

# Interviews

An interview is a psychological and sociological instrument. It is an interaction between two or more persons for a specific purpose, in which the interviewer asks the interviewee specific questions in order to assess his/her suitability for recruitment, admission, or promotion. It can also be a meeting in which a journalist asks somebody questions to determine their opinions. It is a systematized method of contact with a person to know his/her views and is regarded as the most important method of data collection. In addition, interviewing a person gives an idea of how effectively the person can perform a particular task.

## Objectives of Interviews

Interviews may be conducted for various reasons. Generally, interviews are conducted to achieve some of the following objectives:

- To select a person for a specific task
- To monitor performance
- To collect information
- To exchange information
- To counsel

## TYPES OF INTERVIEWS

Depending on the objective and nature, interviews can be categorized into the following types:

- Job
- Persuasive
- Evaluation
- Conflict resolution
- Termination
- Information
- Exit
- Counselling
- Disciplinary
- Media

Each of the above types has a slightly different approach. For example, in a job interview *you* may have to convince the interviewer that you are the best person for the job, whereas in a

termination interview your *employer* may have to convince you that your services have been terminated for reasons that are specific, accurate, and verifiable.

Comparing the involvement and contribution of the interviewer and the interviewee, an interview can be divided into three types: *telling*, *telling and listening*, and *problem solving*.

**Telling** In a telling interview, the flow of communication is almost entirely one way—downwards. It is used most effectively in a directing, time-constrained situation; but it can cause hostility and defensive behaviour when the employee does not have the opportunity to participate.

**Telling and listening** In a telling and listening interview, more feedback from the subordinate is allowed, but the interviewer still maintains control over the flow of communication.

**Problem-solving** In a problem-solving interview the flow of communication is two-way. The bulk of communication is upwards, a genuine rapport is established, ideas are pooled, and exchange facilitated.

### ***Job interviews***

In job interviews, the employer wants to learn about the applicant's abilities and experiences, and the candidate wants to learn about the position on offer and the organization. Both the candidate and the employer hope to make a good impression and to establish rapport. In the initial round, job interviews are usually formal and structured. But later, interviews may be relatively spontaneous as the interviewer explores the candidate's responses.

### ***Information interviews***

The interviewer seeks facts that bear on a decision or contribute to basic understanding. Information flows mainly in one direction: one person asks a list of questions that must be covered and listens to the answers supplied by the other person, e.g., doctor-patient, boss-subordinate, etc.

### ***Persuasive interviews***

One person tells another about a new idea, product, or service and explains why the other should act on his/her recommendations. Persuasive interviews are often associated with, but are certainly not limited to, selling. The persuader asks about the other person's needs and shows how the product or concept is able to meet those needs. Persuasive interviewers require skill in drawing out and listening to others as well as the ability to impart suitable information, adapted to the situation and the sensitivities of the interviewee.

### ***Exit interviews***

In exit interviews, the interviewer tries to understand why the interviewee is leaving the organization or transferring to another department or division. A departing employee can often provide insight into whether the business and human resource is being handled efficiently or whether there is a considerable scope for improvement. The interviewer tends to ask all the questions while the interviewee provides answers. Encouraging the employee to focus on

events and processes rather than on personal gripes will elicit more useful information for the organization.

### ***Evaluation interviews***

A supervisor periodically gives an employee feedback on his/her performance. The supervisor and the employee discuss progress towards predetermined standards or goals and evaluate areas that require improvement. They may also discuss goals for the coming year, as well as the employee's long-term aspirations and general concerns.

### ***Counselling interviews***

A supervisor talks with an employee about personal problems that are interfering with work performance. The interviewer is concerned with the welfare of both the employee and the organization. The goal is to establish the facts, convey the company's concern, and steer the person towards a source of help. Only a trained professional should offer advice on problems such as substance abuse, marital tension, and financial trouble.

### ***Conflict-resolution interviews***

In conflict-resolution interviews, two competing people or groups of people with opposing points of view, such as Smith versus Jones, day shift versus night shift, General Motors versus the United Auto Workers, explore their problems and attitudes. The goal is to bring the two parties closer together, cause adjustments in perceptions and attitudes, and create a more productive climate.

