

Module 7: Interview Skills

An interview is a structured meeting in which interviewer(s) asks you questions to see if you are suitable for a job or a course. Generally, through the discussion, the interviewer wants to know the following:

- Is the candidate able to articulate his or her thoughts?
- Is the candidate able to handle the job responsibilities?
- Does the candidate have positive outlook?
- Is the candidate willing to adapt himself/herself to the existing team and working culture of the organization?
- Will the candidate do the job?

If the candidate succeeds in convincing the interviewer that he or she is the candidate who will be able and is eager to satisfy the expectations of the employer, likely are the strong chances of selection.

Types of Interviews

- **Telephonic/Skype:** Interviews over telephone or through different web platforms are generally done for short listing candidates for face to face interview. However, many organizations now use Skype or other platforms to finally select the candidate for the job.
- **Face to Face:** In a face to face interview the candidate has to travel to the venue as decided by the prospective employer. A face to face can be in the form of one to one or many to one.
- **Meal:** The purpose of a meal interview is to see how the interviewee interacts or functions in given social setting.

Depending upon the feasibility, employers may have/develop their own way of interviewing the candidates.

Pre-interview Preparations

- **Research:** Research about the company, its working style and ethics, its business strategies job profile and job responsibilities, etc. will help you tailor your resume as well as your responses in the interview as per the needs and interests of the company. Company's website and online business databases may help you do your pre-interview research. You may also talk to the company's employees, if you have any in your contact list.
- **Know yourself:** Assess yourself and see which strengths and areas of expertise of yours suit the needs and interests of the company- see what data/information you have gathered about the company and the nature of the job and then tailor your resume and articulate your skills, strengths, accomplishments, and career goals in the interview accordingly. Ask the following questions to yourself:

What are the job responsibilities and the job and what key skills are required?

What skills do you have similar to the ones required for the position?

How will you contribute to the company's growth?

Why are you a better choice than others for the company?

- **Focus on the related skills and strengths:**
Make sure to have examples ready to demonstrate these key skills.

During the Interview

- **Greeting & Introduction:** 'First impression is the last impression', say people. Here you really get the chance to impress your interviewer(s). How you dress, how you enter the interview room, how you greet- these things matter. If you do not take permission before entering the room, if you are not in formal attire, if you do not make eye contact, if you

do not look poised and confident, you are likely to be taken with a negative approach during the interview.

- **Body Language:** Use your body language to make points. Unnecessary body movements should be avoided. Given below are some forms of gestures and postures and their conventional meaning:

Traits	Gesture/Posture	Meaning
Positive	Leaning forward	interested
	Eye contact	confident, willing to learn and focused
	Smiling	friendly and adaptive
	Head nods	attentive and alert
Negative	Unnecessary body movements	nervous or bored
	Crossed arms	defensive
	Lack of eye contact	untrustworthy
	Leaning backward	feeling uncomfortable

Given below is the link of a good video that demonstrate different body postures and their meanings. Watch and learn: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RH5pKs3h-9Q>

- **Focal Point:** Emphasize and focus on the job related skills and strengths which you can control. Putting the energy into controllable things certainly influences the outcome of the interview. Researching the company, job profile and responsibilities help you prepare the expected questions and their answers.
- **Courtesy and Positive Attitude:** Experts say that companies hire the people with positive attitude and of polite nature. Skills are secondary. Skills can be improved but it is almost difficult to change the attitude of people. Hence, be polite and show positive attitude even if you are asked unethical or irritating questions. Irritating questions are generally asked in interviews so as to check the temperament of the candidate.
- **Be Precise:** Your answer should be specific and ideally it should not take more than one or two minutes. Longwinded and verbose expressions should be avoided.
- **Ask for Clarification:** In case you could not hear or understand a question, politely ask the interviewer(s) to repeat or clarify.

Don'ts of Interviews

An interview is a formal discussion; hence the followings should be avoided:

1. The use of filler words like 'you know', 'um', etc.
2. Phrases like 'according to me'. 'I guess', 'I think' 'probably'
3. Manipulation of facts
4. Bluffing the interviewer(s)

Now watch the following sample videos of interview. Type the URLs given below, watch and learn:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A0I3iOD2Ycg>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nhd_oEKDT6I

Based on your learning so far, prepare the tailored answers of frequently asked questions given below.

Frequently Asked Questions

Introductory Questions: Interviews generally begin with the questions which help the interviewer(s) know educational background, work experience, career goals etc. Here are some sample questions:

1. Tell me about yourself? / Introduce yourself.
2. What are your strengths?
3. Do you have any weakness?

4. What are your hobbies?
5. What are your short and long term career goals? / Where do you see yourself in five years?

These are typically open-ended questions. Researching about the company will help you tailor the answers of such questions. Care must be taken in preparing the ready-made answers of these questions as they generally lead to further course of discussion.

Behavioral Questions: Behavioral questions are generally asked to know the personality types and traits of the candidate. They give the interviewer(s) an idea of the candidates thinking process, analytical skills, communication skills, teamwork, leadership, decision making ability, etc. Following are some sample questions:

1. Did you ever have to make a difficult decision?
2. Did you ever work under pressure/ under a deadline?
3. Did you ever fail to meet a deadline? What were the consequences? Did you learn something?
4. What do you do when a member of your team does not cooperate?
5. Did you ever made a mistake(s)? What did you learn from it?

It is obvious that the above questions focus on the interviewee's past actions or behaviours. Since past behaviour gives significant clues to future actions and behaviour, care must be taken while answering such questions. To answer these questions you need to master the art of storytelling; identify some situations and experiences to describe or illustrate the job related skills and strengths. Support your answers with examples.

Character Questions: In almost all kinds of interviews some questions are asked to know what morals and values the candidate gives importance to. These questions answer personality types and traits of the candidate. Here are some sample questions:

1. What are your core values?
2. Who do you think is a good businessman?
3. Have you ever dealt with a difficult person?
4. In addition to your contribution to the growth of the company, how do you plan to help society and the environment?
5. What will you do if you find the organization you are going to work with is rife with bribery and corruption?

Skill-based Questions: Skill-based questions are job specific. They help the interviewer assess the candidate's theoretical and practical knowledge of the key skill(s) required for the job. For example, if you are being interviewed for the post of 'Programmer for Google Search Engine', your knowledge of C++, in addition to other things, is certainly going to be checked since Google Search Engine's algorithm is MapReduce, which essentially stems out from C++.

To prepare skill-based questions, do a research of the company, find out which project(s) the company is working on and see what key skills are required for the project/job you are applying for. Prepare a list of expected questions and have their ready-made answers. And then practice, practice, practice!

Miscellaneous Questions:

1. What do you think is your weakness? Did this weakness affect you negatively in any time of your life?
2. How will you define success?
3. Who is/are your role models? Why?
4. Do you intend to do further studies?
5. What is the last book you've read and would you recommend it?
6. I see a two-year gap between your intermediate and graduation– what were you doing during that time?

7. If you were an education minister, what would you change about your education?
8. What kind of boss do you prefer?
9. If you could be a superhero, what would you want your superpowers to be?
10. How would you describe your sense of humour?
11. What do you do in your free time?
12. What do you know about our company?
13. Do you like working in a structured environment?
14. Why did you choose our company? How can you contribute to the company?
15. Why should we hire you?
16. What are your salary expectations?
17. Are you ready for relocating?
18. When can you start?

To know more about interview skills, see 'Sample Interview Transcript' developed by the experts of University of Essex, UK. Type the following link, read and learn:

https://www1.essex.ac.uk/careers/essexinterview/documents/Essex_Interview_transcript.pdf