
UNIT 8 PREPARING TO FACE AN INTERVIEW

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8.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit will help you to

- Plan out your interview
- Identify the do's and don'ts while appearing for an interview
- Practise answering some tough questions

You will also be provided with

- Vocabulary inputs
- Quick tips
- Modals to ask appropriate questions
- Sample interview for analysis

8.1 WARM UP

Answer this about yourself: What do you notice most when you meet somebody for the first time? How soon do you form opinions? Is the first opinion important?

8.2 READING COMPREHENSION 1: FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF THE JOB SEEKER

Read this leaflet of an employment agency designed to help young job seekers and answer the questions given below:

Congratulations! Your cover letter and resume' have made a good impression and the employer has called you in for an interview. Now it is time to make sure that you also have the interview planned out as far as possible.

Most people want to know how much English they need. Well here's the answer – a good amount of effective communication skills in English might actually clinch the deal for you.

In an interview you may have as little as ten minutes to give an impactful answer to the one main question from each panel member. There could easily be six or more of them, and not surprisingly the number of people gazing at you from across the table seems to increase the higher the profile of the job.

What the panel is testing is obvious:

a) Do they believe you can do the job well?

How can you expect the interview panel to pin down your good qualities if you're not sure of them yourself? You also need to be able to turn your not-so-positive attributes into something more flattering (for example, you may have chaotic organizational skills, but are finding tremendous help in the form of lists). So get the facts about yourself clear in your mind. You may know you are strong in the lab work but weak on writing up. Or you may be an excellent speaker but poor on project management. However your SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis shapes up, make sure you've assessed yourself thoroughly and honestly before you start. Getting constructive criticism from colleagues will undoubtedly help a lot.

b) Do they like the look of you?

It's true to say it's called an 'interview' because they call you 'in to view' you. Of course this has more to do with your attitude than with your haircut or the color of your tie or blouse. You could seriously harm your chances with something as trivial as not smiling at all during the interview. This will be interpreted as either that you are not able to cope under pressure or that you were born miserable. Not good.

You are a happy person and you are not under pressure. You are relaxed, confident. You are likely to get lots of other offers. You are on your way to the top. This is the impression you want to create. This is the affirmation you need to say in your mind before you walk through that door.

c) Do you show any strong contraindications for either a) or b)?

Just one 'no-no' can turn the panel against you even if they quite like you in all other respects.

In a nutshell, for the whole interview never cease to be ENTHUSIASTIC (you're relaxed, so smile a little), ATTENTIVE (you are alert, maintaining good eye-contact and nodding a fair bit), and POSITIVE (give forward-looking answers).

WARNING! Do not go to the other extreme and appear cocky. No one likes a cocky person. Even if your CV is strong and you've already come across well during the interview, a little humility is always a very positive thing. Expressing a willingness to learn more or admitting a small weakness will make you appear honest.

My last piece of advice would be to *never* let your guard down and get your big 10 must dos ready. Your sociability will almost certainly be tested. Everyone you encounter needs to be impressed, from the peon to the chairperson. So be prepared to think on your feet and charm them all. You'll end up feeling exhausted, but if you get your head straight before you start, you'll find it much easier to sell yourself. And with the best of luck, you might just get that job.

Activity 1

- 1) Select the most appropriate answer according to the passage:
 - i) Good communication skill in English
 - a) may help you get the job
 - b) may impress the interviewer
 - c) are not very necessary
 - ii) A SWOT analysis
 - a) will reveal what you need to hide during the interview
 - b) will only discourage you
 - c) will help you make an honest assessment of yourself
 - iii) A suitable impression of you during the interview would be...
 - a) aiming for the top
 - b) appealing, relaxed, confident, alert
 - c) not under pressure, laid back
 - iv) How many of the following statements are true?
 - a) A good CV will not be enough if your attitude is wrong.
 - b) Admitting mistakes will create a bad impression.
 - c) Personal characteristics are a major part of what is being assessed.
 - d) It is important to be able to present your characteristics in a positive light.
 - e) The way you are dressed could be the single most influential factor in the interview.
 - f) The focus should be on being on your best behavior only in the interview room.
- 2) Here is a checklist that you could use for the interview. Read the passage and fill **the big 10 must dos** for the interview.
 - i) _____
 - ii) _____

- iii) _____
- iv) _____
- v) _____
- vi) _____
- vii) _____
- viii) _____
- ix) _____
- x) _____

Remember to do this with a pencil. By the end of the unit you might want to change or add a few more items on the list

3) Do you know the meaning of the following terms? Here’s a small brainteaser. Try guessing the meaning from the context, don’t use the dictionary.

