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## UNIT 5 INTERVIEWS

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## 5.0 OBJECTIVES

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After studying this unit, you should be able to:

- prepare yourself well for an interview;
- express your ideas effectively at an interview; and
- impress the interview board with your personality.

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## 5.1 INTRODUCTION

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The interview is often called a personality test because it helps the interview board to get an insight into your personality. While a written test shows your grasp of a subject, an interview is meant to bring out your capacity to think and act responsibly in the job you have applied for. Through a purposefully directed, yet relaxed conversation, the members of an interview board examine your mental make-up. They try to judge whether you will be able to get on with colleagues and subordinates. Some of the qualities they try to judge are imagination, reasoning, adjustability, tact, and perseverance, i.e. the ability to carry on doing a job, despite setbacks and difficulties. In short, the Board wants to see if a candidate is well suited for the job that she/he has applied for or not.

English is generally used for most interviews conducted in India because it is the language generally used in administration and is also a link language among educated people from different parts of the country, who may not share a common Indian language. It is, therefore, necessary to improve your communicative skills in English for an interview. You cannot express your ideas effectively or leave the stamp of your personality without using the correct English words and sentences at the right moment.

We shall consider the interviews for jobs in sales, and in professions like medicine, engineering, teaching, management, etc., and shall deal mainly with the candidate's side of the interview.

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## 5.2 PREPARATION FOR AN INTERVIEW

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We would assume that you have applied for a particular job and while writing your resume you had played it SAFE, i.e. you have made your job application:

Simple

Appropriate

Functional and

Economical (Hanks and Belliston, 1976)

You have already read how good resumes are written in your writing skills block. We would, however, like to repeat here that your resume tells your potential employers who you are, the type of job you are looking for and your qualifications. A resume is a concise, factual presentation of your educational and employment history.

Preparation is the first step towards success at an interview. Even if you are confident and experienced, you can improve your chances or score higher by being mentally ready before stepping into the interview room and taking a seat.

First, if you are a candidate, you must do your homework on the subject matter well. For instance, try to relate what you have learnt from books to your own previous experience in the line, if possible. For instance, if you have worked as a staff nurse, imagine how you could have improved upon your performance or how you would work on the same job in a bigger hospital. If you are applying for your first job, you must think of the situations that may arise on this job. You can think of how you will do your best in the light of what you have read in books. Remember that at the interview you may be given a practical problem to solve. You will impress the board if you answer directly.

You must also remember that there are a number of areas in nursing and that you have to select the type of nursing you would like to do and are best suited for. Although often as a fresh graduate you would work as a staff nurse, you can always later choose from some of these areas, viz.

Cardiology	Pediatrics	Oncology
Neurology	Orthopedic	Psychiatry

You can yourself supplement this list and spend a little time finding out why you would like to work in any one of these special areas.

Besides preparing on the specific subject itself, you must give some attention to your dress and appearance, because these reflect a person's personality. In fact, it is said that the first impression is sometimes the last impression, and if you fail to make the right impact in the beginning, you are less likely to impress the Interview Board later. The person who is dressed in a slovenly manner gives the impression that he/she is careless about work in general. Nobody would like a prospective employee to do his/her work in a slovenly fashion! At the same time, you shouldn't be so colourfully dressed as to draw too much attention to your clothes.

Your preparation is incomplete without a general overview of current affairs. It is customary to ask candidates questions on events that are happening around them. At some interviews, the interview board would like to know if the candidate is fully aware of trends in culture, politics, economy, etc. and especially medicine. Therefore, you must show that, besides a thorough knowledge of your own field, you also have wider interests.

**Check Your Progress 1**

Say which of these suggestions for the preparation of an interview are helpful and useful.

- a) The well-prepared candidate is one who wears the best suit for an interview.
- b) The candidate who reads the newspapers and periodical magazines and keeps abreast of the times impresses the board more than the one who is only well-versed in his/her own subject.
- c) Before the interview, one should make a list of situations that are likely to arise in the job one has applied for and be mentally prepared to tackle them.
- d) One does not have to worry too much about one's general appearance.
- e) The best time to begin preparation for an interview is a day or two before, so that everything one reads is fresh for the interview.

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### 5.3 UNFOLDING THE PERSONALITY: SPECIMEN INTERVIEWS

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Here is part of an interview for a Sales Officer's job. Read it carefully and find out how you can convey your point of view without being arrogant.