### ***Disciplinary interviews***

In disciplinary interviews, a supervisor tries to correct the behaviour of an employee who has ignored the organization's rules and regulations. The interviewer tries to get the employee to see the reason for the rules and to agree to comply. The interviewer also reviews the facts and explores the person's attitude. Because of the emotional reaction that is likely, neutral observations are more effective than critical comments.

### ***Termination interviews***

A supervisor informs an employee of the reasons for the termination of the latter's job. The interviewer tries to avoid involving the company in legal action and tries to maintain a positive relationship with the employee. To accomplish these goals, the interviewer gives reasons that are specific, accurate, and verifiable.

### ***Media interviews***

Most of us might have watched programmes such as *Walk the Talk*, *Meet the Entrepreneur*, etc., as well as press conferences organized by the government/businesses/industries on television. Many a time, reporters call up over the phone the head of an educational institution, an important person in the government, or the chief executive officer (CEO) of a company to ask about their success stories or their alarming anomalies. We might have watched the interview given by Mr Ratan Tata, Chairman of Tata Group, during the release of Tata Nano or the one given by Mr Shashi Tharoor, the former Minister of State for External Affairs, during the IPL

Kochi Franchisee controversy. All these are media interviews, which are generally conducted to disseminate information to the public on the lifestyle and achievements of an individual/business or on the new policies introduced by the government. When there is an emergency, such as a terrorist attack, internal disturbances, etc., the media conducts interviews with the people in power and also with the experts in order to get their views, interpretations, and more information on the steps taken by the government. At times, we may give some news and the media may interview us over the phone to confirm some part of the message or to get more information on some issue. Thus, media interviews can help viewers to get quick updates on the issue.

In our professions, we may come across most of the types of interviews mentioned above. However, in this chapter, we will focus mainly on job interviews and resumes, and later on provide some tips for taking control in media interviews and press conferences. In the following section, we will discuss the various aspects of job interviews such as employer's expectations, certain critical success and failure factors, preparation, process, follow-up, and guidelines.

## JOB INTERVIEWS

### *Campus interviews*

Campus interviews are the interviews conducted at the campuses of colleges. The companies inform the students well in advance through the placement department of the college that they would be visiting their campus to select students for jobs. Once the companies arrive at the campus they would deliver a presentation (known as *Pre-placement Talk*) to the interested students about themselves, the type of projects they carry out, the selection mode (aptitude test/group task/case study/technical interview/HR interview), etc., and also answer the students' queries if any. As a company has to conduct several rounds of interview in a limited time, it may be able to spend only a little time with students. Hence, these interviews will be brief and to the point.

### *On-site interviews*

On-site interviews are the interviews conducted at company premises. Many companies shortlist candidates after going through their resumes or talking to them over phone and call them to the company for a face-to-face interview (services such as [www.placementindia.com](http://www.placementindia.com), [www.monsterindia.com](http://www.monsterindia.com), [www.naukri.com](http://www.naukri.com), and [www.bestjobsinindia.in](http://www.bestjobsinindia.in) give information about the job openings in various industries and forward the candidates' resumes

to the companies). At times, shortlisted candidates of the campus interview may also be called for a final interview at their office. As the interviewers have more time on hand in this type of interview, they may be able to spend more time with each candidate. Hence, this type of interview may be more detailed than the campus interviews.

### ***Telephonic interviews***

Telephonic interviews are the interviews conducted by the companies over the telephone. This type of interview may be used for shortlisting the candidates by talking to them and verifying the details of the resumes that they have submitted. The interviewing company informs the candidates well before, seeks their convenience, and sends an email to confirm the date and time of the interview. Generally, a telephonic interview will be shorter than the face-to-face interview and may not be the final interview for selecting the candidates.

### ***Videoconferencing interview***

With hiring becoming increasingly global, many companies especially multinationals conduct videoconferencing interviews to select candidates for jobs. Generally when hiring for senior positions from countries across the world, companies may use this mode of interviewing. Nevertheless, it can be used for recruiting within the same country as well. If the interviewers inform the candidates about the videoconferencing facility they have arranged in the candidate's institute or campus, they can use such facility. Otherwise, the candidates need to go to a nearby agency that provides videoconferencing facilities. In either case, they will attend the interview in a professional setting as they do in an in-person interview.