- i) A profile of your professional/ educational achievements and qualifications _____ m _
- ii) Qualities or characteristics _____ r _____ t _ _
- iii) Extremely confusing state of something; for e.g. Traffic _____ c
- iv) In brief; a small or concise package n _____
- v) Fatigue, what you would feel after a hard day’s work _____ h _____
- vi) To comprehend, to understand something as... _____ p _ _ _

8.3 READING COMPREHENSION 2: FROM THE RECRUITER’S POINT OF VIEW

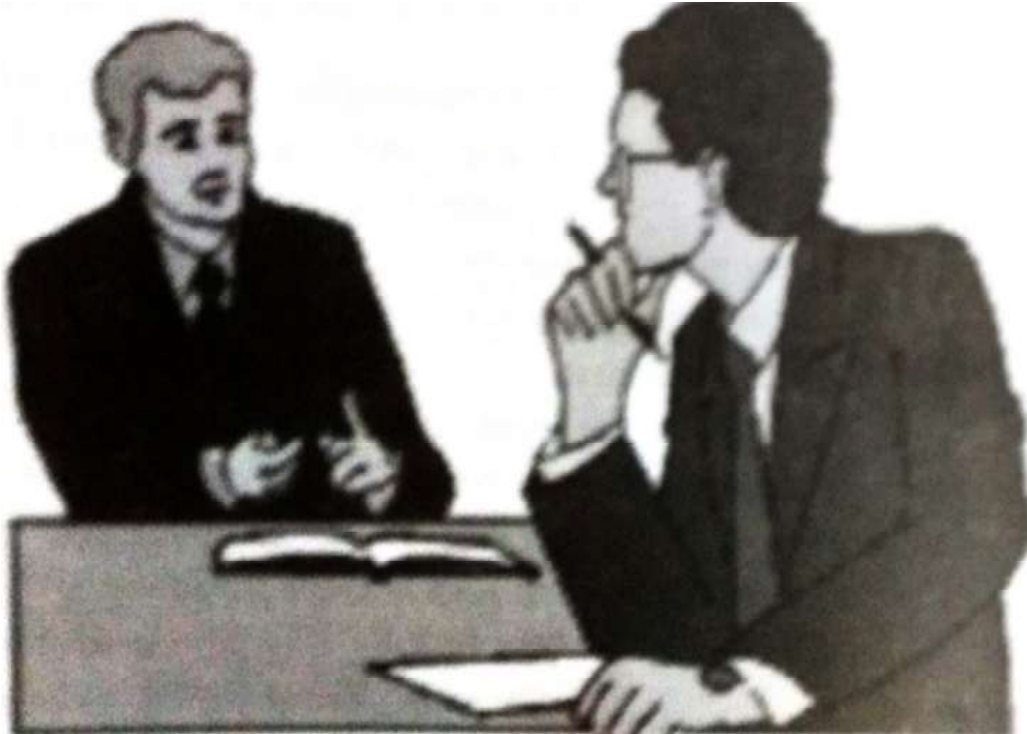
Most managements regard the hiring of entry-level professionals as one of its toughest jobs. With experienced people there is a frame of reference – a track record. With recent graduates there is little or nothing. Often the only solid things that the interviewer has to go on are the examination results which is a blind alley when it comes to the question of whether a candidate can be a good employee or not. Employers consider employing new recruits a gamble. So as recruiters we have to find different ways of predicting potential.

After relying as best we can on examination results to evaluate your ability, we focus on questions that reveal how willing you are to learn, to get the job done and how you would be on average days and when the going gets tough.

For the candidate our advice would be to try and stand out of the crowd. Don’t be branded as average in an interview where thousands are trying their luck. How to do this... well, the simplest way is to give concrete evidence of what you claim to be.

Contrary to popular belief, it isn't necessary to have snap answers ready for every question, because you can never do that. In fact, it is important to pause and collect your thoughts before answering. By the same token occasionally asking for time or asking for questions to be repeated is useful to gain time – only occasionally though.

