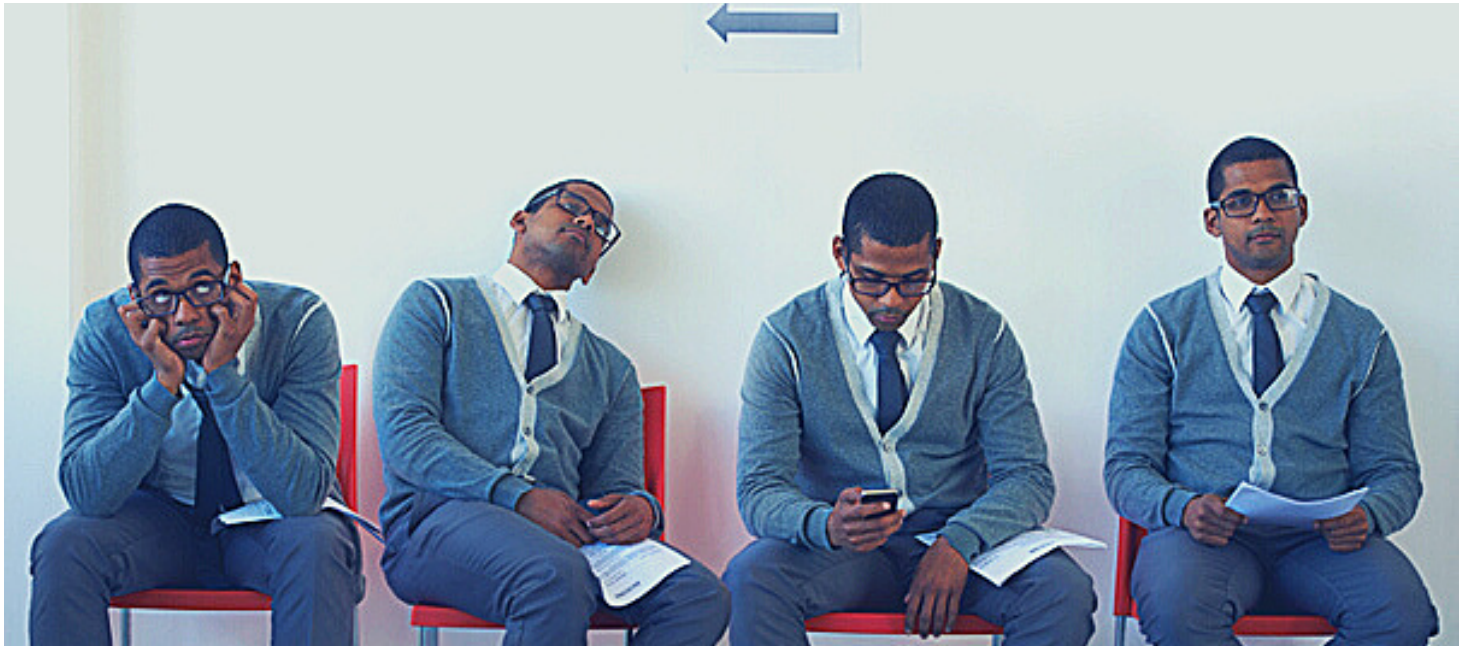


INTERVIEW SKILLS



INTRODUCTION

Every year, millions of fresh graduates get frustrated searching for a job across the globe. Many graduates, while well versed in their own subjects, may not even get their first foot in the door when it comes to job hunting because of their lack of preparedness. Some graduates assume that appearing for an interview doesn't require any preparation and underestimate its importance, consequently failing to make an impression on the employer.

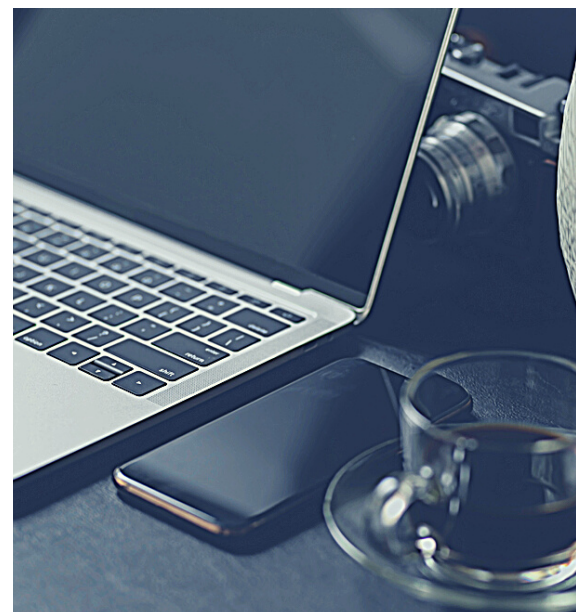
The main objective of the Interview Skills module is to equip students, graduates and job seekers with knowledge and techniques to effectively tackle the interview process, and leave a positive impression with your prospective employer by reinforcing your strength, experience and appropriateness for the job in question.

what is an interview

An interview is a conversation with a purpose – for an employer to assess the candidate and for a job seeker to convince the employers. The interview enables the employer to learn about you, your personality, social skills and general abilities, potential and whether you will fit in the organization.