## **Stages of Interview\***

**Appraisal of résumé** Some companies may shortlist candidates on the basis of projects they have completed, specific courses they have done, internships they have taken up, etc.

**Tests** Companies conduct aptitude tests (written/online) comprising sections such as technical, quantitative, verbal, reasoning, psychometric, etc.

**Group discussions** Most recruiters use this as the second stage after the aptitude tests. Some companies may conduct group activities as well to assess the candidates' personality, leadership skills, knowledge, communication skills, etc.

**Presentations** A few companies may ask the candidates to present themselves in two or three minutes in order to shortlist.

**Face-to-face interview** This may be the final round of an interview. Many companies these days give the candidate a short or long case containing a hypothetical problem in the business/ industrial context, ask the candidate to present the case, and suggest a few alternative solutions in a limited time.

**Videoconferencing interview** This could be a technical-cum-HR interview.

**Negotiations** This stage comes after the candidate has been selected. The company makes

a job offer out to the candidate after discussing the candidate's expectations about salary and other benefits.

**Medical test** Once the job offer is confirmed, the candidates may be asked to go for a medical examination. This is done by the companies that offer the benefit of medical claims. Since the amount that can be claimed is substantial, the company ensures that the candidate is suffering from a major ailment. This is also done to ensure that the candidate is not suffering from any condition that would prohibit him/her from performing the duties required of him/her.

### **Face-to-face Interviews: Campus and On Site**

A face-to-face interview for any job is a personal communication between the interview panel and the interviewee. It gives adequate scope for both the parties to know about each other and to get immediate feedback during the various stages of the interview. As this is the most commonly used form of interview, let us discuss how one can give a face-to-face interview whether it is conducted on campus or at the company site.

#### *Skills and attributes most employers look for*

The following is a list of the skills and attributes most employers look for in prospective employees.

**Technical skills:** The candidate's subject knowledge suitable for the post he/she has applied for. For example, for a 'programmer-analyst trainee' the company may look for the candidate's ability

to plan, develop, test, and document computer programs, and apply knowledge of computer techniques and systems. Interview Situation 4 in the CD demonstrates the importance of indepth subject knowledge.

**Analytical skills:** The candidate's ability to examine and assess a situation, look at it from different perspectives, improve upon, and streamline it. For example, there may be a complex process that one may be asked to analyse critically.

**Career objective:** The candidate's goals and aspirations—what the candidate wants to pursue in his/her life and whether he/she is clear about it, whether the candidate's background and aptitude matches his/her career objectives.

**Mental agility:** The candidate's ability to quickly grasp things/mental alertness.

**Communication skills:** The candidate's skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

**Interpersonal skills:** The candidate's skills to build relationships with colleagues, seniors, and subordinates, and ability to move with team members.

**Flexibility/adaptability:** The candidate's multi tasking skills or ability to adapt himself/herself to

the changing situations or environment and handle multiple concurrent projects. The candidate's

ability to adapt himself/herself to culturally diverse work environment.

**Management/leadership skills:** The candidate's ability to plan, organize, motivate, inspire, manage, and lead the colleagues to achieve the organizational goal.

**Creativity:** The candidate's out-of-the-box thinking and ability to innovate. For example, if others suggest *imposing fine* for an employee for violating a rule and you suggest *appointing him* as the guardian of rules, and justify your solution, you are creative.

**Positive/can-do attitude:** The candidate's positive way of looking at things and people. For example, if one thinks of and projects good aspects of one's college/organization/parents/employers/job, one has a positive attitude.

**Social skills:** The demeanour in public or with strangers/employers or how a person conducts himself/herself with others—the way one meets and greets others, stands, sits or moves in front of others, shakes hands, reacts to opinions, eats or drinks, etc.

### *Factors responsible for failure*

There may be many reasons for failure in an interview. The following are ten common reasons for a candidate being rejected and some tips for handling them:

**Arrogance** It refers to overconfidence. If you exhibit overconfidence the panel may take you as arrogant. Avoid interrupting even before the interviewer completes his/her question. Do not display a facial expression that conveys, 'Why this silly question? I know the answer. It is very simple'. Do not lean on the back of your chair all the time airing arrogance.