Most recruiters would also advice owning up to something you don't know- don't try to bluff the panel on issues that can be verified and checked and believe me most things can. But of course remember you cannot really afford not to know too many things. If you do come across a question that stumps you, don't babble incoherently. It is best to say, "I'd like to come back to that later". You'll get time to come up with a logical answer.



Activity 2

- 1) Complete the following sentences with ideas from the passage
 - i) Most recruiters regard taking an entry level professional a tough job because.....
 - ii) Examination results are not the only thing; interviews are also focusing on
 - iii) One should not try to bluff through questions because
 - iv) Recruiters call hiring entry level professionals a gamble because
- 2) Choose the most appropriate answer:
 - i) What is the recruiters opinion about difficult questions
 - a) Go ahead and give any answer that comes to you
 - b) Take your time to think and then speak
 - c) Just say you don't know

- ii) Examinations are not the only standard of judgment
 - a) Because they never make sense anyway
 - b) Workplace skills like teamwork, problem solving, adaptability and ethics are not tested in examination formats
 - c) Because a good candidate can get a bad score once in a while
- iii) Concrete illustrations of the abilities that you claim to have will show
 - a) That you have amazing memory
 - b) That you are good at talking
 - c) That you have done what you claimed

8.4 VOCABULARY: VERBS

Activity 3

What do verbs do? They describe what you did / do / are going to do. Here are some verbs to help you talk about your responsibilities and experiences.

implement, analyze, document, arrange, upgrade, assist, conduct, consult, develop, facilitate, support, construct, justify, delegate, act, recommend, edit, collaborate, work.

Use the appropriate form of these verbs to complete the sentences below:

- i) I _____ as an assistant to the director of our theatre troupe.
- ii) We got together and _____ a new model for the science festival.
- iii) Many juniors have _____ me about their physics projects.
- iv) We were taught to _____ our questions carefully.
- v) I was in charge of _____ the freshers party.
- vi) I _____ the sports coach.
- vii) I believe teamwork means _____ productively.
- viii) We _____ a survey on students using mobiles.
- ix) Successful projects work through proper _____.
- x) All my projects have been _____ in the portfolio.
- xi) I _____ a new application for this software.
- xii) I _____ the college magazine this year.
- xiii) Training _____ progress, it allows us to improve our work.
- xiv) Plans need to be _____, not just designed.
- xv) My claims are _____ by my work during the apprenticeship.
- xvi) I like to learn new skills, to keep on _____ the old ones.
- xvii) We must _____ our beliefs with actions, in other words do what we say.
- xviii) I've never had African cuisine before. What would you _____ ordering?

8.5 LISTENING COMPREHENSION 1: TALKING ABOUT PREPARING FOR AN INTERVIEW

Activity 4

- 1) You will hear Ruchi Sahay talking about her preparations. Listen to the recording and use her CV to answer the questions that follow:

<p><u>Ruchi Sahay</u> 44 London Road Contact: 01962-898960 Manchester</p> <p>Education St. Johns School Winchester College- Advertising Studies</p> <p>Other information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 year training and apprenticeship in Animations and computer graphics with Eye Corp International. • Summer job with the Daily Planet, local news section, junior editor – 2014 • Fluency in Spanish and French • Member of the local debating society • Twice honorary member of the student council • Core member of the project group dealing with counseling of teenagers • Member of the state level team of the dramatic society • Regular contributor to the Daily 	<p>Day and date: March 24th, Thursday</p> <p>Meeting with: Mr. Fox Mulder</p> <p>Company: New Age Corp.</p> <p>My interest areas include</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>Skills they should know about</p> <p>I'm good at</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>I can</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>I have</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>Questions to ask the interviewer</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>
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- 2) Choose the most appropriate alternative:
- i) David's suggestion was
 - a) to make a cheat sheet
 - b) to stop being nervous
 - c) to practice answering questions based on her CV
 - ii) Ruchi has not mentioned this
 - a) decided the clothes that she is going to wear

- b) gone over her answers to tricky questions
- c) reading up body language tips
- iii) Ruchi wants to avoid this
 - a) tough questions
 - b) reaching late
 - c) simple language
- iv) According to Ruchi, using language effectively implies
 - a) being able to match the level of interaction of the interviewer so that we don't sound too formal or informal.
 - b) using technical words to show that we know the job
 - c) providing detailed explanations for every question

Note: a cheat sheet need not contain only facts; it should have a list of everything that you need to remember to project in the interview



