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## UNIT 2: FACING INTERVIEWS

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### 2.0 OBJECTIVES

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In this unit we will tell you what we mean by ‘interview’, what normally its structure is, and what skills and strategies you need in order to face an interview successfully and stand out from others. We will also give you examples of some competencies, skills and knowledge that are common across jobs and that companies often require from their employees. We will also suggest some tips on how to face interviews particularly on how to organize your thoughts and ideas.

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### 2.1 WARM UP

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#### Activity 1

Answer the following questions:

- 1 Have you ever faced an interview? When and why and with what result?
- 2 How did you prepare for this interview?
- 3 Did you face any difficulty in facing this interview? What was the difficulty?
- 4 Was this interview structured? If so how? Give examples to describe the different stages of this interview.

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### 2.2 READING COMPREHENSION

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Read the text given below and answer the questions that follow. (Read fast; do not stop at words/phrases you do not understand. Keep reading and guessing the meanings of difficult words/phrases from their shape, form, and context and try to get the gist of what the writer has to say).

- 1 It should be clear to you by now that an interview is a sort of oral test (whether face to face or on telephone) arranged to screen candidates and select the best possible ones. In almost all cases before an interview is held, the interviewer advertises his/her needs and requirements mentioning duties and responsibilities of the prospective candidates, qualifications, skills and competencies both essential and preferred required of the applicant and draws up an application format to elicit necessary information from the applicants. Only those applicants who meet these requirements are then short-listed for an oral interview to select the most suitable one(s) for the job. Sometimes the interview can be preceded by a written test as the first stage of screening and elimination.

- 2 Interview as a kind of oral test is a structured event. A well-designed interview is a problem solving exercise and there are rules, or unwritten conventions, of carrying out this event. Like a dialogue or conversation, it has a beginning, middle and an end and we can see that there are ways of opening an interview, continuing it, foreclosing and closing this process which both the interviewer and the interviewee has to follow.
- 3 Normally there is only one interviewee at a time but there can be one or more interviewers seated opposite the candidate with a table in between. All the members of the interview board have a copy of the resume of each of the candidates called for the interview. The event is chaired by the chairperson or by his/her nominee in his/her absence.
- 4 Generally all interviews run through four stages. Stage 1 is warming up or making the candidate feel relaxed. Stage 2 tests the candidate's level of suitability. Stage 3 tests the upper limit of the candidate after which it begins to wind down before closing the interview in Stage 4.
- 5 The candidate is ushered in, and after the initial formalities – welcoming, greetings, and seating – the interaction begins. Generally it is the chairperson or his nominee who begins the interview by asking for general personal information that, in fact, is already given in the application form. Certain questions may also be put to make the candidate feel at ease. For example, if the candidate is from another town or city, the questions can be:

When did you arrive here?

Did you have a nice journey? and so on

The aim of these initial exchanges is to help the candidate settle comfortably and feel relaxed.

- 6 Once the candidate is introduced and settled, stages 2 and 3 begin with the Chairperson requesting experts in the field to take over. These stages are longer interactions as these are designed to cross check what the candidate has claimed in the CV. The interviewers' questions try to probe in depth the candidate's proficiency, past achievements, strengths and weaknesses, aptitude, confidence and personality, dedication, devotion to duty, sense of responsibility, leadership qualities and willingness to work at odd hours or on week ends, and so on. The salary and other perks are also discussed. In fact, it tries to cover directly and indirectly all the requirements and needs the interviewer demands of the candidate. The probing questioning is done by experts belonging to the candidate's professional field and also by other members on the board from HRD and Finance before the winding down begins. Stage 4 is the actual end of the interview with words like:

O.K. Thank you for coming. Wish you good luck. We'll soon let you know about the outcome, etc.

### **Activity 2**

- 1 Select from the following the most suitable title for this passage:
  - i How to face interviews
  - ii Nature and structure of interviews
  - iii Composition of the interview Board
  - iv Questions asked in interviews

- 2 The writer talks of two things about interviews in this passage. Write these two sub-titles where these would occur in the given passage.

i      Structure of interviews    ii      Interviews as a testing technique

- 3 According to this passage how many stages are there in a common interview? Use short phrases to describe these stages. Example: Checking personal details.