Sailash Kumar, aged 28, enters the interview room dressed in a pleasant light blue suit with a matching blue striped tie. His shoes are polished and his general appearance is neat and proper. He walks without affectation, addresses the Chairman and says,

Sailash Kumar: Good Morning sir.

Chairman: Good morning. Please sit down.

(Skimming through the bio-data sheet in front of him)

Mr. Kumar, where are you working at present?

Sailash Kumar: At Sonics Ltd., Jaipur, and sir.

Chairman: What is the nature of your work there?

Sailash Kumar: I have to do everything to promote sales, from advertising through mass media to obtaining orders from retailers.

Chairman: What are the products you deal in?

Sailash Kumar: Mainly electronic goods — tape-recorders, VCRs, VCPs, etc.

Chairman: How long have you been working there?

Sailash Kumar: Ever since the firm was founded. This is my third year, sir.

Another member: Why do you wish to change your job?

Sailash Kumar: Sir, there are better job prospects in this company. You have now entered the field of computers, too. And my first love was really computers.

Second member: What immediate applications do you foresee for computers in our country?

Sailash Kumar: At present, the government is careful about not being over-ambitious in the use of computers. This is quite natural when we already have the problem of unemployment. But a good computer climate is being built up, especially where repetitive work is involved in factories, and where an instant retrieval system is required to maintain records in offices.

Third member: From your experience of sales, what do you think counts most in gaining success in this line?

Sailash Kumar: First and foremost, it's good advertising. The wider the coverage, the greater the chance of getting orders. Secondly, assurance of quality. The reputation of the company is, in fact, established in its first few years.

Chairman: But what about personal contacts? An officer in a high position can through personal influence secure a large order for the company.

Sailash Kumar: Yes. That is an important factor, too. But an entrepreneur who depends entirely on this, stands the chance of losing his credibility when the patron is removed from his position of power.

#### **Vocabulary**

*Affectation*: Behaviour which is not one's natural manner

*Promote*: Increase (sales)

*Mass media* : The means of giving news and opinions to large numbers of people; for example, radio and television

*Retailers*: Those who sell things to customers for their own use and not for resale

*Prospects* : Chances (of success)

*Foresee* : See ahead of time

*Climate* : The general temper of people

*Repetitive* : Done again and again

*Retrieval system* : A method of finding stored information when it is needed

*Entrepreneur* : One who plans for a business and gets it going

*Credibility* : Being trustworthy

*Patron* : One who supports and encourages a company

Let's analyse the part of the interview you have read above. The following facts show the candidate's suitability for the post of Sales Officer.

- i) His dress and appearance are neat and proper and this gives the first impression of a man who is careful about his dress and appearance. Such a man will be methodical in most things he does.
- ii) He greets the Chairman of the board and sits down only when he is asked.
- iii) He describes his present job specifically — to 'promote sales through mass media' and 'obtaining orders from retailers'.
- iv) His reason for wanting to leave the present job is candid. His first love is computers and he has better job prospects here.
- v) He knows the salient facts about computer applications in India but is probably over-enthusiastic to display his knowledge. He was not asked about the government's attitude towards computers.
- vi) His ideas about success in sales are convincing and based on long-term values. He thinks advertising and 'promise of good quality' will ensure success on a long-term basis, individual contacts and patronage will only safeguard the interests of the company for a short time.

**Check Your Progress 2**

- 1) a) Give the meanings of these words used in the conversation:  
'promote' .....  
'prospects' .....
- b) Explain the metaphorical use of 'climate' in 'computer climate'.  
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- c) 'The wider the coverage, the greater the chances of winning orders.' Another sentence like this would be 'The greater the demand for goods, the higher the prices.' Explain this idea with another related sentence.  
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- 2) Here's a conversation at an interview for the post of a doctor at a village hospital. Read it carefully and answer the questions that follow.

Randhir Patel is a fresh MBBS and is seeking his job. He is a young man of 29.

'May I come in, Sir?'

'Yes, please?'

'Good morning. Sit down, Mr. Patel. Where did you do your MBBS?'

'At Patna Medical College, sir.'

'Do you have any experience?'

'None, except as an intern.'

'You know this is a post for a doctor at a Govt. village hospital.'

'Yes, sir.'