Quick tips

Positive factors in an interview	Negative factors in an interview
Psychological and behavioral cues	Psychological and behavioral cues
Early arrival	Late arrival
Alert, expressive attitude	Inattentive
Relaxed manner	Withdrawn or condescending
Smiling	Tense, fidgety
Clear voice	Frowning
	Mumbling, timid
Verbal cues	Verbal cues
Sticking to the main point	Changing the subject
Relevant responses	Generalizing or excessive detail
Organized information	Disorganized
Spontaneous replies	Uncalled for humor
Candor	Long and frequent pauses
Appropriate humor	Criticizing others
	Evasive

8.6 LISTENING COMPREHENSION 2: TWO INTERVIEWS

Activity 5

You will hear two interviews. Listen and answer the questions that follow. You may listen to them more than once.

- 1) Choose the correct option according to the recording
 - i) Ms. Wong did not continue her studies at Christ College because
 - a) She didn't want to go in for higher education
 - b) The college didn't offer a course of her choice
 - c) She had started her first job
 - ii) Ms. Wong's German is rusty since
 - a) she has had very few opportunities to use it
 - b) she loves French
 - c) she never understood German anyway
 - iii) The interviewer believes that the candidate likes a fast work pace because
 - a) it is given in her CV
 - b) she says she enjoys brainstorming and long session of project work.
 - c) she seems obsessed with work.
 - iv) David wants to join New Age Corp. because
 - a) he wants a job
 - b) he has just finished college
 - c) he'll get better opportunities at New Age
 - v) David would like to do this in future
 - a) work in the same company
 - b) own a company
 - c) work in any other company
 - vi) What is David's question for the recruiter?
 - a) whether he will get the job.
 - b) whether the company is going to move overseas.
 - c) whether he'll get the chance to work in one of the overseas branches as well.

8.7 WRITING 1: AN ANALYSIS

Activity 6

- 1) Which do you think was a better interview? Why?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

- 2) Look at the final question of the second interview. What would be yours if you were in David's place?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

8.8 WRITING 2: PREPARING MY REFERENCE SHEET

Make your own cheat sheet. Use David's idea and design a cheat sheet that may help you when you go for an interview. Please do remember not to refer to the cheat sheet while answering. It's only a reminder of everything you should say or do.

This is what we would include in our cheat sheet:

The company

Date, day and time

Person we are meeting [if known]

Anything important about the company

 In the last two years

 In the past

What special things have I done that they should know?

 In school

 In college

What makes me a good choice?

Interpersonal skills/ communication skills/ problem solving skills /creative / organized / effective negotiations/ marketing/ administrative skills/ adaptability/ flexibility/ integrity/ any other

Salary expected _____

Questions for the recruiter _____

What am I supposed to carry to the interview?

Copies of the C.V and other documents

8.9 GRAMMAR: MODALS

Modals are auxiliary verbs which show the speaker's attitude or mood. Modals do not take "-s" or "to" after them, nor do they take "do". For e.g.it would be wrong (*) to say

- * We should to phone later
- * I do may follow you
- * I cans understand you

They are used in the following ways

- To express intentions – *will, might* - I'll put them away today.
- To express permission – *can, may* - May I sit down?
- To express ability – *can, could* - We can do this.
- To express obligation – *must, should, ought to, have to* - You must get ready, we'll be late!
- To express prohibition – *mustn't, can't, shouldn't* - You shouldn't party every night.
- To make offers – *will, shall, can* - Will you join the club, please?
- To make suggestions – *should, shall, could* - We could go out tomorrow, don't you think?
- To make requests – *can, could, would, may* - Would you do this for me?

Activity 7

1) Complete the dialogue with the correct modal verbs.

Sales: Hello, Sales Department

Deepak Poddar: Oh, hello (I/speak). i) *Can I Speak* to Mr. Larson, please?

Sales: I'm afraid he isn't here today. (ii /help) you?

Deepak Poddar: (iii/ you give) him an urgent message?

Sales: Sure.

