

THAKUR COLLEGE OF SCIENCE & COMMERCE

Autonomous

COMMUNICATION SKILLS

What is an Interview?

An interview is at the most fundamental level, a meeting between strangers. It is worth bearing this in mind at all times when you are preparing for an interview. You have a very limited amount of time to make a good impression, so preparation is key. An interview should be a two-way process, but in reality, particularly early on in your career, it can often feel that all the power is in the hands of the interviewer. It can feel like you, as the candidate, are being judged and weighed in the balance, whereas an interview really should be a two-way process. You need to be sure the job and the organisation is right for you too. Thinking about an interview like this may help reduce the fear factor. It is true to say that most people get nervous at interviews and find them pretty stressful, however many you have attended, but by finding out a little more and being better prepared, it is possible to improve your confidence levels and interview performance markedly.

What is the purpose of an Interview?

The interviewer will certainly be looking to find out whether you have the potential to do the job effectively and make a useful contribution to the department and the organisation. At its simplest level, this means they will be asking:

- Can you do the job? (Skills, attributes, knowledge, experience, understanding)
- Will you do the job? (Enthusiasm, commitment, loyalty)
- Will you fit in? (Personality, attitude, approach, good fit with company ethos, values and the existing team)

You should be asking yourself similar questions. Is the job at the right level for you? Is it too challenging or not challenging enough? No one expects you to be able to do the job expertly from day one, by the way, but you need to be confident that with a proper induction and some training, you will be able to make a valuable contribution. You need to ask yourself if you are excited and pleased at the prospect of working for this organisation, in this job. You must also ask yourself if you identify with the mission statement of the organisation, its values and the way it goes about its business. Finally, what's in it for you? Would this be a good next step in your career? In asking yourself such questions while preparing for an interview and in the interview itself, you will effectively change the power balance, and the interview will no longer feel so one sided. You need to feel it is right for you, just as much as they need to feel you are right for them.

Different Types of Interview Formats

Interviews may be structured in different ways. At some point, though, whatever has gone before, you will in most cases find yourself being formally interviewed face to face by one, two, or in some cases, several interviewers at the same time. Below are some possible interview formats.

You should be told exactly what to expect, but if you are in any doubt, contact the organisation and find out.

- **Group Interviews** – You will be interviewed at the same time as a number of other candidates. Each candidate will be asked a question in turn and you may be encouraged to enter into discussion with the other candidates. Selected candidates may then go on to an individual interview.
- **A series of interviews with different people** – each person will hopefully ask questions with a different focus, though you may find you have to repeat yourself. If you are asked similar questions, be sure to answer just as completely each time.
- **Informal ‘chats’** with different people followed by a formal interview – you could be taken on a tour and will be given the opportunity to ask lots of questions. Treat these informal chats as seriously as the formal interview! You can be pretty sure that everyone you speak to will be asked for their opinion about your suitability.
- **Formal Face-To-Face Interviews** – could be one to one in smaller organisations, but frequently more than one interviewer. Questions will be focused on the evidence you have provided in your application/CV and letter that you meet the requirements of the job.
- **Panel Interview** - you may be interviewed by several people and the Chairperson will coordinate the questions. Often each member of the panel will have their own set of questions agreed beforehand and will ask the same set of questions to each candidate. Be sure that when you answer a question from one panel member, you direct the answer to everyone, not just that one person. The panel interview is common in the public sector.
- **Assessment Centres** – one or two days or more, typically including information sessions, tasks, exercises and social events. Be careful that you do not behave too casually or talk carelessly during any social events, coffee breaks or lunch/dinner. You need to maintain a professional attitude throughout.
- **Telephone Interviews** – these are being used increasingly by employers as a way of screening candidates to see if it is worthwhile asking them for a face-to-face interview or to attend an assessment centre. Telephone interviews are quite challenging because all the visual cues are absent, so it is probably worth looking at them in detail. There is more information about telephone interviews in the Research and Preparation section.

Research & Preparation

The biggest mistake people make when they are called for interview is to do nothing. Thorough pre interview preparation is absolutely essential. Whatever type of interview you have, your preparation should be the same:

- Find out as much as you can about the organisation - its various 'arms' and locations, its future plans, its financial situation, its mission statement, its ethos.
- Read any external reports
- Get informed about any current issues in the news that may be related to the organisation's business.

