
UNIT 4 PREPARING FOR THE JOB

Structure

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4.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit will help you to

- Understand the selection criterion in an interview
- Identify the skills needed
- Practice answering some Frequently Asked Questions (FAQS)
- Familiarize yourself with new interview formats like the telephone interview and videoconferencing

You will also be provided with

- Vocabulary inputs
- Quick tips
- Sentence structures for effective answers
- Sample interviews for analysis

4.1 WARM UP

Talk to people who have faced interviews in the last year. Find out what they have to say about

- The experience of their first interview
- The best / worst moment
- About the interviewer(s)
- How did their preparation help?
- What would they change if they could?

Don't worry if you come across some negative experiences or opinions. Don't let it scare you - its all part of the job-hunting game.

4.2 READING COMPREHENSION: YOU ARE IN CONTROL

What is an interview about? And is there a perfect interview? Read on to find out.

One of the most important things you can learn about job interviewing is that you - yes, that's right, you can exercise a remarkable degree of control over the entire process. Understanding, using and expanding on the control you have over the interview may be the single most important factor in your ability to get the job you want and build it into a job you love.

What does it take?

There are some folks who just attract other people to them. I'm not talking about physical attractiveness here. I'm talking of personal traits such as friendliness, courtesy, genuine interest in the other person, good listening skills, an ability to influence the environment rather than being controlled by it. A person who radiates a sense of control communicates competence, calm and confidence. Your interview goal is to communicate that you are the best person for the job. With control you exude a sense of certainty, predictability and lowered risk. These are subtle qualities all interviewers are looking for. When you feel not in control, you tend to present yourself both personally and professionally in a way that does not attract other people.

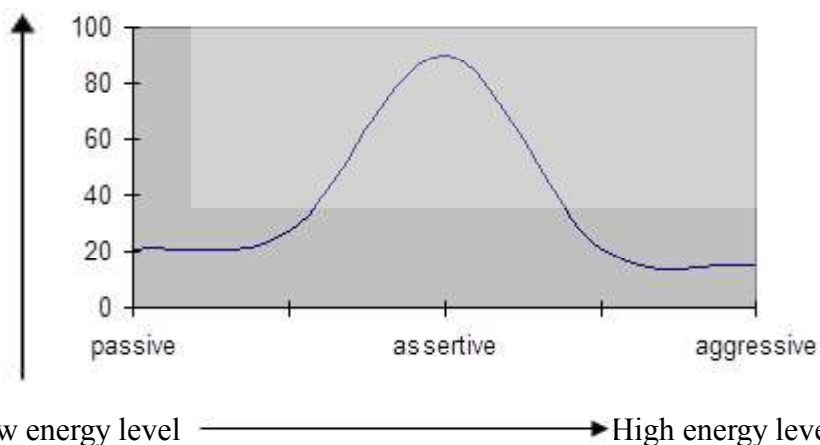
By taking control I do not mean charging into the room like a star from the world wrestling shows, physically overwhelming the space with your body language and cologne while verbally dominating the conversation by not letting the interviewer get a word in edgewise. It might be kind of fun to watch but it sure won't get you the job.

Two things I'm absolutely sure of - (a). You do want to exhibit the appropriate level of assertiveness in the interview to demonstrate you are capable and (b). You do not want to cross the invisible line between assertiveness and aggression.

Get Feedback

How do you know what you talk like? What your presentation is like? - Get feedback, real feedback. Take a look at this **Communication Effectiveness Model**

High Communicative Effectiveness



Next because you are the best source of information about yourself, ask yourself the following question:

When do I communicate in the passive zone /assertive zone / aggressive zone?

What am I doing most frequently?

Be Heard

No job interviewer is going to sit there trying to pry information out of you. If you are too passive in your communication it shows non-interest and “not - good-with-people”. On the other hand, maybe you have determined that you are much too aggressive in the way you communicate. This is also bad news because you will be seen as ‘hard to work’ with and not a team player. No interviewer is going to recommend hiring you if you come across as opinionated.

Answer this - whose interview is it anyway? I want you to actually stop for a minute or two to think about this. Sure your potential employers are interviewing you but they are interviewing other candidates as well. This makes the time you spend for your interview very precious. It is your time to be seen as a winner, it’s your time to shine. This interview is yours and you need to take responsibility for it.

Remember the interviewer assumes more or less that you can do the job. In today’s hectic world, no one has the spare time to interview someone who they think can’t do the job, do they? Only the best candidates, only the most appropriately skilled individuals, only those who the interviewer actually hopes can do the job, will be called for the interview. Of course, it’s up to you to communicate that you actually can do the job.