- Deepak Poddar: It's Deepak Poddar from the Chicago office. (iv/ you tell) _____ him that I (v /not/make) _____ it to our meeting in Stockholm because I (vi/ attend) _____ an important marketing meeting that day.
- Sales: Ok, I (vii/ give) _____ him the message.
- Deepak Poddar: That's great and (viii you/make) _____ sure that you tell Mr. Larson that he (ix not/decide) _____ the poster until he's spoken to me.
- Sales: I (x check) _____ with a colleague. (xi you/hold) _____ the line for a moment please? Hello. I'm afraid it was sent out yesterday.
- Deepak Poddar: Oh no!
- Sales: (xii/call) _____ the printers and tell them to stop work on the catalogue until further notice?
- Deepak Poddar Yes, please. And (xiii you/call) _____ me back to confirm that they have stopped work on it? It's really important that they don't print it yet.
- Sales: Sure, no problem. I (xiv/get) _____ back to you in a few minutes.

8.10 LET US SUM UP

The day of the interview is filled with a lot of uncertainties and you will be under pressure to give your best performance. The good thing is like all performances this can work out great with preparation. This unit focuses on last minute details, the right attitude during the interview as well as the recruiters' expectations from your answers.

The vocabulary section highlights the use of verbs and words from the passages while the discussion and writing section provides activities designed to reinforce your preparation. The grammar section reviews modals.

8.11 ANSWERS

Activity 1

- 1)
 - i) a
 - ii) c
 - iii) b
 - iv) True statements – a, c, d
- 2) **The big 10 must dos** for the interview – this is what our list looks like, you should have identified any 10 of these.
 - i) Effective communication skills in English

- ii) Turning not-so-positive attributes into positives
- iii) Doing a SWOT analysis
- iv) Smiling
- v) Staying relaxed, confident
- vi) Remain enthusiastic
- vii) Attentive - alert, maintaining good eye-contact and giving positive non verbal responses
- viii) Positive answers
- ix) Willingness to learn
- x) *Never* let your guard down
- xi) Think on your feet
- xii) Charm them all

- 3) i) resume
- ii) attributes
- iii) chaotic
- iv) nutshell
- v) exhausted
- vi) interpreted

Activity 2

- 1) i) ...there is no previous work record to judge the candidate's workplace skills.
- ii) ...your willingness to learn, ability to get the job done and how you would be as an employee.
- iii) ...most information is verifiable.
- iv) ...it is difficult to say for sure who will be a good employee and who will be a disappointment.
- 2) i) b
- ii) b
- iii) c

Activity 3

- 1) i) worked
- ii) constructed
- iii) consulted
- iv) analyse
- v) arranging
- vi) assisted

- vii) collaborating
- viii) conducted
- ix) delegation
- x) documented
- xi) developed
- xii) edited
- xiii) facilitates
- xiv) implemented
- xv) supported
- xvi) upgrading
- xvii) justify
- xviii) recommend

Audio text for listening comprehension 1

I'm so excited ... actually really nervous too. I had sent my CV to New Age Corp which is the market leader in the animations industry... and just when I thought of giving up – here's the call letter. After the first excitement ... well it was a bad case of jitters. Then my friend... David... he suggested getting a cheat sheet ready. Sounds interesting? ... it is. It has everything about me so that I don't forget, everything I want them to know... you know things like my skills and what I am like... and ... a checklist of the documents I need to carry. I even noted down the clothes and accessories I'm choosing... oh yes... and my answers to the tricky questions. I'm not going to learn them but this ... kind of ... helps me focus on important information... things I can't afford to miss.

In fact David grilled me on my CV.... I didn't know there were so many items to ask about. So I'm going over the details of projects, college, experiences... everything I've put in there.

I already have my transport ready.... reaching late would be suicidal and I've spent the last few days looking over company details ... I must know everything about New Age Corp... that reminds me I must ask them if they are venturing into film production ... that would be exciting.

What else about my preparation ... well let's see... we must be able to use language effectively ... not too formal if the recruiter is not ... what I mean is, we need to match the interviewers' level of formality. And... I'm going to keep my answers simple... you know ... no complicated explanations —and jargon only where necessary. I need to come across as approachable, manageable and skillful. It does sound like getting ready for a show but then being prepared could mean beating all odds and landing that dream job.

Activity 4

- 1) My interest areas include – animations/films, writing, sports/ softball, social activities, debating/public speaking, theatre [*you should have got at least four of these*]

I'm good at – verbal and written communication, interpersonal skills

I can – play softball, interact one to one or in large groups of people, speak two foreign languages

I have – participated in theatre, worked with young people, contributed to newspapers, been junior editor, been apprentice in an animations company

Questions for interviews: If they have ventured into film production

2) i) a ii) c iii) b iv) a

Audio text 2

Candidate 1 Ms. Sheila Wong

Interviewer: Good morning, Ms...?