Three Golden Interview Rules

- Know the organization
- Know yourself
- Know the job



Golden Rules

KNOW THE ORGANIZATION

In the internet age, there is no excuse for you not to gather information about the organization. Try researching as much as you can about the company, such as company web site and annual reports. Read about their founders and company hierarchy. Try to find out whether their businesses has changed. Try to understand why the company is expanding and its role and expectation of new position. When there is a new position, companies are usually looking for someone to fill very particular role in the company. Read any relevant press clippings. Research the company's competitors and their products. Such research allows you to assess whether they would be a good fit for you.

KNOW THE JOB

You must fully understand the job description of an advertised job. You must understand how the position you will fill contributes to the company's activities as a whole. Pay attention to the position description in the job advertisement. Research the position to find information about related positions. You may even talk to someone working in a similar job. This knowledge will help you highlight your skills that relevant to the position. When you face the interview, you must be fully aware of what you'd be getting into if you get hired.

KNOW YOURSELF

Your personal attributes are extremely critical. How do you work under pressure? What strategies do you use? What are your strengths? What type of management style do you prefer working with? What keeps you motivated? How do you know when you have been successful? How did you come to choose your course of study? Knowing yourself will help you assess if you are fit for the job, prepare for your upcoming tasks and environment you will be asked to operate in. Always remember these three simple rules.

Follow these rules and you will be able to approach your interviews with confidence. Try to always understand the objective and the employer's perspective. Don't assume and always read rules and regulations, as well as instructions very carefully before answering.



PREPARE FOR THE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

SITUATIONAL QUESTIONS

These questions present hypothetical circumstances and provide you the opportunity to describe an ideal situation or how you would deal with a circumstance. Interviewers often use these questions to gain an insight into your thought process. These questions may be followed up by behaviour-based questions to obtain concrete examples.

Example

1. What would you do with an employee who is always late for work?
2. Will you stop working if you get married?
3. How would you ensure long-term success with our company within your first week?

BEHAVIOR-BASED QUESTIONS

Interviewers like to identify and determine job-related success factors such as technical skills, knowledge, behaviour, performance, and motivation. These questions allow interviewers to determine if you have demonstrated strengths and abilities needed for the given position. There are many behaviour-based sample questions you can use to prepare for your interviews.

The interviewer wants to see if you are adaptable or flexible:

1. Describe a situation in which you had to adjust to change over which you had no control.
2. Describe the most demanding manager you have ever worked for and tell me how you adapted to his/her style.
3. Sometimes we have jobs or projects that change on the way. Tell me about when this happened to you and how you dealt with it.

The interviewer wants to know if you are attentive to details:

1. Tell me about an instance when you found errors in your work. What caused them? What did you do about them?
2. Tell me about an instance when your company benefited from your attention to detail. While working on projects, it's essential to keep track of details while still managing the big picture.

The interviewer wants to know if you are creative or innovative:

1. In your last position, what good idea did you come up with that was implemented?
2. Tell me about the most creative work-related project you have completed.
3. Describe an innovative idea you developed that led to the success of a company initiative.



ANSWERING INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

As part of your description/explanation to interview questions, use concrete examples. Quantify and illustrate each skill and experience in a well-structured way. When you are communicating a given skill and experience, it is best to deliver your answers using the STAR method.

THE STAR METHOD

The STAR method takes into consideration the following:

S- Situational

T -Task

A- Action

R -Result

Example: Interviewer: Describe a critical situation you have been confronted with?

Interviewee: (Driver): I believe the most critical situation in my career was when I was requested to drive home the staff through the students' riots that took place last month. I thought we could avoid the crowd by taking the back streets. But we realized that the students were running up the back streets to avoid the police, seeing we could go nowhere, we stopped and took shelter in a building. After a few hours, we decided to take another chance and managed to drop the staff home safely. Some students threw rocks and our window chipped, but if we hadn't taken the risk that time, we would have been stuck for another 10 hours as the situation worsened.

Based on this incident, I submit my recommendations for implementing a thorough security procedure. I am happy to inform that my recommendations were implemented.