The interview is a two way street. You are not going to be interrogated like an enemy agent in some war movie. They have work that needs to be done and the money to pay for it. You have the skills and the attitude. They are trying to determine if you are the best person for them and you are trying to find out if this is the best place to work in at this point of your career.

Remember in many ways a job interview is like skydiving -you don’t get a “do over”, if you blow it on the first try, you never get a second chance to make a first impression.

Activity 1

1) Read the passage given above and mark T/F according to the passage.

- i) An interview is meant to give the candidate a hard time.
- ii) No one doubts your basic ability since you were called in the first place.
- iii) The passive and aggressive styles of communication are very high on effectiveness.
- iv) Interpersonal communication skills are under observation from the moment we enter the job market.
- v) Attitude judgments about people are old fashioned; they don’t happen in the modern workplace.
- vi) The fear of powerlessness doesn’t affect interview performance.
- vii) In spite of somebody else doing the questioning the candidate actually can control the interview.
- viii) In an interview the two parties are trying to decide on a mutually beneficial agreement.

2) Based on the passage you have just read, complete the list.

Selection criterion for the winning candidates.

The candidate should have the following:

Ability to _____

Quality of _____

Must _____

Should have _____

The candidate must not

3) Complete the following:

i) Aggressive communication styles are harmful because _____

ii) Being in control helps because _____

iii) Feeling powerless during the interview stops us from _____

iv) The interviewer is looking for subtle qualities like _____

v) The way we converse with each other is important because it shows _____

4.3 VOCABULARY: WORDS IN CONTEXT

Activity 2

1) Find words from the passage, which mean the same as the following:

i) knowing in advance what is going to happen

ii) too much of anything; a person or situation that is too dominating

iii) speaking or acting in a forceful way so that people notice you

iv) behaving in an insistent and forceful way without caring about other people

v) somebody who has very distinct opinions and puts them across aggressively

vi) very busy

vii) questioned

viii) another chance

- 2) The word grid below hides ten adjectives which have the qualities that you must cultivate at the workplace. Locate them.

E	F	F	I	C	I	E	N	T	P	L	E	A	S	A	N	T
C	A	P	A	B	L	E	T	F	R	I	E	N	D	L	Y	Z
C	Z	X	Y	R	E	S	T	F	U	L	W	X	E	A	S	Y
O	W	U	V	P	E	R	F	E	C	T	I	O	N	I	S	T
N	F	X	Y	N	F	F	A	B	C	A	L	B	J	S	L	L
S	R	Z	O	G	E	D	F	U	N	M	L	V	O	E	O	E
I	E	H	A	R	D	I	D	E	T	B	I	I	Y	R	W	A
D	Q	U	I	A	H	F	S	G	C	I	N	O	A	I	F	R
E	U	S	J	R	L	F	K	O	B	T	G	U	B	O	I	N
R	E	U	P	E	M	I	K	O	A	I	I	S	L	U	V	I
A	N	A	Q	O	N	C	W	D	D	O	X	V	E	S	Z	N
B	T	L	R	S	I	U	X	Y	Z	U	Y	R	E	A	L	G
L	L	L	T	U	A	L	E	R	T	S	K	I	L	L	E	D
E	Y	Y	Q	V	Z	T	O	U	G	H	Z	K	C	A	L	M

- i) having the abilities or qualities necessary to do something.
- ii) a kind and friendly person
- iii) a person who does a job well and successfully without wasting time and energy
- iv) a person who does not show undue worry or excitement
- v) someone you enjoy being with because s/he is humorous, friendly and happy
- vi) someone with talent and expertise in their job
- vii) someone who pays full attention to things and is ready to deal with anything that might happen.
- viii) someone with a strong desire to be successful and powerful
- ix) someone who likes the company of most people
- x) a person who refuses to accept anything that is not perfect

4.4 LANGUAGE FOCUS

Here are a few language structures that can be used in interviews. Practise them whenever the opportunity arises.

Answering ice breakers

Q: Good morning/ good evening...
How are you? Could we have your name?
Ayushi Rajwar right? Hope you haven't had to wait too long?
Are you comfortable?

A: Good morning/ good evening...
Fine thank you. Ayushi Rajwar / I am...
Yes that's right. Not at all...
Of course, thank you ...

