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# UNIT 16 WRITING REPORTS-3

## REPORTING INTERVIEWS

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### 16.0 OBJECTIVES

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In this unit we shall show you how to conduct an interview and how to report it. After completing the unit, you will be able to write reports on the interviews you conduct.

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### 16.1 INTRODUCTION

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An interview is usually a meeting where a person is asked questions by others to decide whether he can enter a university or take up a job. Another kind of interview is a meeting between an important person and others who want to know about his activities and point of view. In this unit we shall discuss the second type of interview and how it can be reported. This kind of interview is an exercise in personal relationship — a one-to-one interplay of mind and personality between the person being interviewed and the one asking the questions.

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### 16.2 DIFFERENT STAGES IN CONDUCTING AN INTERVIEW

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#### Stage 1

After you identify the person you wish to interview, you have to get in touch with him and fix an appointment. The key to successful interview is good preparation. Find out in advance the relevant biographical facts about the person you have to interview so that you may base some of the questions on them.

Now you should write down a lot of questions to ask during the interview. These questions provide a framework for the interview, but they need not be asked in a rigid sequence. Often it is more effective to bring them in casually as the conversation flows. Remember that interviews are human interactions, not questionnaire exercises. So change your questions or discard some of them if the situation requires it. This preparation helps you in many ways. You know what to ask and you have time to think how best you can ask the questions. Besides you can convince the interviewee that you are interested in him and in the subject you are discussing by putting intelligent questions.

#### Stage 2

When the interview begins it is better if you devote the first few minutes to pleasantries. After developing rapport with the interviewee, you should proceed with your questions. Ask a few general questions first. Do not ask your difficult questions in the beginning. If you have any embarrassing questions, bring them into the conversation when the mood is fairly relaxed.

A fundamental rule of interviewing is to let the interviewee talk. Do not interrupt once the conversational tap has been turned on. But the interviewee should know that you are really interested in what he is saying. Growth and continuity in an interview arise from conversation. Transitions should occur naturally and logically during the discussion — one answer suggesting another question.

### Stage 3

The end of an interview is also as important as the beginning. The end should be smooth and meaningful. You should not take more time than you are given unless you feel that the interviewee is also keen on continuing the meeting. Just before you wind up, you should check your notes and ask for clarifications, if you have any doubts. You should ask for copies of any documents that have been mentioned during the interview.

While taking notes, listen for key phrases that are significant and take them down in full. It is better to use a tape-recorder, but do not depend on it excessively.

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## 16.3 REPORTING AN INTERVIEW

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Before starting to write the report of an interview, you should examine your notes and ask yourself : "What has this person said that is interesting and significant?" After finding the most significant part of his statements, you should make it the leading part of your report. Your impressions of the interviewee's personality should be worked in as the report develops, but this should not be allowed to obscure the main theme.

After writing the leading portion, you have to decide how to proceed to the substance of the interview and plan the main body of the report. If you want to make your report purely informative, you can write the body of the report in a question-and-answer form. You can add explanatory passages to provide an element of continuity. Or you may develop the body of the report by switching back and forth while writing about the various points. In your reports use direct quotations that will tell the reader what the interviewee wishes to convey and also those that illuminate his personality. You may give a suitable title to your report.

### Examples of Reports

#### Example 1

Here is a report of an interview (adapted from a report published in *The Times of India*, 11th July, 1987).

#### Dancing To Her Own Tune

Uma Sharma has been trained in Kathak, Kathakali, Bharata Natyam and Manipuri. Trained both in the Lucknow and Jaipur gharanas of Kathak, under Guru Sunder Prasad and Pandit Shambhu Maharaj, she has been very particular about not neglecting either the Hindu element or the Muslim element in her Kathak compositions. Moreover, she has done dance compositions based on the poetic works of writers like Kalidasa, Tulsidas and Surdas as well as those of writers like Ghalib, Iqbal and Faiz.