**Apathy** It refers to lack of enthusiasm or interest. Avoid *frozen* or *nil* expression on your face. A smile on your face, eye contact, confident posture, timely gestures, etc., may convey that you are enjoying the interview and that you have really come for an important occasion in your life.

**Uninhibited nervousness** It refers to *explicit nervousness*. Though nervousness is common during an interview, you should try to control it rather than showcasing it through your clammy hands, dry lips, sweaty forehead, shaky hands or legs. If you are nervous, avoid keep clearing your throat/placing your hands on the table/wiping your forehead with tissue/handkerchief. Try to place your hands on the armrests of the chair and tell within yourself, 'I am fine/all is well' and look confidently at the interviewers.

**Equivocation** It refers to *evasion* or *beating around the bush*. When you do not know the answer to a question even after spending a few minutes on thinking, tell the interviewer politely, 'Sorry, I am unable to recall the correct point. However, can I make a guess?' Similarly, when you are unable to understand a question correctly get it clarified either by asking, 'Excuse me sir, could you please repeat the question? or paraphrasing in your own words rather than answering incorrectly.

**Lack of concentration** It refers to *inadequate focus because of poor listening, wandering mind or apathy*. The panel gets an idea of this quality when you give irrelevant answers or look elsewhere when the panel speaks to you. Remember to listen attentively exhibiting non-verbal cues and maintain eye contact. Listen completely and then answer.

**Lack of crispness** It refers to *lack of precision, conciseness, and clarity in your communication*. Time is precious for everybody, and hence keep in mind that the interview panel is busy with many interviewees like you. If you are well-prepared you can be focused and clear in your answers. Avoid being verbose and sounding artificial. Preparing answers for certain anticipated questions will enable you to be concise and clear.

**Lack of social skills** It refers to using inappropriate/not following certain etiquettes during your interview. Meet the interviewers with a firm handshake and a warm smile. If some snack or beverage is offered to you during interview, either refuse politely or take it exhibiting appropriate table manners. Use polite expressions such as, 'could you please...', sorry, pardon, excuse me, thank you, etc.' Thank the interviewers when you are offered a seat, speak softly but assertively, thank the panel before leaving the room, use positive and powerful words and be excited about your interview. Consider it as a learning experience.

**Lack of firmness** It refers to *lack of determination consistency/decisiveness*. Do not keep on changing the areas of your expertise. For instance, if you have mentioned in your objective that you are specifically interested in computer programming, your answers should reflect the same. You cannot suddenly change your interest to some other unrelated area. Try to look into your skills and knowledge while preparing for the interview. Know well what you want to become in life and what your interest areas are.

**Inadequate quantitative/qualitative skills** It refers to *inability to justify your answers or points of view*. Keep ready some examples to prove your skills or personal qualities. If you keep on speaking without adequate justification, the panel may not trust you.

**Unsuitable personality** It refers to *a personality that does not match the job requirements*. For instance, if you are appearing for a marketing manager's position, you need to be an excellent communicator. If you need to handle a lot of employees you need to be cordial, patient, and a good listener. If your personality does not match the demands of the job you are applying for, the panel may not be interested in selecting you. Hence, it is important to know the job description well before you appear for the interview.

### *Preparing for interviews*

The key to success in an interview is not one's experience, grades, extracurricular activities, but one's attitude. To rise above others with better experience, grades, or skills, a highly positive work attitude is needed. The way most employers differentiate among candidates at the entry level is by the candidates' attitude towards work. They look for those who have the 'can-do'



attitude and are sincerely willing to put forth their very best effort. In the following paragraphs, we will touch upon the various aspects of preparing for interviews.

**Preparation of résumé** A resume is a written record of a candidate's education, and past and present occupation, prepared when applying for a job. This document enables the employer to judge the candidate's potential fit for the post. The resume should be modified as per the requirements of the job and the organization. We will discuss how to prepare a job-winning resume later in this chapter.