Asking questions, asking for clarifications / for time May I/could I have a moment to think about this...
I'd like to know some thing...
I have a question...
Could I get back to this question in some time? (If you don't mind)
Could you repeat the question, please? May I ask if...
There is something I'd like to know...
May I know / I'd like to know the pay package/remuneration you are offering.

Activity 3

Given below are two parts of brief conversations between two different persons on various occasions in daily life. Match part A of the conversation with part B.

A	B
i) Hello! Savita! How are you?	a. Thank you very much, sir. You helped a lot.
ii) Hi Vikas! Coming to see the movie?	b. Yes, here it is.
iii) May I know your name please?	c. Thanks! I need the good wishes.
iv) Many thanks for the lovely birthday present.	d. Fine, thank you.
v) Congratulations, Rehman. You've done very well in the exams.	e. Certainly sir. I'll bring it in a moment.
vi) Can I help carry your books Mrs. Rao?	f. Of course not. In a moment.
vii) May I borrow your camera for a day, please?	g. I'm Roopa Trivedi.
viii) Good luck with exams, Sarita	h. Sorry. Not a paisa on me.
ix) Excuse me, could you tell me the way to the station?	i. Oh that's very kind of you. Thank you very much.
x) Excuse me. Can I have another glass of water?	j. No thanks. I've had enough.
xi) Like another cup of tea?	k. Yes, of course.
xii) Like to come for a drink?	l. Sure. Go straight and then turn right.
xiii) Have you any change on you?	m. My pleasure. I hope you liked it.

xiv) May I take my calculator into the examination hall, please?	n. That's out of the question. They're not allowed.
xv) Would you mind moving your car, please?	o. Love to.

4.5 LISTENING: OFF THE BEATEN TRACK

Interview techniques have expanded hugely. It now caters to the time bound and technologically advanced world of work. Listen to a call center HR supervisor talking about new interview formats.

Activity 4

- 1) Complete the following in your own words with ideas from what you just heard:
 - i) Since the interviewer can't see you nodding in response to what they are saying on the phone _____
 - ii) The speakerphone is not a good idea because _____
 - iii) How you sound on the phone is important. Your voice should not _____
 - iv) In case the interviewer doesn't give us a chance to talk about our skills then _____
 - v) If there is no invitation for a meeting then _____
 - vi) The phone interview is the first level before _____
 - vii) Helpful ideas to prepare for an interview via videoconferencing are to _____

- 2) Listen to David's advice for **telephonic interviews** and fill out the following checklists

Dos	Don'ts
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

4.6 WRITING AND SPEAKING: SOME FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Given below are some FAQs (Frequently asked questions) at interviews. Write out your answers. Then practise a mock interview with a friend/colleague

- 1) What are your career goals?
- 2) Where do you see yourself 5/10 years from now?
- 3) Why should we hire you?

- 4) What are your extracurricular interests?
- 5) What did you enjoy most in your college/university?
- 6) What appeals to you most in this job?
- 7) What are your greatest achievements?
- 8) At this point in life what is the most important thing for you?
- 9) How would your friends describe you?
- 10) What motivates you?
- 11) What do you want out of life?
- 12) What are your strengths and weaknesses?
- 13) Tell us about yourself?
- 14) How would you judge your interpersonal skills?
- 15) What do you know about our company?

This is just a small sample. The range of possible questions is infinite but what makes interviews predictable is that the questions are from a few basic categories.

Here is a table that will help you. Look at the “best answer option” and answer the sample questions.

Question category	Sample	Best answer option	What’s your answer? Use the suggested structures to answer the questions ...
Testing attitudes	Do you like teamwork? How do you handle criticism? What bores you and what do you do about it?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give examples to support what you claim is your belief. <i>For example, Yes I enjoy teamwork. In fact most of my projects have been in teams.</i> • Talk about the importance of that attitude in your work. • Be honest and positive. <i>For example, if the criticism is constructive I’m okay with it but if it is uncalled for I do feel bad but I know these things happen sometimes</i> 	I am... I like /enjoy / prefer... I am comfortable in /doing /with ... I am good in/ at / with... I believe I am... I consider myself...