- Try to read between the lines and find out how they treat their staff, management styles, conditions etc. If you know anyone who works for the organisation, talk to them.
- Find out as much as possible about the job role.
- Plan some suitable questions to ask them.

Prepare Yourself

- If an informal chat or visit has been suggested, take them up on it.
- Check the match between what they want and what you can offer. Make notes to remind yourself of your best evidence for each criterion or competency.
- Anticipate the questions. They will be focused on the essential criteria/competencies and your CV/ application.
- Decide on your interview outfit and the best advice is probably to dress up rather than down, though the dress code must be appropriate for the job sector. You should aim to look smart, professional and business like. Bear in mind, though, that new clothes can play tricks on you – buttons can come undone, collars chafe and shoes pinch - it is a good idea to give them a test run beforehand. You need to feel as comfortable and relaxed as possible.
- Make sure you know what to take with you, eg degree certificates, passport, other documentation, portfolio etc and get them ready.
- Buy yourself a smart business folder or portfolio in which you can place your application, information about the organisation and the job, your notes and questions, any personal evidence of relevant achievement etc. Remember to take it with you and read it before you go in.
- Check the location and plan your journey allowing yourself plenty of time to get there.

Prepare for any tasks

Within the interview process, whatever ‘shape’ it might take, you may be asked to perform specific tasks;

- Give a short presentation usually before/in the formal interview
- Deliver a lesson/lecture (education/training)
- Defend/explain an artistic portfolio
- Take part in a group exercise/discussion
- Demonstrate proficiency in a skill
- Solve a technical problem (computing, engineering)

Make sure you know exactly what is required so you can prepare thoroughly.

General tips on Answering Questions

- If a question really floors you, you could employ some delaying tactics, such as repeating the question, asking them for clarification or saying you would need a little time to think about that

one. In fact, asking a questioner to explain exactly what they mean can subtly alter the power balance in your favour.

- It is okay to pause for thought, but not too long.
- Don't go on and on at great length. Watch out for signs of boredom in the interviewers and be responsive. You can always use a phrase like 'Have I answered your question? Or would you like me to elaborate?'
- Prepare some statements about yourself beforehand. Crucial things that you want to get over about yourself. Act like a politician and get them into your answers at some point.

Prepare for your Telephone Interview

Telephone interviews are often used to see if you are genuinely interested in the job or whether you have just been applying randomly for anything and everything. The focus will be on why you want to work for their particular company and what you have got that they want and whether it is worth asking you for a face-to-face interview. Remember that it is not just what you are saying but how you sound. There will be no visual cues, unless it is a video conferencing event. Your voice alone will have to convey it all. You should prepare in exactly the same way as for any other kind of interview.

Creating an Excellent First Impression

Interviewing is an inexact science. It has been shown that the complex business of candidate evaluation is rarely free from bias, despite the best efforts of HR specialists. Research evidence indicates that an interviewer can make up his or her mind about a candidate in the first 30 seconds. Understanding something about how this works should help you make a really positive start to your interview.

The Halo Effects

Interviewers have been shown to have an immediate 'gut reaction' to candidates, who are then judged as all good or all bad right from the start. This is known as the Halo Effect. It is particularly likely to occur where a candidate has a single outstanding characteristic. Typically, interviewers then tend to minimise or ignore any evidence that contradicts their first impression. It is crucial that you create the best possible first impression that you can, as it can be difficult to recover from a bad start. The following advice should help.

Achieving the Halo

Experts estimate that between 70 – 80% of all communication is non-verbal. You are giving out all kinds of messages even before you start to speak. The most important things to remember are:

1. Walk tall and stretch up through your spine making yourself as tall and straight as possible.
2. Walk confidently without shuffling and keep your chin up and straight on your shoulders.
3. Do not cover your body with your arms, a folder, a bag or anything, whether sitting or standing.
4. Be careful if you sit with your legs crossed that your raised foot doesn't start moving about of its own accord! This sends an anxious message and can be distracting.

5. Make calm and direct eye contact without staring aggressively. When one person asks you a question,

reply to all interviewers and make eye contact with each of them too.

