

1. Job Interview

The term 'Interview', is derived from 'intreme', which means 'sight between.' An interview is essentially a conversation, though with several special features:

- It has a specific purpose.
- It follows a fairly structured pattern—time, place, length, participants and subject matter are established well in advance.
- One group or participant controls the proceedings and contributes mainly questions—the other contributes mainly answers.

There are various types of interviews—the choice of type determined by the purpose. The types of interviews could be:

- Job interviews
- Journalistic interviews
- The interview of a patient by a psychiatrist, etc....

In this chapter, we will be looking at job interviews with the aim of enabling students to tackle the seemingly imposing period of the interview and to help them gain more confidence.

Let us now look at what a candidate must do before, during and after the interview, in order to face this daunting task with relative ease.

Preparing for the Interview

Even the best qualified candidate, must present himself convincingly well before any employer. But how does one prepare for an interview?

The candidate must - Hear more about the position he is seeking, what are the qualities the

employers are seeking in a prospective employee and if his own personal qualities would suit the job.

- Research the company. The more one knows about one's potential employer, the better. Find out what the priorities of the company are.
- Must analyse one's own strengths and look at which of these will match the job one is seeking.
- Must also analyse one's own weaknesses, and come up ways to present them to one's own advantage.
- Look at this example:

INTERVIEWER : Between 1990 and 1995 you had quite a few different jobs. Why was that?

INTERVIEWEE : At that time I was unsure about the direction I wanted my career to take. I felt the need to test my strength and weaknesses in various kinds of employment so I would find out what I could do best. The different jobs taught me a wide range of skills—word processing, selling by telephone, and small business accounting. I think these skills will always be useful, and I wouldn't have learnt them, if I hadn't tried a number of different jobs.

This is a clear example of a confident candidate, who turns an apparent failure or misfortune into an advantage, and does it convincingly.

With the preparations all done, the next part is facing the interview itself.

On the day of the Interview

- Avoid a last minute rush. Get ready well ahead of time.
- Avoid tension. Find means to relax yourself.
- Decide on something to do after the interview, regardless of the result.
- Selection of dress is of primary importance. Choose an outfit appropriate to the job, and one which is acceptable to the company. The outfit must be comfortable to wear, and must suit the candidate.
- Enter the interview room only with a file or folder, containing the necessary papers.
- Importantly, do not forget to carry all the necessary documents.

In the Interview room

First impressions are the best. Therefore, present yourself with confidence and conviction no matter how tensed you really feel. How do we present ourselves as confident personalities?

- Greet the interviewer
- Give a firm handshake
- Stand with good posture, smile and meet the eye of the interviewer. Eye contact is a sign of confidence and it is true that more jobs are lost because of a lack of eye contact than from lack of experience and qualification.
- Be aware of your body language. An 'open' posture with your back straight, and arms and legs uncrossed, is better than a 'closed' posture - back hunched, arms and legs tightly crossed.
- Do not display your nervousness. Avoid small repetitious movements which might give you away.

- Always face the interviewer and make eye contact to show you are concentrating. Do not stare around the room or gaze out of the window.
- Wait for the interviewer to finish before you speak.
- Answer questions directly: don't pretend you did not hear all that the interviewer said and don't answer a question not asked.
- Do not talk too much. Pause often and shorten your answers, but take care not to make them too short, that they sound curt.
- Respond with energy, speak clearly and use facial expressions to emphasise your meaning.

Taking Questions

Some of the questions would be common questions that you would already expect in an interview like,

1. Why did you apply for this job?
 2. What makes you want to work for this company / organization? etc.
- Some of them might be difficult / take you by surprise. Take time to think about them and if you are sure you don't know the answer, say so. Do not invent answers. It is far better to show that you are eager to learn, than to give the impression that you have nothing to learn.
 - Assemble your thoughts well before answering. Keep your answers to the point.
 - Ask the interviewer to repeat a question if you have not understood it fully.
 - End your answers with positive points, if you can. Avoid unnecessary personal disclosures.
 - Do not use jargons to impress
 - Answer with confidence. Do not undersell yourself by being apologetic.

CONCLUDING THE INTERVIEW

At the end of an interview, you will usually be invited to ask questions of your own. If you are well prepared, you will have one or two questions in mind. This is your opportunity to show some initiative and imagination. If you are skilful in interviewing the interviewer, it will act in your favour. Keep your questions positive and constructive. For example: "Does the company plan to expand in the future? What is the scope for promotion?" etc. Frame questions to show that you have thought creatively on issues that have not been raised. But do not overdo it. Do not take over and do not show off. Keep your questions, short, genuine, relevant and few in number.

At the end of the interview smile and shake hands firmly. Thank the interviewer for the time he or she has given you, and take your leave.

Once having left the interview room, remember to jot down any questions that took you by surprise during the interview, and any point in the interview where you floundered and you think you need to improve. Remember, it will help you to face future interviews.

Here is an example of an interview:

The interviewee is attending an interview for the post of a Personal Assistant to the Manager of a Chennai based company.

- Interviewee : Good morning, Sir. May I come in?
 Interviewer : Good morning. Please come in. (The interviewer offers the candidate a seat)
 Interviewer : Please take your seat.
 Interviewee : Thank you, Sir
 Interviewer : I have been through your application letter and curriculum vitae and see that you are quite well qualified for the job. Your shorthand and typing speeds are commendable.

- Interviewee : Thank you, Sir. The classes I took on shorthand and typing have certainly enhanced my qualifications for this job.
- Interviewer : I see this won't be your first job. In fact, you have worked as a sales representative before. Can you tell me your reasons for having applied for this job?
- Interviewee : Yes, I have worked as a sales representative for 4 years now. But this is the kind of job I have always been interested in. That is the reason why I have done my typing and shorthand.
- Interviewer : What subject did you like best in college?
- Interviewee : Personnel Management.
- Interviewer : Can you tell me why?
- Interviewee : I think I like working with people.
- Interviewer : And what about your other interests?
- Interviewee : I enjoy sports, especially cricket and football.
- Interviewer : That is very fine. Thank you very much. That is all I want to ask you for now. Is there anything you want to ask me?
- Interviewee : Thank you, Sir; I think there will be a training programme. How long will that be?
- Interviewer : It will be a one year programme, after which depending on your performance, you will be absorbed into the company.
- Interviewee : I see, Sir. What will be the starting salary?
- Interviewer : That will depend on your ability to do what the company wants of you. During the training period it will be Rs. 2,500/- per month, fixed.

- Interviewee : I understand.
Interviewer : Good. Is there anything else you want to ask me?
Interviewee : No, Sir. Thank you.
Interviewer : That's fine. I hope to be able to let you know about the job in about two weeks.

Having studied the model interview let us try doing the exercise below.

Exercise

1. Write out an interview (including the parts of the interviewer and interviewee), for the post of an Assistant to a Managing Director of a firm.
2. Make a list of questions that you would ask if you were an interviewer. (Ask questions about education, experience, interests, knowledge of English, ability to deal with correspondence, preparing reports, arranging meetings, computer knowledge, salary, expected, etc).
3. In the class attempt a mock interview for a job.