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- 4 What is the importance of probing questions? What kinds of questions are asked in this stage?

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- 5 What do you think is the importance of the initial stage in an interview?

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## 2.3 LISTENING COMPREHENSION: HOW TO FACE INTERVIEWS

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You are going to listen to a recorded talk on 'How to Face Interviews' (tape script-1). Read the questions given below before you listen to the recording. You may listen to it twice.



### Activity 3

- 1 What is the importance of interaction during the interview?

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 .....

- 2 What are the skills required to face an interview?

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 .....

- 3 In what way do you think your command over English will help you in facing interviews?

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4      What aspects of communication are to be kept in mind in order to create a good impression on the interview panel?

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**2.4    SPEAKING: STAR STRUCTURE**

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**Activity 4**

Speak for about two minutes on the following topic. You can have one minute to prepare for this topic and make notes if you want to before you start speaking. (Speak in front of a mirror/someone at home or a classmate at the study center).

**You are going for a job interview. How have you prepared for it?** You can use ‘**STAR**’ structure to organize your thoughts.

“S – T – A - R” structuring device is used for logical development of thoughts. The four letters of ‘STAR” stand for the following:

- S:** stands for ‘Situation’:      A brief sentence or two to set the scene and give the context.
- T:** stands for ‘Target/Task’:    The specific aspect you focused on and why.
- A:** stands for ‘Action’:        What you actually did, how and when, and the rationale for your choices.
- R:** stands for ‘Result’:        What the outcome was and the difference it made.

Candidates find this technique of structuring their ideas very useful and we’ve no doubt that you too can learn to make use of this technique with some practice.

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**2.5    WRITING**

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**Activity 5**

Some people think that promotions within the company should be by seniority while others believe that merit alone should be counted.

Discuss **both** the views and give your own opinion. Write about 250 words.

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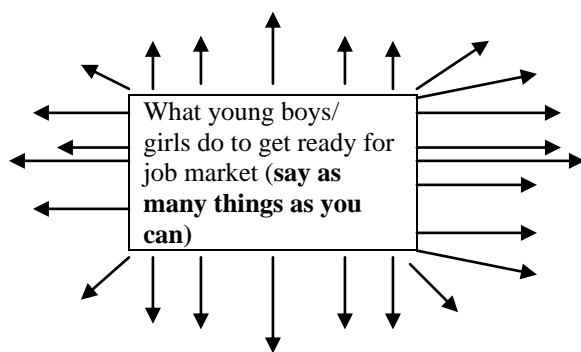
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### Activity 6

- 1 Write down as many sentences as you can 'about what young boys/girls do to get ready for the job market. Example:

They *try to acquire* educational and professional qualifications.

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- 2 Make a list of all the adjectives you would associate with an ideal candidate.

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## 2.7 GRAMMAR: THE PASSIVE

Rules for changing active voice into passive voice.

- The object of the verb becomes the subject, and the subject becomes the object.
- If the subject or object in the sentence in the active voice is a pronoun, it changes its form as shown in the table below:

From Subject to Object	
Subject position	Object position
I	Me
We	Us
You	You
He	Him
She	Her
They	Them
It	It

- The verb in the active voice is changed to its passive form. The table below shows how the verb is changed into its passive voice form in the different tenses.

Tense	Active voice	Passive voice
The simple present	He <b>loves</b> bananas.	Bananas <b>are loved</b> by him.
The present continuous	He <b>is eating</b> a banana.	A banana <b>is being eaten</b> by him.

The present perfect	He has eaten a banana.	A banana has been eaten by him.
The simple past	He ate a banana.	A banana was eaten by him.
The past continuous	He was eating a banana.	A banana was being eaten by him.
The past perfect	He had eaten a banana.	A banana had been eaten by him.
The simple future	He will eat a banana.	A banana will be eaten by him.

Compare the following sentences:

The event *is chaired* by the Chairperson. (passive sentence)  
The Chairperson *chairs* the event. (active sentence)

The two sentences have the same meaning, but the emphasis is different.

In an active sentence, we are more interested in the person or thing doing the action (the agent).