Uma Sharma has been described as wayward, impulsive, tempestuous, temperamental and credulous. Like many, she claims to be the maligned, the vanquished, who has, all the same, made it despite all odds.

Cautiously outspoken, she reflected at length about her contribution to dance and her attitude towards the world of dance. Her speech is devoid of affectation. As an adept in Kathak, Uma Sharma's views on dance are interesting.

**Q.** Do you follow the traditional approach to Kathak? Don't you try to experiment and innovate?

**A.** I try to experiment with everything I do. I like to go very deep into the theme I am doing and am very particular about creating the right setting, environment, and costumes. If it is a historical event, I try to read as much as possible. My reading always affects my performance favourably. I remember doing 'Anarkali' for the Bharatiya Kala Kendra. I read a lot about Mughal history but the challenge was to keep within the framework of Kathak.

I am constantly trying to innovate and experiment. More recently, I have tried to know what lies in the intricacies of Spanish Flamenco. I want to take two weeks' vacation in September and spend it in Spain. As I will participate in the Madrid Festival along with Mario Maya — Spain's topmost Flamenco dancer — I am confident that I will learn a lot about Flamenco. I would also like to spend some time on a study of gypsies' dances.

**Q** People say that your high connections have led to your success. What are your comments?

**A** People who make such accusations are just against me. Over the years my enemies have increased, which is inevitable when one does good work. When I was awarded the Padma Shri there was a lot of talk about my contacts though I was not even aware that I was getting it. Anyway, the majority of my admirers don't accept such talk. So I am not interested in all that.

And then if I was so well connected, why have I been ignored by the ICCR and the two Festivals of India?

**Q** What is your attitude towards the present day critics?

**A** Some critics have been spreading vicious rumours about me that I have put on weight and that my institution is a monolithic structure where nothing is taught. Their illusions will be shattered if they visit my institute and see the work I am doing. Most critics today write about the great masters with such flippancy that it is surprising. Criticism involves a lot of thought. My advice to present day critics is that they must try to understand the art they review.

**Q** What are your views on 'Guru-Shishya Parampara'?

**A** In my view the 'Guru-Shishya Parampara' is almost dead today though I try my level best to carry on the tradition in my school. I don't take a fee or even ask my students for a glass of water. All I ask them is to do 'Pranam' to their Guru and do hard work every day. I know that the attitude of the students towards their gurus has changed. I can recall that as a student I had great respect for my teachers. Today I cannot expect this from my students. The 'Seva Bhavana' is just not there.

### Glossary

'wayward : changeable

im'pulsive : having a tendency to act suddenly without thinking about the suitability of one's acts

tem'pestuous : violent

,tempera'mental : having frequent changes of temper

'credulous : too willing to believe

'vanquished : conquered, defeated completely

'adept : expert

'flippancy : the quality of being disrespectful about serious subjects

### Self-check Exercise 1

Read the passage given above and answer the following :

1 What are the main schools of Indian classical dance?

.....  
 .....

2 Which school of Indian classical dance does Uma Sharma mainly represent?

.....

3 Who were her gurus?

.....  
 .....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

[illegible]

.....

.....

.....

**After interviewing a distinguished teacher, write a report of the interview. You may ask the teacher why he took up the teaching profession, and his opinion about the usefulness of the courses he is teaching. Give some biographical details also.**

[illegible]

## Example 2

The following report of an interview with former President Gerald Ford by an Associated Press reporter illustrates another way of reporting an interview (Quoted in Warren K. Agee : *Reporting and Writing the News*, Harper and Row Publishers, New York, 1963).

Former President Ford says President Reagan is "naive" if he thinks budget cuts will be easier than tax cuts to sell Congress.

And because of that, Reagan should hold off on the last two years of his three-year, 30 per cent tax cut programme until there is "visible evidence" Congress will reduce the growth of federal spending, Ford says.