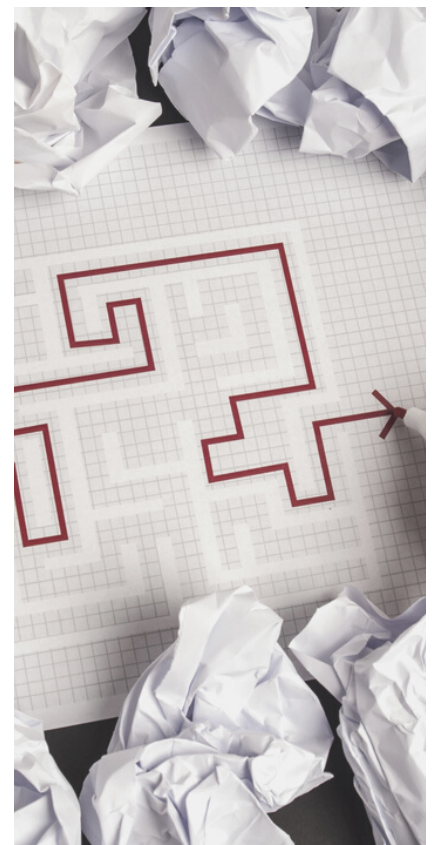
Now, let's examine how the interviewee used the STAR method to his advantage.

S Situation: Unsafe driving through the streets in the middle of violent student riots.

T Task: Drive the staff home safely.

A Action: Took back streets to avoid rioters, took shelter and waited for situation to improve

R Results: Managed to ensure safety of the staff. Implemented a thorough security procedure.



STRUCTURE OF THE INTERVIEW

Now, you will look at the structure of the interview and ways to respond to them. Then, you will examine a few guidelines focusing on the way you dress and behave during the different stages of the interview. An interview typically follows three stages:

FIRST STAGE – OPENING

Usually, interviewers use the opening of the interview to set you at ease with open ended questions. The questions may not be relevant to the position. Interviewers make initial assessments based on your appearance, attitude, manner, tone of voice, etc. The first five minutes can set the stage for the rest of the interview.

SECOND STAGE – INFORMATION EXCHANGE

Interviewers try to find out more about your skills, qualities, and interests/motivation for the position, how you fit in with others in the organization etc. Remember they are seeking the most suitable applicant for the position. The most suitable applicant is not necessarily the best qualified academically. Academic achievement is only one criterion; other includes work experience, social skills, potential, and enthusiasm.

THIRD STAGE – CONCLUSION

At this stage the interview is drawn to a close. It is important for you to leave a final positive impression – this is just as important as the initial impression and once again include non-verbal as well as verbal messages that you give.

DRESS CODE:

For Male:

1. Suit / Formal Trousers – Colour: Black / Dark Blue / Dark Gray
2. Shirt – Well ironed, Clean, White or Light Blue
3. Tie – Conservative but Powerful
4. Shoes – Well Polished Black Shoes with Black Socks
5. Personal Grooming – Use Deodorant / Perfume, Mouth Freshener and Comb

For Female:

1. Suit - Decent Colour; Not very Flashy
2. Jewelleries & Accessories – Fashionable; Not Heavy; Not noisy; Not too big
3. Shoes – Matching, comfortable height
4. Personal Grooming – Use Deodorant / Perfume, Mouth Freshener and Business Hair-do

How to make a good first impression:

In the first few seconds of meeting you, an interviewer will make a judgment, so it's important to make sure it's a positive first impression. Dress well, smile confidently and shake their hand firmly. Also, avoid being late as this not only makes a bad impression, but you also run the risk of turning up looking flustered.



Sample Interview Questions

- Tell me about yourself?
- Why do you want to work here?
- What are your strengths/weaknesses?
- What skills or training do you have, that qualify you for this position?
- Describe a time when you had to be relatively quick in making a decision.
- Do you prefer to work in a team or independently?
- What are some of your future professional goals?
- If I were to ask your previous supervisor to describe you, what would the person tell me?
- What motivates you and how are you able to motivate others?

Sample Questions to ask the Employer

- What kind of assignments might I expect during the first six months on the job?
- What qualities are you looking for in the candidate who fulfils this position?
- How is success in this job measured?
- Are there opportunities for advancement in this organization?
- What kind of training will I have?
- What do you see as the biggest challenge for someone in this position?

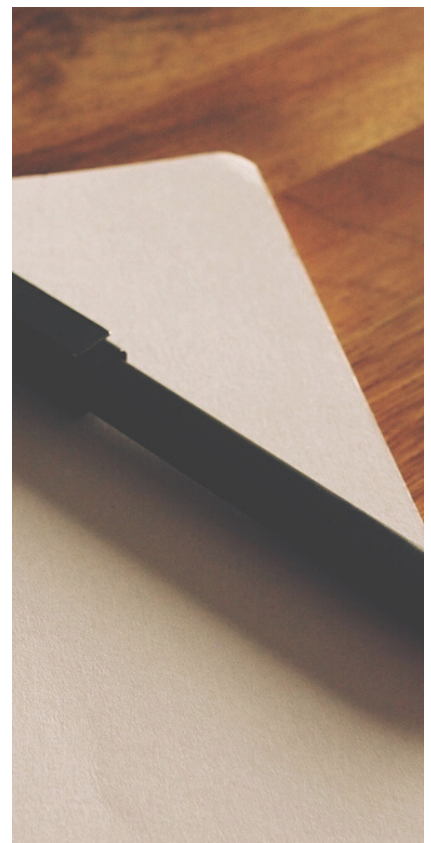
AT THE END OF THE INTERVIEW

If you sense an interview is finishing and that you are not clear about the following steps of the selection process, ask! Ensure that you know before you leave the interview what will happen next. This includes details of when the interviewers will be finishing the interviews, the time before a decision is made, and how all the applicants will be notified.