In a passive sentence, we are more interested in the person or thing affected by the action. If we want to mention the agent we use *by*.

But often the agent is not important. Example:

The candidate *is ushered* in.....  
The salary and other perks *are also discussed*.

### Activity 7

1 Put the verbs in brackets into the passive voice in the following sentences:

- i You'll hardly recognize our college. It ..... (redo) in the Summer vacations.
- ii Two students ..... (send) out of class for copying during the test.
- iii The computer room which ..... (complete) only last year, ..... (equip) with the latest computers.
- iv Applications ..... (invite) for the post of a Mathematics lecturer. Preference ..... (give) to applicants with teaching experience.
- v The retiring teacher ..... (give) a fond farewell by the students and teachers.
- vi The four students ..... (scold) for disturbing the class.
- vii The ancient language Pali ..... (speak) only by a few scholars.
- viii The students who secured very high marks in Science ..... (interview) by the Committee for a scholarship.

2 A person who works in the Human Resource Department is explaining how they select candidates in her company.

Write at least ten sentences in the passive voice, describing the recruitment process. The process is given below in the active voice. You may have to add a sentence or two of your own.

If there's a vacancy in any department of our company, we usually advertise it in-house first of all. If we don't find any suitable candidates, then we advertise the job in papers or on the Internet. We ask the applicants to send in their CVs. We short list the suitable applications and invite the short listed candidates for an interview. After that, we ask some of the applicants back for a second interview. Then we call them for a group discussion. We choose the best candidate. After this we check his or her references, and then we offer the applicant the job.

Example: If there is a vacancy in our company, it is advertised in-house.

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## 2.8 LET US SUM UP

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In this unit you have learnt what we mean by 'interview', what normally its structure is, and what skills and strategies you need to face an interview successfully. You have also learnt what behaviour competencies, skills and knowledge are common across jobs that companies often require from their employees these days and we have also offered you some tips on how to face interviews. Besides we have described in detail on how to organize your thoughts and ideas to achieve logical development of thoughts.

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## 2.9 ANSWERS

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### Activity 2

- 1      ii -Nature and structure of interviews
- 2      Structure of interviews: at the beginning of paragraph 2.  
Interview as a Testing Technique: at the beginning of paragraph 1.
- 3      Stage 2: Cross-checking candidate's claims;  
Stage 3: Assessing candidate's competencies;  
Stage 4: Closing the interview. (You may get other similar phrases).
- 4      Probing questions are important as these questions try to probe in detail all the relevant facts about the candidate. They try to understand the candidate's proficiency, past achievement, strengths and weaknesses, aptitude, confidence and personality, dedication, etc.

- 5 The initial stage sets the mood for the interview. The initial formalities like welcoming, greetings, and seating is intended to make the candidate comfortable and at ease and prepares him/her for the more formal questions.

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### 2.3 Listening comprehension: How to face interviews (tape script-1)

- 1 Interviews and tests of any kind are quite taxing and nerve wracking even for experienced people and hence one needs to keep one's cool and be prepared to face them with full confidence. Fortunately, most of the interviews in modern times are conducted by experts in the field, particularly in big organizations and by professionally managed companies recruiting personnel for their clients. However, exceptions are there and one ought to learn the technique of facing interviews.
- 2 What are these techniques and how can you apply them? We have said that interviews are a kind of oral testing. The company has obviously called you for an interview because it has found that your CV, among a few others, appears to meet their needs and requirements. Interaction during the interview would now enable the organization to cross check the statements and claims made by you in your CV and also judge other traits of your character and personality necessary to carry out the duties and responsibilities attached to the job. Hence, what helps you now on this occasion is your command of the English language, particularly your oral communication skills that you can put to use effectively to convince the members of the selection committee that you are the best candidate of the lot for the particular vacancy.
- 3 You will particularly need socializing skills and conversational skills soon after entering the venue and the interview room; functional skills to make enquiries about the waiting room and so on. In the first phase of the interview you will have to talk about yourself before the interview enters the second and the third phases which we have outlined.
- 4 Parts 2 and 3 of the interview are designed to confirm and cross check what you have stated and claimed in your CV, that is, about your general and professional qualifications, behavioural competencies, generic skills, knowledge, experience and other qualities of your character and personality vis-à-vis company's requirements for the job such as ability to work under pressure, meet targets, work at odd hours and so on. For example, you can be asked questions such as the following to find out your behavioural competencies and attitudes to them:
  - Do you enjoy working in a group? Why/Why not?
  - Tell us about a problem you faced in completing an assigned work in your last job/at college. Could you complete the work? Why/Why not?
  - Do you think it is good to go prepared for a scheduled meeting, or should you be spontaneous?
- 5 It is here that your command of English, training in facing interviews, ability to anticipate what can be asked and give relevant responses, and knowledge and experience will come to your aid in facing the interview successfully. This is the occasion when the portfolio you have made must be passed on to the Chairperson since this becomes a visual evidence of what you say and claim.