6. Beware of physical habits and tics.

7. Do not keep touching your face (or any other bits of you!).

8. Subtly mirroring a person can enhance positive feelings in them, eg nodding, leaning forward to listen.

9. Do use gestures to demonstrate energy and enthusiasm, but don't get carried away! Be subtle.

10. Smile – this is such a powerful and important human expression it can be recognised from a considerable distance. But obviously, don't grin like a fool all the time or giggle nervously.

By following this advice, you will not only be perceived in a really positive way, but you yourself will feel more confident and in control.

Dealing with Nerves

Nerves can be a problem for many people before an interview. Being well prepared can really help, and learning some relaxation and stress busting techniques can prove very beneficial too. Standing or sitting tall and keeping your chest and neck area open so you can breathe deeply can induce feelings of calm. A good posture will also improve how your voice sounds.

Visualising a calm, happy picture in your mind's eye can also be a helpful meditative technique. For more ideas see www.mindtools.com/pages/main/newMN_TCS.htm and www.wildmind.org/applied/stress/meditation-for-the-very-very-busy. Choose a method that suits you and practise.

The Handshake & Introductions

The handshake is a very significant and powerful physical contact. You need to get it right. It should be accompanied by a smile and an appropriate greeting and introduction. It may well be followed by some general small talk, possibly about your journey or the weather, before you all get down to business. Both the handshake and the 'social glue' of informal conversation are very important. You need to practise both.

Dos & Don'ts of the Handshake

- Do sit with palms up while you are waiting to go in. If you are prone to very sweaty palms, take some wet wipes with you.
- Don't think you have to shake hands with everyone on the panel; just the Chair is usually enough. If they don't offer their hand, you can initiate it.
- Don't bend your arm too much at the elbow - it brings you too close.
- Don't crush the other person's fingers by too strong a grip.
- Do offer your whole hand, not just the end of your fingers.
- Don't be feeble and limp wristed.

- Don't keep pumping their hand up and down for ages. Three to four shakes is enough.
- Don't use your other hand eg to touch the other person's elbow or cover their hand. This represents a desire to dominate.
- Leave the interview with a handshake too.
- Don't wipe your hand on your trousers or skirt afterwards.
- Do smile!

Lasting Impressions

Just as the first few seconds of an interview are vital, the last few moments are also extremely important. Shake hands again, thank them for interviewing you and (if it is true) take the opportunity to tell them how keen you are on the job and how good you would be if appointed to the role. Take your leave walking tall, and make sure you don't try to go out via a cupboard door!

Aftermath

Successful?

If you are successful, now is the time to negotiate on salary, terms and conditions. Make sure you are happy before you sign the contract. If you are lucky enough to be juggling more than one job offer, or are awaiting the result of another interview, make sure you know what the timescale for formal acceptance is. Delaying too long could leave you without anything. Some jobs, particularly in teaching, may be offered to you on the day. In cases like this, do not accept with the idea you can change your mind later. A verbal agreement is considered binding.

Unsuccessful?

You are statistically likely to be unsuccessful rather more often than you are successful at an interview. That is, you may possibly have to go through the process a number of times until you get a job. There can be many reasons why you are not successful, many of which have nothing to do with you. Try to treat each one as a learning experience. Try to keep positive and do ask for a debriefing/feedback quite soon afterwards. Most places will be happy to do this. It can help you in your next interview providing you act on the feedback and, more importantly, it can help you feel better about yourself.

Withdrawing from an Interview

You can withdraw from the interview process at any time, if you feel the job is really not for you. Do this professionally and explain your thinking. Do not just slope off. It is probably not a good idea to do this too often, however, in case word gets round. But, if you are really sure you do not want the job, it is much fairer not to waste people's time and to say so.

Explain the types of patterned interview.

Ans: In a patterned interview the interviewer controls the direction of conversation. It is of following two kinds.

1. **Direct Interview:** In the direct interview the interviewer keeps very close control at all times by directing limited and specific question. He / She asks close ended question and does not let the interviewee speak freely.

2. Indirect Interview: In the indirect interview the interviewer makes little or no attempt to direct the applicant conversation.

What are the different purpose/objectives for which interview is carried?

Interviews are face-to-face communication. It is a form of interpersonal communication. Interviews are not just for job procurement.