Additionally, establish who you should contact after the interview if there has been no news after reasonable time period. Confirm who to contact if you need to provide any additional information about yourself, or ask any further questions.

Overall, your goal is convincing the employer that you have these four qualities:

- **Qualifications:** Talk about your background, education, and experiences.
- **Attitude:** Be honest, positive, sincere, and professional.
- **Intelligence:** Use your communication skills, and speak about your knowledge of the company and its mission. How can you help the organization achieve its goals?
- **Compatibility:** Speak about how you have adapted to different work environments in the past and provide examples of your ability to be an effective team player



Tips for preparing for an Interview

You will excel at a job interview and leave a favourable and lasting impression on the interviewers by preparing for it and considering a few tips as mentioned below:

1. Research the company's background and profile

In an interview, you may be asked questions that require you to be knowledgeable of the company's role. An interviewer may ask you to explain the reason why you would like to be a part of their organization. By thoroughly researching the company, you will become knowledgeable of multiple aspects relevant to them.

2. Research the Job Profile

You should be aware of the roles and duties that you will be performing at the job position that the interview is being conducted for. You can use this information to highlight your skills, abilities and past experiences while answering and establishing how they will give you an advantage and help you perform efficiently at the job position.

3. List Your Strength and Weaknesses

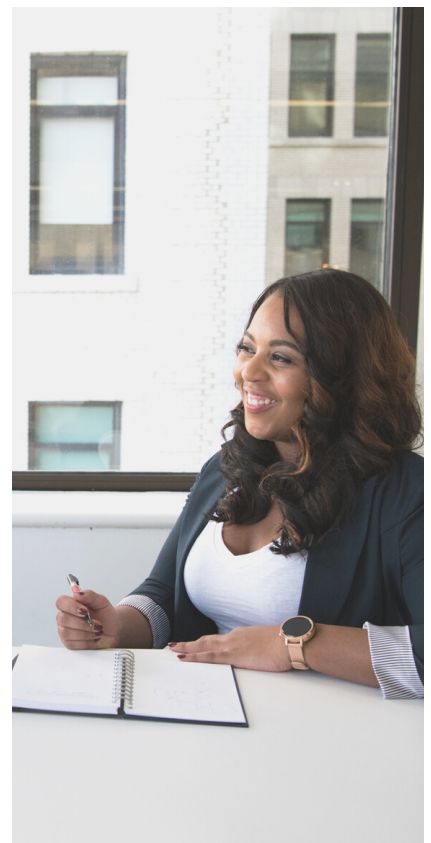
A prominent question that is often asked in different job interviews is regarding the strengths and weaknesses you have. In such a situation, you should reflect on yourself and find the areas that you are adept in and those that might require improvement on your part. Along with listing these, you can think about various situations wherein you have used the strengths to your advantage and tackled unfavourable situations efficiently. Being well-aware of these qualities may help you respond to questions concerning the same without being caught off-guard, eliminating instinctive answering.

4. Familiarize Yourself with Questions Asked in an Interview

By familiarizing yourself with the questions generally asked at any job interviews, you will prepare yourself for answering them. There are a few generic questions asked in many interviews that relate to your career objectives, areas of interest and motivation. You can refer to resources available online which may contain questions that are generic and domain specific.

5. Improve Your Method of Answering Questions

Your method of answering the questions should be meticulous. You should listen carefully to every question being asked. Being patient and waiting for the interviewer to finish their questions before replying, and controlling any eagerness or excitement may help relay an image of calmness and composure along with good etiquettes. While answering, making suitable use of gestures may help in emphasizing your answers and retain the attention of the interviewers.



Tips for preparing for an Interview

6. Practice Interviews

The best way to be prepared for an interview is via extensive practice. You can practice answering questions by yourself in front of a mirror or you may also have mock interview sessions with your friends or family members.

7. Know Interview Etiquette

Knowing interview etiquette may increase your chances of getting the job. Upon entering the venue, politely and enthusiastically greet the interviewers and others, and firmly shake hands. Make eye contact during the interview session and sit straight. Pay attention to the interviewers and listen to them carefully. These interview etiquette tips can help you make a good impression on the interviewers.

Success!