Candidate: Ms. Wong, Good morning

I: Ms. Wong ... right... how are you?

C: Fine thank you, and you?

I: Oh fine ... um... so...you'd like to join our team, I gather?

C: Yes, I would.

I: That's good. ...We'd like to know something about you ... perhaps you could tell us about your education?

C: Sure, well I left school in 1999 and went on to join a graduate program in media studies. And then... I wanted to do a course in advertising, which my college didn't offer ... at specialization level that is.

I: That would be Christ College, Right?

C: Yes, in Bangalore. Well since they didn't have advertising, I went to New Age Media, which was giving a diploma ... a two-year diploma in advertising. In fact I finished the course this summer.

I: That's interesting.... Tell me what did you enjoy most at school? Which course did you like the most?

C: Ah.... That would have to be ... foreign languages.

I: Foreign languages?

C: Yes we had French and German.

I: And are you fluent in those now?

C: I'm good at French. My German ...mmm...is a bit rusty. You see I used a lot of French in my projects.

I: Did you like those projects... I see quite a few in your CV?

C: Oh yes, it was exciting. I loved working on the projects. For one you... you get a lot of free hand to try out new things. And then... the brainstorming sessions... the long hours at design and storyboarding. It's a...fulfilling experience.

I: I see you like a fast work pace. Tell me ... Do you think you get more creative ideas when you are working alone or does a team help?

C: I think a team helps... a small one though ...discussing and going over concepts is very useful.

I: That's good to hear...

Candidate 2 Mr. David Smith

I: David why don't you tell me something about yourself

C: um... well... I

I: Yes?

C: I'm ...I think I'm serious and... calm.

I: Calm?

C: Yes, I don't panic in a crisis and I... enjoy working with all kinds of people...even those...you know who are difficult to get along with.

I: Ok and where do you see yourself in say... 5 years time?

C: umm... you mean my long term plans? Well I see myself in media and one day I'd rather open my own company.

I: What is it specifically about New Age that attracts you?

C: First of all, I want to start working and I have finished my studies this year, you know. .. I want to get on. More importantly, I've heard a lot about New Age ...it's a big company. I'll have better scope... that's why.

I: Fair enough... before we move on is there something you'd like to know?

C: Yeah. Just one question. If I get the job will I be working overseas as well... in your branches or something?

I: Our staff regularly does six month placement overseas...you're interested in working overseas, are you?

C: Yes. It would be interesting ...I would enjoy that.

I: Well can I ... well I'd like to know...what do you consider your strengths and weaknesses?

C: As I mentioned I don't panic in crisis. And my weakness ... I think I get bored of repetitive workyou know ...sameness

I: Does that imply lack of commitment?....

Activity 5

- 1) i) b
- ii) a
- iii) b
- iv) c
- v) b
- vi) c

Activity 6

This is our assessment of the candidate:

- 1) Ms. Wong begins the interview on a positive note. She speaks without much hesitation, acknowledges interruptions. Her answer to the first question is well organized. She goes on to mention her interest in languages, always a positive accomplishment. Further she gives a very convincing reason for not being good at German. She obviously knows the working of her field and focuses on what would be considered tough situations to convey that she is comfortable with them.
- 2) David's interview starts off with a lot of hesitation on a very predictable question. Further he mentions a quality – calmness – which he definitely doesn't show at that moment. He also doesn't provide any experiences or illustrations to justify his claims. David doesn't volunteer information even though he has been given lots of cues where he can sell his plus points for example, future plans and why this company. He also doesn't seem to be sure of his choices, indefiniteness is a definite drawback. His answer to the question on weakness is badly worded and exposes a weakness that could lose him a possible job. It would have been better to say it with a positive focus "I like to do new things, to innovate".

Activity 7

- 1) ii) Can I help you?
- iii) Could you give him _____?
- iv) Could you tell him _____
- v) I will not make it _____
- vi) I have to attend _____
- vii) I will give him _____
- viii) could you make sure _____
- ix) _____ he must not decide the poster _____
- x) I will check _____
- xi) Will you hold the line _____?
- xii) Should I call the printers _____?
- xiii) could you call me _____
- xiv) I'll get back _____