'You know conditions in a village may not be quite favorable for a young city-bred person like you. No entertainment, except your TV set and the incessant lowing of cows.?'

'Yes, sir. I'm aware of all the drawbacks there. I'd like to take up the challenge, anyway.'

'You call it a challenge. Why?'

'Because it is difficult to explain things to illiterate villagers and convince them that a certain way of living is good for them.'

'Give us some concrete examples of difficulties in communication you may encounter.'

'Well, for instance, villagers constantly ignore advice about the need for personal hygiene. Also, as a doctor, it will be my duty to propagate family planning. Here, I would inevitably face resistance. The illiterate villagers just don't want to give up their traditional ways of thinking.'

'What about the salary being offered?'

'It is a bit on the lower side, but I think I can manage.'

'There won't be much scope for additional private earnings.'

'I am quite aware of that, sir.'

'Do you know what are some of the common diseases prevalent in the village where you're going?'

'Sir, I haven't yet had time to acquaint myself with these details. But I assure you.....'

'They'll do. You may go.'

### **Vocabulary**

*Intern* : A junior doctor completing hospital training and living in the hospital

*City-bred*: Brought up in a city

*Incessant*: Never stopping

*Lowing* : The noise made by cows

*Illiterate* : Unable to read and write

*Encounter* : Meet; be faced by (a difficulty)

*Hygiene* : Cleanliness, generally

*Propagate* : To spread and influence a great number of people

*Inevitably* : (adv. from inevitable) Which cannot be prevented from happening

*Resistance* : Opposition

*Prevalent* : Existing commonly

Speaking Skills

- a) A doctor’s job at a village is more difficult than in a town because:
  - i) There are few conveniences and comforts of life in a village.
  - ii) Villagers suffer from more complex types of diseases.
  - iii) Villagers are generally illiterate and it is difficult to get them to follow any advice.
- b) Randhir Patel wants to work in a village hospital because:
  - i) He has no other job at present.
  - ii) He likes to do something challenging.
  - iii) He is fond of a quiet, peaceful life.
- 3) Tick the qualities listed here, which apply to Randhir Patel. Then judging from the score say whether you would consider him suitable for the job, if you were on the interview board.
  - a) Courteous
  - b) Well-informed about the people he is going to work for.
  - c) Understands the mental make-up of the villagers in general.
  - d) Honest about his shortcomings.
  - e) Shows he will be understanding and patient with the village folk and will be able to win them over.
  - f) Doesn’t want any financial benefits at all.

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- 4) a) ‘Conditions in a village may not be quite favourable for a young city-bred person.’ What meaning would the sentence have if someone said: ‘Conditions in a village will be quite unfavourable....?’  
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- b) ‘(the salary) is a bit on the lower side, but I think I can manage.’ How would the meaning change if he said. ‘The salary is very low. But I’ll have to manage somehow.’  
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Here’s a conversation at an interview for the post of an engineer. It’s an example of how one should not behave at an interview. Read carefully and notice the points about appearance, dress, and manner.

Mr. Natwar, a tall man in his thirties, with unkempt hair is dressed in a loud three-piece suit. A red-spotted tie dangles from his neck. Unbecoming horn-rimmed spectacles are perched on the bridge of his nose. There is an unmistakable limp in his gait. Without greeting the members of the board, he draws a chair to himself and seats himself with the air of a man who is meeting his equals. He peers over his spectacles at the members as if to say ‘Well? What have you to ask?’

Chairman (smiles to himself): Mr. Natwar, where are you working at present?

Natwar: Bridgelinks India Ltd., I’m the Executive Engineer there. My work is to look after the making of bridges on rivers. I built the bridge over the Damodar at Chas.

Chairman: Yes. Why do you wish to leave the Company?

Natwar: The present Chief Engineer there is a stick-in-the-mud. He won’t listen to all the wonderful ideas I’ve got.

Chairman: Don't you think he might have better ideas as the Chief Engineer?

Natwar: No. How can he? After all he's not as qualified as I am. He got to the top by getting the support of some influential people. I have a degree in engineering from America.

Second member: Mr. Natwar, I notice you have some difficulty in walking. Any accident or?

Natwar (Visibly nervous) : That is there from birth. But why do you ask personal questions? That is not the purpose of this interview.

Chairman: We know exactly what we should ask.