The purpose for which interviews are carried may be as follows:

1. **Counselling:** taken by a supervisor, officer, or counsellor who may ask questions relating to work or problem from the employee. In other cases interviews may be conducted by a doctor/psychiatrist of patients or person facing psychological problems.
2. **Evaluating:** taken by supervisor, manager to review and evaluate the performance of the employee(s).
3. **Disciplining:** taken by an officer, manager if the behavior of the employee(s) require action to maintain discipline.
4. **Complaining:** taken by an officer, manager if the employee(s) wish to lodge complaint for certain dissatisfaction or action required.
5. **Terminating:** taken by an officer/manager to inform employee(s) about the termination from job.

Other Objectives:

There are following objectives of patterned interviews.

1. The resume provides a lot of information about the candidate but not all the information so this interview is conducted to evaluate job qualification that the resume can't provide.
2. Another purpose is to determine the real communication ability of the interview.
3. This interview also helps the interviewer provide essential facts about the job and company.
4. It also instils a feeling of mutual understanding and confidence in the applicant, who accepts the job.
5. It promotes good will towards the company, whether the applicant accept the job or not. It is important to give the right impression to the candidate who is disappointed by a turndown.

Discuss briefly various symbols of positive and negative attitude of an interview?

An interview may have a negative or positive attitude during the time of interview. The summary of these negative or positive symbols is as below.

Direct Interview:

Positive Negative

- a) Early arrival Late arrival
- b) Alert, responsible attitude Intensive, dull attitude
- c) Emphatic attitude Withdrawn attitude
- d) Relaxed manner Tension, body tremor

- e) Smiles Frowns
- f) Clear voice Choked voice
- g) Diligent, responsible, smart Lack of concentration, dull, weak
- h) Strong and determined attitude Lack of determination

Verbal Behaviour:

Positive Negative

- a) Sticking to the main point Changing the subject
- b) Relevant responses Irrelevant responses
- c) Well organized presentation Disorganized presentation
- d) Appropriate use of humour uncalled of levity
- e) Spontaneous replies Long pause before replying
- f) Speaking well of people Criticism of others
- g) Eye contacting confident Looking sideways cresting ayes downward.

How should an effective interviewer behave during interview? What pitfall an effective interviewer avoids? What are the guidelines to an interview to conduct and effective interview? Or what are the responsibilities of an interviewer?

Giving an interview is equally important as taking interview, one has to be very careful while giving an interview, there are following guidelines in general which could enable an interviewer to conduct a good and effective interview.

- a) Preparation
- b) Conduct during interview
- c) Evaluation

a) Preparation:

The interviewer should prepare himself before the interview, the following points are to be considered in this regard.

1. Reading applicant's Resume: There is much information provider in his resume so the resume should be read in detail. So as to asks the question in the perspective of resume.
2. Being aware of state Regulation: There are many policies and rules and regulation made by a state about the recruitment of employees. The interviewer should be aware of them so as to avoid any prospective lawsuit.
3. Planning the questions: The interviewer should plan the pattern of question, the number of question types length duration etc. should be clear in the mind of interviewer.
4. Omitting personal bias: There might be many biases in the minds of interviewer about the candidates. In order to make the interviewee fair he should avoid these biases.

b) Conduct during the interview:

Having prepared for the interview the interviewer should consider the following points during interview.

1. Letting the candidate speak: The main objective of interview is to have the information from the candidate as much as possible, so interviewer should let the candidate speak as much as possible.
 2. Using the language of candidate: If there is no restriction regarding the language such a language should be used in which the candidate feels easy and free.
 3. Avoiding arguing with the candidate: The purpose of interview is to evaluate the candidate not to solve a dispute, so argumentation with the candidate should be avoided.
 4. Not interrupting the candidate: The candidate is already under a lot of pressure. So the candidate should not be interrupted.
 5. Controlling the emotions: During the interview there are many stages on which the interviewers might get emotional. This may cause failures to the interview process.
 6. Establishing eye contact: In order to be confident and to put the candidate at ease, the interviewer should establish an eye contact with the candidate.
 7. Using body language: Use of body language can play an important role to make the question clear to the candidate.
 8. Asking open ended questions instantly: The close or dead ended questions are not very useful to acquire more information. So open-ended question should be asked as much as possible.
- c) Evaluation: After the interview the last step is to evaluate the interviewee. For this purpose, there are following points which should be given importance.