<p>Testing behavior</p>	<p>How would you deal with conflicts with colleagues? How do you deal with stress? Tell us about a time when you solved a problem in a creative way?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe how you behave in a certain way and why and what the experience has taught you • Provide a concrete illustration • Keep the answer small and include only important aspects • Know exactly which of your experiences reflect which aspect of your behavior • <i>For example, I believe talking it through can solve most problems, I used to do that during my work in the students council....</i> 	<p>I believe... I enjoy... I like/prefer to... I'd like to tell you about... During ... When I was... Let me give you an example ... Like the time when I ... I used to...</p>
<p>Testing skills</p>	<p>How comfortable are you with new technology? Are you better at verbal skills or written skills? Are you proficient in the latest software?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe your skills and relate it with the what the job requires • Be ready with proof either in your C.V or experiences that you can relate to prove that you have the skill. • If you want to talk about your qualities relate them to the skill you are asked about. • <i>For example I'm good at computers particularly the kind of software required for ...</i> 	<p>I am good in/ at/ with ... I have done a lot of ... I have a lot of / considerable experience in ... My skills are ...</p>
<p>Industry knowledge</p>	<p>What do you know about our company? What do you know about our products and services?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know the company • Know the industry • Don't just state statistics, give your analysis of a situation 	<p>Based on my research... I'd say... It's obvious that... It seems that ... The trend is ...</p>

4.7 LET US SUM UP

Preparing for job interviews is an essential activity for any job hunter in the present competitive world. Being prepared is the sign of a good interviewee. This unit focuses on how you can be in control during the interview and the skills needed to be counted as a winning candidate. It also provides ideas and structures to help you deal with frequently asked questions.

The “vocabulary” sections introduce you to a range of words useful for interview. The grammar section deals with question answers. The unit also provides a few helpful navigation tools through the writing and speaking sections.

4.8 ANSWERS

Activity 1

1) i. F ii. T iii. F iv. T v. F vi. F vii. T viii. T

2) Selection criterion ...

Ability to influence the environment

Quality of competency, calm and confidence

Must exhibit friendliness, courtesy, genuine interest in the other person, good listening skills

Should have the appropriate level of assertiveness and conversational skills

The candidate must not

- Feel powerless
 - Overwhelm the interviewer with body language
 - Verbally dominate the conversation
 - Ignore the possibility of attitude judgments
 - Communicate aggressively
 - Communicate passively
- 3) i) ...the candidate is seen as a difficult person to get along with and thus a bad choice as an employee. It means low interpersonal skills, which is a huge drawback in the workplace.
- ii) ... it shows competence, calm and confidence. All three are essential qualities for a winning candidate.
- iii) ... being positive and effective in our personal or professional presentation.
- iv) ... a sense of certainty, predictability of action and therefore lowered risk for the employer
- v) ... how we would manage everyday situations at work.

Activity 2

- 1)
 - i) predictability
 - ii) overwhelming
 - iii) assertive
 - iv) aggression
 - v) opinionated
 - vi) hectic
 - vii) interrogated
 - viii) do-over

- 2)
 - i. capable
 - ii. pleasant
 - iii. efficient
 - iv. calm
 - v. fun
 - vi. skilled
 - vii. alert
 - viii. ambitious
 - ix. friendly
 - x. perfectionist

E	F	F	I	C	I	E	N	T	P	L	E	A	S	A	N	T
C	A	P	A	B	L	E	T	F	R	I	E	N	D	L	Y	Z
C	Z	X	Y	R	E	S	T	F	U	L	W	X	E	A	S	Y
O	W	U	V	P	E	R	F	E	C	T	I	O	N	I	S	T
N	F	X	Y	N	F	F	A	B	C	A	L	B	J	S	L	L
S	R	Z	O	G	E	D	F	U	N	M	L	V	O	E	O	E
I	E	H	A	R	D	I	D	E	T	B	I	I	Y	R	W	A
D	Q	U	I	A	H	F	S	G	C	I	N	O	A	I	F	R
E	U	S	J	R	L	F	K	O	B	T	G	U	B	O	I	N
R	E	U	P	E	M	I	K	O	A	I	I	S	L	U	V	I
A	N	A	Q	O	N	C	W	D	D	O	X	V	E	S	Z	N
B	T	L	R	S	I	U	X	Y	Z	U	Y	R	E	A	L	G
L	L	L	T	U	A	L	E	R	T	S	K	I	L	L	E	D
E	Y	Y	Q	V	Z	T	O	U	G	H	Z	K	C	A	L	M

Activity 3

- i) d
- ii) k
- iii) g
- iv) m
- v) a
- vi) i
- vii) b
- viii) c
- ix) l
- x) e

xi) j

xii) o

xiii) h

xiv) n

xv) f

Tape Script

Hi, I'm David Smith. I'm here to talk to you about two interviews that companies like ours are going in for in a big way - Telephonic and video conferencing.