Natwar: Well! (Throws his hands up in disgust)

Third member: Mr. Natwar, suppose you have a hand in assigning the construction of a bridge to a contractor. It has to be built within a very short period because an important minister will shortly be passing that way. Only one contractor is ready to do the job that soon. You know he is unreliable. He is notorious for not using the right proportion of sand and cement in concrete. Will you give him the contract?

Natwar: Yes. Why not? What is there in it? After all the work will be done. The end justifies the means.

Chairman: They'll do. You can go now.

Natwar gets up abruptly without so much as smiling, and goes awkwardly out of the room. He carries away a pencil which he had picked from the table (to fiddle with).

### **Vocabulary**

*Stick-in-the-mud* : A person who will not change or accept new things.

*The end justifies the means*: A bad action can be allowed if the result is good.

It is obvious that for various reasons Mr. Natwar is the last choice for the post. But now let's present Mr. Natwar in a different light. After reading the conversation at this second interview you should be in a position to compare the two.

Mr. Natwar is dressed in a simple, yet clean and well pressed suit and a striped tie. He wears spectacles which make him look somewhat scholarly. With unassuming manner and gait, he walks up to the members.

Natwar: Good morning, sir (smiles)

Chairman: Good morning. Please sit down. Er... Where are you working, Mr. Natwar?

Natwar: At Bridgelinks India Ltd., sir.

Chairman: What is your designation and the nature of your work there?

Natwar: I've helped in the construction of the Damodar Bridge at Chas.

Chairman: You seem to be doing rather well there. Why do you want to leave.

Natwar: Er. The present Chief Engineer is a good old man, but he won't accept new ideas in bridge building. He belongs to the old tradition, but in fact so much research has gone into this field, so I thought I'd take a break.

Second member: We notice you have difficulty in walking. Was it an accident?

Natwar: No. It's a manufacturing defect, sir. (The members of the board have a laugh at this quip!)

Third member: Suppose you are in-charge of a bridge which has to be built in a very short span of time because a minister will shortly be passing that way. There's only one contractor who's ready to undertake the task, but you know he's dishonest and does not use the right proportion of sand and cement in concrete. Will you give him the contract?

Natwar: Certainly not. I would rather give up my job instead.

**Vocabulary**

*Tradition* : The body of principles, beliefs, practices, etc. passed down from the past to the present

*Break* : A chance (to make things better)

*Quip*: A remark meant to sound clever

**Check Your Progress 3**

- 1) Compare the candidates in the two interviews given above and give examples from the texts to show how they create quite different impressions on the interviewers.

Features	Candidate in Interview 1	Candidate in Interview 2
Appearance — dress, manner etc.		
Attitude to work		
Attitude to others		
Self-estimate		

- 2) The extracts given below are from an interview for the post of a Personal Assistant. Make the statements more polite. (Example: ‘My present boss has got no common sense, really.’)

Improved version: (I find it difficult to understand my present employer. He just can’t decide about the right thing to do.)

- a) The old man, my father, wants me to aim at higher things, some of which are impossible to achieve.

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- b) Do you think I’m fool? I understand that a P.A. has to keep office matters confidential.

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- 3) Convey the following information in a modest way:

(Example: My present job is far below my real competence.

Improved version: I feel I can take up greater challenges than are offered in my present job.)

My present pay is ridiculous! The company doesn't recognize my real worth.

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Candidates for an interview may have some wrong notions. One of them is that they are going to a battle where their wits will be matched against others. That is, they fear the five or six members of the Board will be waiting to prove that the interviewee is a big fool. Another wrong idea is that the interview will be the turning point in their career, it will make or mar them. All these fears are bound to unnerve them unnecessarily and force them to adopt a defensive stance. They may thus lose their chance without showing their real competence.

A lesson may be learnt from the lives of many successful men in history. In fact you might use their attitude as an auto-suggestion to calm yourself. First, the members of the board are human beings just like you and are prone to emotional changes. Even the most hostile among them can be won over by patient and convincing talk.

Secondly, success at an interview is certainly important, because it means a job with a salary, but one does not have to be nervous and anxious about it.

Let us read the interview given below and answer the questions that follow.

Mrs. Beena Menon in her early thirties is dressed in a sober sari. She looks relaxed and confident.

'Good afternoon sir'

'Please sit down Mrs. Menon.'

'Er... Where did you do your training from.'

'From the Govt. Medical College, Coimbatore.'