In an interview with the Associated Press at his home in the California desert, Ford said efforts to reduce federal spending always tried to generate formidable coalitions which band together to protect their own appropriations.

"My own experience in Congress would lead me to the conclusion that the House and Senate would be more amenable to a reduction in taxes than they will be to an effort to reduce expenditures."

### Glossary

na'ive/na'i:v/ : having or showing no experience

'formidable : causing anxiety and fear

ap,propri'ation : something, especially money, set aside for a particular purpose

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## 16.4 PUNCTUATION : THE APOSTROPHE

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A writer of reports should be careful about punctuation. In this section, we shall discuss the use of the apostrophe.

Apostrophe is the sign(') used in writing

- i) before or after *s* to show possession.

### Examples

Jawahar's shirt

Children's clothes

Women's clothes

a boys' school (apostrophe placed after the plural ending - *s*)

- ii) to show that one or more letters or figures have been left out of a word or figure.

### Examples

don't for *do not*

'87 for 1987

- iii) before *s* to show the plurals of letters and figures

### Examples

There are two t's in *letters*.

Your s's look like 8's.

### Self-check Exercise 3

Use apostrophes where necessary.

- 1 You better mind your ps and qs when the Professor of English is here.
- 2 You ys and js are similar.
- 3 Youre absolutely right.
- 4 Alls well that ends well.
- 5 After a moments thought he shook his head.
- 6 I wonder if your parents neighbours will come.
- 7 Why dont you join the Book Lovers Club?
- 8 I will tell you whatll happen in a years time.

### Self-check Exercise 4

Rewrite the following phrases using the possessive forms of nouns :

- 1 the wings of the butterfly.

.....

- 2 the gold rings of the princess.

.....

- 3 hesitation of three seconds.

.....

- 4 fashions of girls.

.....

- 5 the response of the audience.

.....

- 6 the cries of the women.

.....

- 7 the whisper of the breeze.

.....

- 8 the ripples of the streams.

.....

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## 16.5 USAGE : WORD STUDY

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In the first report given in section 16.3 we used the following words :

credulous, adept, affect, lie, take, confident, majority, accept, illusion, advice.

These words are often confused with some other words which appear to be similar. In this section we shall help you to distinguish between the following pairs of words :

Accept, Except  
Adapt, Adept  
Advice, Advise  
Affect, Effect  
Allusion, Illusion  
Bring, Take  
Confidant, Confident  
Credible, Credulous  
Lay, Lie  
Majority, Plurality

### i) Accept, Except

Ac'cept is a verb; it means (i) 'to take something offered', e.g., I cannot accept your gift. (ii) 'to believe or admit', e.g., I accept your reasons for being late.

Ex'cept, as a verb, means 'to leave out, exclude', e.g., You have to follow the rules I can except no one.

**Ex cept**, as a preposition, means 'excluding, deliberately omitting.' e.g., Everyone went to the meeting except you.

ii) **Adapt, Adept**

**A 'dapt** is a verb meaning 'to make suitable for new needs, different conditions, etc.' e.g., He had to adapt himself to the new surroundings.

**'Adept** as a noun means 'a person who is highly skilled in something,' e.g., She is an adept in the art of cooking.

**'Adept** as an adjective means 'highly skilled'.

iii) **Advice, Advise**

**Ad 'vice** is a noun meaning 'opinion given by one person to another on how the other person should act.' e.g., I asked the doctor for his advice.

**Ad 'vise** is a verb meaning 'to tell somebody what one thinks should be done.' e.g., I advise you not to go there now.

iv) **Affect, Effect**

**Af'fect** is a verb. It means (i) 'to cause a change in' e.g., The weather affected her health, (ii) 'to pretend to feel', e.g., He affected illness so that he could avoid going to work.

**Ef'fect**, as a noun, means 'a result', e.g., The weather had an effect upon her health.

**Ef'fect**, as a verb, means 'to cause or bring about', e.g., She effected her escape.

v) **Allusion, Illusion**

**Al'lusion** means 'an indirect or implied reference', e.g., He made an allusion to the lack of discipline in this country.

