trick you can do on your own is to use a tape recorder and record yourself speaking on the telephone to a friend or in another relaxed situation. Then listen to the tape. Are you nasal? High pitched? Do you hear other problems?

Some improvements you can make to start:

- Breathe. You need air to speak well.
- Use a moderate pace. Too fast and you sound nervous, too slow and you sound boring.
- Clearly enunciate the end of each word. Say "thoughT thinK doG" not "thaw theen dah."
- Clearly enunciate the end of sentences. Don't let your sentences fade out as you get to the end. Sometimes this happens because of lack of breath to support your words.
- If you come from a part of the country where a "twang" is a natural part of your speech pattern soften it a little. Otherwise you can sound too nasal.
- Don't end your sentences as if you are asking a question. Drop your voice rather than ending on a high note.
- Avoid annoying verbal habits such as: "um, you know, like," and slang. Sometimes it helps to listen to professional voices like T.V. news anchorwomen or talk show hosts and try to copy what they sound like. This can give you an idea of how it "feels" when you are using good speech habits. But use this technique only for practice and be sure to develop a unique speaking voice all your own.