Well, the first contact with a potential employer is almost always by phone. Even in this age of online interviews, the phone remains important. Add to that the huge number of call centers and BPOs whose lifeline is the phone.

Whatever the cause of the telephonic interview you must be prepared. You have to make that interview lead up to the face to face and if it is an interview for a voice based job well-this is the interview.

You know the call usually comes in when we are least prepared for it – when you just reached home or you're sleeping late...

How do you prepare?

Firstly the most obvious and neglected point is that the recruiter has only your voice to judge...which, by the way, is enough. So record yourself... how do you sound? Remember there's no perfect voice but it shouldn't be too high-pitched or too loud or too soft. If anyone's ever told you that you speak too fast – slow down. You need to come across as confident and alert (not hyperactive and fidgety), pleasant (not funny) and attentive (no long thoughtful pauses, please)

Second, take a surprise call in your stride, instead of letting your caller hear a gulp, nervous breathing and shaky sentences say something like, "Thank you for calling, would you wait just a moment while I close the door". Take a deep breath, slow your heart beat down, pull out your documents, the company information, smile and get back on the phone. Now you are in control. The smile changes the way you sound, it improves voice quality - makes it more pleasant. So even if they can't see you, smile.

Next let the caller do the major talking but keep up your end of the conversation. Over the phone they can't see your body language signs... like a nod or a shift in the chair - a long silence while you are listening could mean you're not there. Fill it with hmm... ok, yes, I understand, mm.... in moderation they work wonders.

Next very importantly - be brief, thorough but brief. You must stick to the point, no long winded explanations. Then again something about the technology - don't use a speaker phone unless it is of a very good quality. The speaker leaves your hands free but makes you sound like you are speaking from another planet – voices echo badly. When holding the phone keep the receiver an inch from your mouth and speak directly into it.

The next bit is important. One of the mystical things about a phone is that it can pick up and amplify every background sound like whirring fans, your nervously tapping feet, too many deep breaths, gum being chewed or smoke being inhaled or exhaled and papers rustling. Imagine the scene yourself, you wouldn't be happy with the candidate either.

And now what's the video conferencing thing... new kid on the block really, but increasingly common. Do everything that you would do for a face-to-face interview. Additionally remember - don't take notes, don't wear too many accessories, also don't make too many hand gestures - the transmission makes them very jerky and rainbow colored, there will be a time gap before the audio reaches you and they will be watching you all the time - so show yourself the way you want to be seen. Do remember we tend to notice more details when we are watching someone on camera.

Finally for both the videoconference and telephonic interview here are a few tips.

One - if the interviewer doesn't give you an opening to sell your skills - you need to salvage the situation - have some work related questions ready and while you are getting an answer, wait for a pause and tell that you have worked on similar things before. Push your skills but not aggressively.

Two - Ask questions related to the job requirements.

Three - If you haven't already been asked or invited to meet the interviewer, take the initiative like - "It sounds very exciting. I'd certainly be interested. Could we meet to discuss this?"

Last - don't talk about money. Financial negotiations are too important to be discussed over the phone. Just make sure you get the face-to-face interview...

Activity 4

- i) ... you must use words like 'I understand' or 'ok' or fillers like hmm, but in moderation.
 - ii) ... it makes us sound too far away and creates too much echo.
 - iii) ... sound too high-pitched or too loud or too soft.
 - iv) ... we will need to find an opportunity to do so / we could ask a question and in response to what is said, mention our skills.
 - v) ... we should ask for an appointment.
 - vi) ... the face to face interview.
 - vii) ... do everything that we would do for a face-to-face interview, be extra careful about our body language and presentation and not make too many gestures.
- 2) This is our checklist. You should have identified at least 5 points each

Dos

- i) Sound confident, alert and attentive
- ii) Sound pleasant

- iii) Speak at a moderate pace
- iv) Smile during the conversation
- v) Be prepared for surprise calls
- vi) Give verbal cues to show that you are listening
- vii) Give thorough but brief answers
- viii) Keep the mouthpiece one inch away from your mouth and speak directly into it
- ix) Take initiatives, ask relevant questions, seek further appointments

Don'ts

- i) Sound hyperactive, fidgety
- ii) Speak too fast, loud or slow
- iii) Have long pauses or long sentences in your answers
- iv) Talk more than the interviewer
- v) Use speaker phone unless of a very good quality
- vi) Smoke /chew gum/tap feet while on the phone
- vii) Have distracting background sounds
- viii) Talk about money