**Il'lusion** refers 'to the condition of seeing things wrongly', e.g., Not only magicians, but ordinary people also create illusions.

vi) **Bring, Take**

**Bring** means 'to come with'. e.g., Bring the book when you come here.

**Take** has a number of meanings : for example

i) to get possession of; e.g., The enemy forces have taken the airport.

ii) to carry from one place to another, e.g., Take the book when you go home.

iii) to have, e.g., I want to take a vacation.

vii) **Confidant, Confident**

**'Confidant** (feminine: confidante) is a noun. It means 'a person to whom one tells one's secrets.' e.g., She is my confidante in the matter.

**Confident** is an adjective. It means 'feeling confidence, believing in one's ability.' e.g., He spoke in a confident voice. I'm confident I can do it.

viii) **Credible, Credulous**

**'Credible** means 'deserving or worthy of belief.' e.g., A credible news report.

**'Credulous** means 'too willing to believe, especially without proof.' e.g., She is credulous; she believes everything.

ix) **Lay, Lie**

**Lay** is a transitive verb and takes a direct object. e.g., Lay it on the table. (lay, laid, laid).

**Lie** is an intransitive verb and does not take an object. e.g., My shirt was lying on the floor. (lie, lay, lain).

x) **Majority, Plurality**

**Maj'ority** means 'the greater number' e.g., The majority of doctors believe that smoking is harmful to health.

**Plu'rality** means 'the largest number of votes in an election, especially when less than a majority' e.g., He won a plurality of votes, but not a majority.

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## 16.6 LET US SUM UP

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An interview is purposeful conversation. There are different stages in conducting an interview.

(i) Find out the biographical facts about the person you wish to interview and prepare a list of questions to ask. (ii) Create a pleasant atmosphere at the beginning of the interview and ask your difficult question when the mood is relaxed. (iii) Check your notes and clarify your doubts before you wind up.

In your report, put the important points in the leading paragraph. You can use direct quotations. You can also add biographical details and explanatory passages. You may give a title to your report.

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## 16.7 KEY WORDS

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**a 'postrophe** : the sign (') used in writing to show that one or more letters or figures have been left out of a word or figure (as in *don't*)

**'interview** (noun) : a meeting where a person is asked questions by another

**,punctu'ation** : the division of written matter into sentences, phrases, etc. by means of signs such as a comma, a full stop, a question mark, a semi-colon, a hyphen, etc.

**re'port** : an account of events, experiences, etc.

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## 16.8 SUGGESTED READING

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A daily newspaper.

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## 16.9 ANSWERS TO SELF-CHECK EXERCISES

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### Exercise 1

- 1 Kathak, Kathakali, Kuchipudi, Bharata Natyam, and Manipuri.
- 2 Kathak.
- 3 Guru Sunder Prasad and Pandit Shambhu Maharaj.
- 4 She thinks that the 'Guru-Shishya Parampara' is almost extinct now. But she wants to continue it at her institution.
- 5 The reporter has mentioned the names of Uma Sharma's guru and has written about her interest in comparative studies of various types of dances. There are a few comments on her temperament.
- 6 The tough question was about her high connections. It was asked in the middle.

### Exercise 3

- |            |                            |
|------------|----------------------------|
| 1 p's, q's | 5 moment's                 |
| 2 y's, j's | 6 parents' neighbours      |
| 3 You're   | 7 don't, Book Lovers' Club |
| 4 All's    | 8 what'll, year's          |

### Exercise 4

- |                             |                           |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1 the butterfly's wings     | 5 the audience's response |
| 2 the princess's gold rings | 6 the women's cries       |
| 3 three seconds' hesitation | 7 the breeze's whisper    |
| 4 girls' fashions           | 8 the streams' ripples    |