**Personal attributes** One needs to analyse one's own hard and soft skills, strengths, weaknesses, attitude, likes, and dislikes. At least two unique strengths and weaknesses must be distinguished. For example, if you think of your *hard work and commitment* as your strengths, many candidates may have this. On the other hand, your *passion for a particular job, your strong foothold in certain areas of study and research*, etc., may differ from others. Likewise, *being very*

*sensitive or short tempered* may be a weakness common with many candidates, whereas *taking many responsibilities at one time and struggling with the same* need not necessarily be. Hence, analyse yourself carefully and note down your important strengths and weaknesses. Think whether you look at things in a positive perspective or negative perspective. If you have a negative attitude, try to change yourself. Knowing yourself or introspecting your qualities and skills is a very important step in the preparation of your job interviews. Interview Situation 8 in the CD demonstrates a confident and convincing answer to the common interview question of strengths and weaknesses.

**Mock interview** A mock interview is more than just a chance to work out the interview jitters. It is an opportunity to practise interviewing technique and answers live. It is also a chance to hear constructive feedback from someone who can guide towards improving the style and presentation during the real interview. Just one mock interview may bring about a marked improvement in the interview skills. Ideally, the mock session should be videotaped, and thereby one can have two opinions—the mock interviewer's and one's own. Go through at least one mock interview. For maximum effectiveness, review your answers and then go through a second mock interview. This will give you confidence in your first real interview.

**Knowing the prospective employer** You need to know the company that you wish to apply/ have applied for. You can collect information about the following factors:

- Age of the company
- Services or products
- Competitors within the industry—both national and international
- Growth pattern
- Reputation/where it stands in the industry
- Divisions and subsidiaries

- Locations/length of time there
- Size of organization
- Sales/assets/earnings
- Provision for career growth
- Ongoing projects
- Mission, culture, and values

You can collect the information through the company website, annual report, CD-ROMs, brochures, columns/articles in newspapers and magazines, personal contacts, if any, in the company, etc. The depth of information that is collected beforehand is far greater than that provided in the pre-placement talks or at the interview.

**Awareness of job description** The nature of the job should be understood thoroughly. You can get an idea about the job profile from the company website. Also, you need to acquire a clear idea about the subject knowledge and skills that the job demands and also the knowledge of the type of activities you will be required to do. Such exercise will enable you to match the requirements with what you have in hand. If necessary, you can seek clarification from the person concerned at the company.

**Subject fundamentals** You need to quickly go through the contents of basic courses done in the college. The job description generally gives an idea about which subjects you need to refresh in mind. Interviewers generally ask very basic questions (e.g., What is an array? What is the difference between RAM and ROM?). Knowing your main subjects well before an interview gives you immense confidence, which in turn leads to a better performance.

**Examples corroborating skills** Besides testing the technical skills, the interviewers may also assess the candidate's team skills, decision-making ability, leadership skills, problem-solving skills, etc. Hence, pick up at least four or five such examples that show the above-mentioned qualities. Then prepare the narration of these examples using the STAR (situation, task, action, and result) approach. The STAR approach provides the outline for the answers. Preparing examples saves time and makes one feel more confident while answering behavioural questions. The STAR approach has been explained in the Students' Resource.

**Appropriate dressing** Campus fashions and work fashions are two different worlds. You should be doing the talking, and not your clothes. Select conservative, good-quality clothes. They should be neat, clean, and ironed. Make sure your shoes are conservative, clean, and polished. Arrange all your documents systematically in a neat folder and carry it with you.

**Questioning the employer** Interviewers expect you to come in with a working knowledge of the company as well as with a list of questions. When you have really done your homework you may not be able to think of any questions because you already have the company's history. Still,

make up some questions ahead of time to ask during the interview. They can be based on the job that you are applying for or your prospects in that job.

**Memorizing your résumé** Imagine the embarrassment if your interviewer asks you to elaborate on the project which you have done during your course of study, and you fumble. For every item on your resume, try to have a paragraph's worth of information in addition to what is already said; even better, try to think of a way in which each item illustrates one of your particular strengths or weaknesses. If you are too nervous to remember everything, it is all right to hold a copy of your resume in your hand to jog your memory.