1. No personal bias: There might be many candidates with whom the interviewer may have personal bias. This should be avoided in any case so as to hire the potential people.
2. Clear cut standards: The interviewer should try to establish a clear-cut standard for evaluation such as point system.

What pitfall an Interviewer should avoid?

There are many things in which the interviewer can easily be trapped. There are the general pitfalls which should be avoided. They relate mainly to the following biases prejudices and other weaknesses within the interviewer.

1. Halo Effect: It is the tendency of the interviewer to form an overall opinion regarding the applicant on the basis on a single aspect of his or her personality. For example, if the candidate did not comb his hairs properly the interviewer might have an image that the applicant is a careless person.
2. Stereotype Error Trap: It is the tendency to categorize the candidate on the basis of features of surface clues or some superficial hints.
3. Expectancy Error: It is the tendency of the applicant to anticipate the need and preference of the interviewer and to respond accordingly. For example, the candidate may give an answer, which is correct but not in accordance with the interviewer preference. So the interviewer should give the leverage to the candidate.

4. Ideal image error: Usually, an interviewer has an image of a candidate. This usually happens that the image in the mind interviewer does not coincide with the candidate. So the interviewer should go on for a compromise.

5. Personal bias of the interviewer: The interviewer may have many personal biases against the candidate. Poor handshake, biting of finger, gum, chewing, loud, clothes, poor eye contact etc. these should be ignored.

6. Pseudoscience and myths: Handwriting, outward features, date of birth number of letters in the name lines or marks on the palm of hand and shape and bulges of the skull are not scientific tools to judge the ability of the candidate. An interviewer should avoid them.

7. Stereotypes: Interviewer might indulge in monotony in different questions in different ways should be asked.

8. Other pitfalls: There are a number of pitfalls other than those mentioned above. These are as follows:

- i. Illusion that the previous experience of itself guarantees ability to do the job well.
- ii. Being impressed because the applicant needs a job even though the necessary qualification is lacking.
- iii. Talking too much by interviewee not listening.
- iv. Poor preparation before interview.
- v. Asking inappropriate questions.
- vi. Being discourteous and rude towards the applicant.
- vii. Jumping to conclusion.
- viii. Accepting facts without intending to determine meaning and accuracy.
- ix. Leaving unexplored gaps.
- x. Allowing candidate to guide the interviewer.
- xi. Depending on memory to conduct interview and to evaluate the applicant's qualification.
- xii. Asking other questions when the applicant hesitates a moment.
- xiii. Appearing to be critical and cold towards the applicant.
- xiv. Not observing non-verbal clues.
- xv. Poor questions (a) leading question (b) loaded question (c) dead ended question.

What is the role of interview in interpersonal communication? Or what is the purpose / Objective or patterned interview? Or what is the importance of interview?

Interview plays a very important role in interpersonal communication, since it is between two persons or parties i.e. interviewer and interviewee, its importance is discussed with respect to both aspects.

a) From Interviewer Point of View: Interview has following importance for the interviewer.

To Match the applicant and the job:

A job has specific requirement. Every person is not suitable for every kind of job, so the interviews enable the interviewer to match the applicant and the job requirement. This matching may be in the following way.

Matching Qualification: A candidate having a master's degree does not mean that he has the knowledge of master level. Asking questions about the field of candidate enables the interviewer to know as to how much knowledge the candidate has acquired.

Matching Candidate Ability: Different candidates have different abilities. The interview helps know the abilities of every candidate according to the job requirement.

Other Areas: Candidate's conduct, attitude, confidence, communication skill and other areas are expressed means of interviewers.

To develop the image of organization: Another secondary role of interviews is to establish a good image of an organization before candidate and ultimately before the market.

From Interviewee Point of View: An interview is equally important for interviewers as it's for interview. This importance is enumerated as follows.

To have information: An interviewee can have different information about the organization. This information might be about the organization nature of job salary rule and regulations, etc.

To have a suitable job: Interview helps the candidate know about the job. In this way, he / she can choose the best one of him / her.