- 6 You must also keep in mind aspects such as: speed of talking; organizing your thoughts; accuracy of grammar and structure; and pronunciation. The tips we have already described will leave a lasting impression on the members of the interview board.
  - 7 Let us sum up what all these mean. Pay full attention to the person who is asking the question so that you know exactly what the question is. Do not interrupt the interviewer when s/he is still speaking; let him/her complete his question before you reply. Be relevant and answer to the point; do not speak too fast or too slow; too low or too loud but loud enough so that everyone on the other side of the table can hear what you say. This is the occasion when the portfolio you have prepared proves very useful to you to support your claims. Hand it gracefully to the Chairperson for perusal while giving evidence of your behavioural competencies, skills and experience and so on. Emphasize your strong points that are relevant and support your candidature but do not tell a lie or try to bluff or hide your weak points as being aware of one's weaknesses itself is one's strength. Be polite and do not lose your temper even when you are provoked; being patient and keeping one's head are also a candidate's strong points. Finally, use appropriate words/phrases to thank the interview board at the end of the interview.
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### Activity 3

- 1 Interaction during the interview would enable the organization to cross check the statements and claims made by you in your CV and also judge other traits of your character and personality necessary to carry out the duties and responsibilities attached to the job.
- 2 Important skills required for an interview include socializing skills, conversational skills and functional skills.
- 3 A good command over the English language will give the candidate an edge over the others. Such a candidate will be able to convince the members of the selection committee of his/her suitability for the job in terms of his/her qualifications, personality traits and so on.
- 4 We need to keep in mind aspects like speed of talking; organizing our thoughts; accuracy of grammar and structure; and pronunciation while communicating.

### Activity 5

#### Argument for seniority:

A senior person would be quite experienced and adept at the job which a junior lacks. A senior person's perspective would be mature and balanced.

#### Argument for merit:

A meritorious person comes with the assurance of potential to perform well. Also merit would include technological knowledge and subject skills.

You could add more reasons.

### Activity 6

- 1 They prepare an effective CV highlighting their skills and knowledge. They try to polish their spoken English skills by joining classes.

## Recruitment-II

They approach recruitment agencies and register themselves for a suitable job.

You could add more in a similar manner.

- 2 Confident, responsible, skilled, able, knowledgeable, goal-oriented, problem-solving, etc.

### Activity 7

- 1
  - i You'll hardly recognize our college. It **was redone** in the Summer vacations.
  - ii Two students **were sent** (send) out of class for copying during the test.
  - iii The computer room which **was completed** (complete) only last year, **is equipped** (equip) with the latest computers.
  - iv Applications **are invited** (invite) for the post of a Mathematics lecturer. Preference **will be given** (give) to applicants with teaching experience.
  - v The retiring teacher **was given** (give) a fond farewell by the students and teachers.
  - vi The four students **were scolded** (scold) for disturbing the class.
  - vii The ancient language Pali **is spoken** (speak) only by a few scholars.
  - viii The students who secured very high marks in Science **will be interviewed** (interview) by the Committee for a scholarship.
- 2 If no suitable candidates are found then the job is advertised in the papers or on the internet. The applicants are asked to send in their CVs. Suitable applications are short listed. Short listed candidates are invited for an interview. Some of the applicants are asked to come back for a second interview. They are then called for a group discussion. The best candidate is chosen. The candidate's references are then checked. Finally, the applicant is offered the job.