**Punctuality** The waiting room is your initial face-to-face connection point with your potential employer. Always arrive at least ten to fifteen minutes early. This will give you the time necessary to do a quick mental review before the actual interview. Have a glass of water to avoid the 'cotton mouth' syndrome. Check in with the secretary or administrator. Ask how long the interview is scheduled for, so that you have an idea of how much time you will have.

**Relaxing the nerves** By the time the interview day comes closer, you should be set. Get a good night's sleep, eat well, and take a relaxing walk beforehand. And remember, it is just a job interview. If you do not get it, it is not the end of the world—take it as something better being in store for you in the future.

### **Knowing the possible types of interview**

**questions** Interview questions may either be open-ended or close-ended. While open-ended questions allow one to give more information, close-ended questions restrict the responses to 'yes' and 'no'. For example:

*Open-ended:* How good a manager are you?

*Close-ended:* Are you a good manager?

There are basically six types of questions you may face during an interview:

#### **1. Experience questions**

The main purpose of this type of question is to objectively measure the features of your background.

What is your C.G.P.A. (cumulative grade point average)?

How long were you at ...?

#### **2. Credential questions**

This type of question aims at subjectively evaluating the features of your background.

What did you learn in your network programming class?

What were your responsibilities in that position?

#### **3. Opinion questions**

This type aims at analysing subjectively how you would respond in a series of scenarios.

What would you do in this situation?

What are your strengths and weaknesses?

#### 4. Questions requiring innovative answers

These questions are asked to find out if you are capable of an original thought:

Can you sell this pen to me in one minute?

What kind of animal would you like to be?

#### 5. Behavioural questions

The purpose of this type of question is to anticipate future responses based upon your past behaviour.

Can you give me a specific example of how you did that?

What were the steps you followed to accomplish that task?

Behavioural questions are gaining greater acceptance by the trained interviewers because past performance is the most reliable indicator of future results.

#### 6. Tough questions

Good interviewers often ask difficult questions to establish the weaknesses as well as the strengths of each candidate. They want to find out how you stand out from the other candidates who possess almost the same skills as you. Look at your curriculum vitae from the interviewer's perspective. List out the gaps, weaknesses, and any problems you can see. If you were the interviewer, what would you ask? Work out your answer to each question.

### *The interview process*

In its simplest form, an interview consists of three distinct steps:

- Establishing rapport • Closing
- Gathering information • Using body language effectively

Understanding and successful completion of these basic steps are critical for one to reach the next step in the process, whether that be another interview or the actual job offer.

**Establishing rapport** The rapport-establishing step is where the vital first impressions are formed. Some employers may claim to be able to make a decision about a candidate in thirty seconds or less. The truth is that you set the tone for the interview through your physical appearance and initial responses. When you enter the room, look around and establish eye contact with the people there. Smile warmly and greet them. Shake hands with a firm grip, if required, and sit when invited to do so. Address the panel members as 'Sir/Madam' or use their surnames if you know correctly. Do not call them by their first names unless they insist you to do so. Interviewers will analyse you in reference to the company culture. Further, your initial responses will greatly affect how you are perceived in the eyes of the interviewer. It is not necessarily the words you say, but how you say them. This is where your positive attitude and confidence will establish the tone for the interview.

answers against their expectations. Your honesty and sincerity in answering the questions should be evident; remember that interviewers are experienced and can judge whether you are

speaking the truth or telling a lie. Most interviewers are keenly aware of when they are being deceived or tricked. Questions in this step will usually be probing questions that drill deep into your background, attempting to get past the interview veneer. In fact, this is the stage in which you will need to consolidate the employer's view. You will be judged on attitude, work ethics (will you really work hard or are you just looking for an easy job?), intelligence, and honesty. Interview Situation 9 in the CD demonstrates undesirable and desirable answers to an ethics-based question.

**Closing** If your interview has been successful, there will usually be an indication of what is to come next. You may be given further company information that is reserved only for the select few. You may get a hint from the interviewer's body language. No matter what your view of the

interview is up to this point, it is important to personally close the interview by establishing continuity of the process. Ensure that you understand the next step and be prepared to follow up from your side. Always pursue each interview as if it were your last.