'Where are you working at present?'

'At Sarvodaya Hospital , Meerut.'

'How long have you been working there?'

'For the past two years.'

'Now why do you wish to change your present job?'

'This hospital is definitely bigger than where I am working at present and I feel confident that I will be able to use my present experience in a better manner.'

'In your application you have mentioned, that you would like to work as a senior nurse in the pediatric department. Is there any reason for it.'

'Yes. I have worked for the last many months in the Pediatric department and I would like to continue in the same department.'

'What had been your responsibilities?'

'Taking vital signs, weighing patients, general patient care, charting, technical procedures.'

'And how long would it take you to join us if we offer you a position here?'

'I have to give a months notice to my present employers. So it will be sometime after that.'

'Okay thank you Mrs. Menon.'

'Thank you.'

**Check Your Progress 4**

- 1) The interview board already has Mrs. Menon's bio-data and work experience in front of them. Yet they ask her questions on these. Why ?

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- 2) Why do you think Mrs. Menon wants to change her job now ?

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- 3) What reason does Mrs. Menon give to choose a particular area in her interview ?

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**5.4 LET US SUM UP**

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In this unit, you have been made aware of the following:

- An interview Board tests whether you have the proper qualities for the job.
- In order to perform well at an interview, you should know your subject matter well and be mentally prepared.
- In order to make a good impression in the very beginning, you should be properly dressed when you appear before an interview board.
- Your answers to questions should be to the point. They should be said in a convincing manner.
- You should have a relaxed manner at the interview, so that you can think clearly and convince the Interview Board of your competence.

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**5.5 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

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**Check Your Progress 1**

b), c)

**Check Your Progress 2**

- 1) a) Promote: To advance (someone) in position  
Prospects: Expectations of wealth, social position, etc.
- b) 'Climate' refers to the average weather conditions at a particular place. In 'computer climate' the meaning of 'climate' has been extended to refer to the general temper or opinions of the people in respect of the use of computers.
- c) Another sentence is:  
The wider the application of the computer in industry, the greater the efficiency.
- 2) a) iii  
b) ii

- 3) a), b), c), d). Yes, I would consider him suitable.
- 4) a) The meaning will be that the conditions in the village will not help him at all in his work as a doctor.
- b) The changed sentence means that the speaker will accept the salary because there is no other alternative.

### Check Your Progress 3

1) Features	Candidate in Interview 1	Candidate in Interview 2
Appearance— dress, manner, etc.	unkempt hair; 3-piece suit of dazzling colour; red-spotted tie; doesn't greet the Board; sits down without being asked; carries away a pencil after the interview Impression: careless gives too much importance to clothing; bad-mannered.	Simple, yet clean and well pressed suit; looks scholarly; unassuming manner; greets the Chairman of the Board Impression: does not believe in mere show; serious about his work.
Attitude to work	'The end justifies the means' Impression: lacking in moral values	'I would rather give up my job instead.' Impression: man of integrity.
Attitude to others	'The present Chief Engineer is a stick-in-the-mud.' 'But why do you ask personal questions?'  Impression: has a poor estimate of his superiors; rude to the members of the Board; lacks sense of humour	'the present Chief Engineer is a good old man, but he won't accept new ideas in bridge building'. 'It's manufacturing defect, sir.' Impression: has no personal grouse against the Chief Engineer, but just points out his unwillingness to accept new ideas; has a sense of humour and doesn't mind being asked about his physical defects.
Self-estimate	'The bridge over the Damodar at Chas was built by me.' 'He won't listen to all the wonderful ideas I've got. After all he's not as qualified as I am.' Impression: conceited	'I've helped in the construction of the Damodar Bridge of Ghas 'I thought I'd take a break.....' Impression: modest and straightforward.

- 2) a) My father wants me to aim at higher things. I know it's for my own benefit, but I feel some of these things are not possible to achieve.
- b) Sir, I have always tried to understand my duties properly and I know that I have to keep office matters confidential.
- 3) I feel my present pay is too low. I've tried to do my best in my present job and have shown good results.

### Check Your Progress 4

- 1) It is to examine whether what she says is correct and tallies with her bio-data in the application and to see whether she can express herself properly.
- 2) Because she wants to do something more challenging.
- 3) For the last few months she had worked in the Pediatric Department and would now like to take up a senior position so that she can have the benefit of her experience in the new job.