**Using body language effectively** Various aspects of body language, namely personal appearance, facial expression, posture, gesture, eye contact and personal space—all need to be used effectively during a job interview as they communicate your confidence, sincerity, enthusiasm, interest, seriousness, social skills, etc., to the interview panel.

**Personal appearance** Take care of your attire, accessories, and personal hygiene. Keep at least two sets of neat, well-ironed formal attire (men: pants, shirt, tie, belt, shoes; women: pants and full sleeved top/salwar suit/sari and blouse) specially for your interview. Clip your nails. Be well groomed. Avoid gaudy colours, clunky jewellery, and excess perfume.

**Facial expressions** Your face is an excellent tool to communicate your interest, sincerity and enthusiasm about your interview to the panel members. Wear a smile on your face while entering and meeting the interview panel and use appropriate expressions while answering the questions. Even if you do not like some questions, try not to show your dislike on your face. Be happy and sporting and answer the questions patiently.

**Posture** Do not sit on the edge of the chair and do not lean on the chair either. Sit in a straight posture in the beginning and after some time you can change the posture. Be natural but at the same time try to control nervousness if you have any by resting your hands on the arms of the chair.

**Gesture** Use small gestures (e.g., if you wish to show two fingers to tell 'I have two points' keep the fingers close to you rather than stretching close to the panel ) while speaking as there will be little space between you and the panel. Exhibit suitable gestures, such as nodding head, tilting head, shaking hands, etc., at appropriate times.

**Eye contact** Maintain eye contact with all the panel members right from the time you meet them till you leave the interview room. While answering a question, look first at the member who posed the question and then at other members as well. Remember that if you do not look at the panel, you may appear to be diffident. Eye contact will also help you in getting feedback

from time to time about how the panel members receive your answers, thereby enabling you to change your approach.

**Personal space** As you will be sitting just on the opposite side of the panel, the space between you and the panel will be very less (a table may separate you and the panel). Hence, do not bend too much or stretch your hands on the table.

(*Note:* It will be helpful if you observe the interviewers' body language when they ask questions and also when you answer them. You can understand their intention and interest in asking the question and also their reaction to your answers.)

Interview Situation 1 in the CD demonstrates the importance of appropriate body language in interviews.

### *Answering techniques*

#### **Behavioural answering technique**

- Talk about how you have done rather than how you would do.
- Be prepared to use examples from your work, classes, and extracurricular activities.
- Be ready to offer not just any example, but your own example.

#### **Compelling story technique**

- Expand your answers by developing the specific examples into compelling stories with personality, flair, and interest.
- Captivate your interviewer by providing the details and nuances that bring your story to life.
- Do not, however, be tempted into lengthy monologues that will stretch the interviewer's time.

#### **Personality matching/mirroring technique**

- Take your cue from the interviewer in terms of tone and approach. For instance, if the interviewers are using minimal gestures or facial expressions, you can also follow the same approach. If they speak in low tones, you can also do so. However, do not be too casual, even if the interviewer seems to be. Watch and learn.
- Bring under control the 'too much' area (too loud, too pushy, too confident, too egoistic, too formal, or too conventional) in your own personality.

#### **Parroting technique**

- Do not assume or make a 'best guess' of what the interviewer is looking for.
- If a question is unclear to you, it is absolutely appropriate to 'parrot back' the question in your own words to make sure you have understood the correct meaning.
- Use it as a temporary stall when you do not have a ready answer. You will get some time to think and answer.

#### **Reframing technique**

- Always attempt to answer the questions as straightforwardly as possible, initially.

- Reframe the original question to illustrate an area of your background that can further enhance your overall image. For example, if you are asked who your favourite

professor is, you might give a short answer about a particular professor, and then reframe the question by explaining why that professor is your favourite— ‘... in fact it was her inspiration that encouraged me to participate in a two-week internship over the winter break, where I combined my classroom knowledge with practical experience in the field of ...’ Thus, you can use this technique to your advantage in the interview.

**Abraham Lincoln technique** Abraham Lincoln, while arguing in the court, would usually argue both sides of the case to the jury. He would first take the opponent’s side of the issue and then his client’s side.