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TYPES OF INTERVIEW

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EXPLORATORY INTERVIEW
FIRST INTERVIEW SECOND
INTERVIEW
SEQUENTIAL INTERVIEW
GROUP INTERVIEW
PANEL INTERVIEW
APTITUDE TESTS AS PART OF AN INTERVIEW

There may be other types of interviews but you will have enough information from the detailed study of the ones listed to deal with any of the combinations you might face. Let's look at these types of interview in detail.

EXPLORATORY INTERVIEW

This type of interview is the only one where there may in fact not be a vacancy. The employer may hear about you or learn about you from your speculative approaches and shows an interest in you. The exploratory interview is an opportunity for the employer to meet you and explore the possibilities of giving you a job. The company may be thinking of expanding or changing its main type of work, and your skills have indicated that you may be the person who could play a part in that process. The interview itself is likely to take place between you and only one interviewer. It will relate to the skills which you have indicated you possess. If you do well in this type of interview it could possibly get you a job.

FIRST INTERVIEW

This type of interview will not get you a job. By definition, a first interview is part of a two or three stage process. Many employers conduct these types of interviews when they have a large number of good candidates or if they are thinking of filling a large number of posts. The interview will probably be conducted with only one interviewer. The aim of the interview from the employers point of view is to choose a small number of good candidates from the large number who all appear to be good. The questions will relate to the specific skills which you have highlighted in your application, as well as an assessment of you as a person. The interviewer will be seeking to find the type of person which the company likes to employ and will include your ability to communicate clearly, construct logical answers, be neat and tidy in your appearance, and be an adaptable person. If you are successful in this type of interview you will be selected for the second interview.

TYPES OF INTERVIEW

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SECOND INTERVIEW

This is a much more serious interview than the first interview. If you get this far then you can be sure that the employer is very interested in you. The level and type of questioning will be more specific, and relate to the job you have applied for. The interview will almost certainly be conducted by a team of three or more interviewers, including a personnel officer, your potential 'boss', and possibly a senior manager.

SEQUENTIAL INTERVIEW

This is an interview where you will be seen in turn by several people. You may meet the personnel officer first, then a senior manager, then the head of the department where you would be working if appointed. These types of interview are not used very often because they seem to be time wasting and repetitive. The main point to remember in these types of interview is that you can plan what to say to whom. There would be certain questions which the personnel officer would not ask. You would be able to assume, for example, that the main concern of the personnel officer would be to take the details of your two referees, ask about your health record, and outline sickness and holiday procedures. The senior manager would be looking at your personality as a whole and your flexibility. Specific questions about the job would be asked by the head of the department where you would be working.

Remember the relative importance of the people in this type of interview. The most important interviewer here is the head of department first then the senior manager, and lastly the personnel officer. If the head of department told his senior manager that he couldn't work with you, the senior manager would probably accept the decision even if he or she personally liked you.

GROUP INTERVIEW

This type of interview brings together the candidates who are all hoping to get the job. There may be two or three interviewers in the group making a total of perhaps eight or ten people in all. This type of interview is often followed by a panel interview.

The purpose of group interviews is to determine how you would handle a group problem. You are being tested on both your team work and leadership qualities. You will probably be asked to discuss a preset question, and the interviewers, who will not try to get involved, will assess how much of a part you play in the discussion and the merit of what you have contributed. Questions might be about developing new initiatives in the company or how to handle a particular problem which might arise in the course of your normal work duties.

Remember that this will only be part of a larger interviewing process and you should not over contribute here. Make two or three general and non controversial points which are constructive. Save your strength for the main interview.

TYPES OF INTERVIEW

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PANEL INTERVIEW

Most interviews are in this category. A panel will consist of several people, between three and up to possibly seven or eight. Obviously the stress factor for the interviewee increases with the number of interviewers.

It is important to decide early on in the interview which of the panel members are the important ones, and who will have a greater influence on who is appointed. Usually, at the beginning of such an interview the Chairperson of the interviewing group will introduce the panel. You will be trying to come to terms with the room, the panel, the atmosphere and your own nervousness at this stage. Despite these factors try to register the job titles of the people interviewing you so that you can decide who the important members are. The most important is your potential boss, then the senior manager, then any other managers, and finally the personnel officer. Many interviewees make the mistake of assuming that the personnel officer has an important role to play in the process. The only real role of the personnel officer is to make sure that the interview procedure is properly adhered to and that matters like sickness, holiday and salary details are explained properly.

When you are questioned by an interviewer, look that person in the eye when you reply. Occasionally, when faced with a large interview panel, try to catch the attention of the panel to the importance of what you are saying by scanning across the whole panel whilst answering the point.



FIND OUT WHO IS IMPORTANT IN THE INTERVIEW PANEL

TYPES OF INTERVIEW

APTITUDE TESTS

Many employers set tests for potential employees. In simple case it might be to test the type of skills of someone who claims to have good keyboard skills, or a simple mathematics test for someone who wants to work in a job which requires that ability. Increasingly, though, tests are being used which are more comprehensive and difficult. Aptitude tests may include a written English test, a mathematics test, and an abstract reasoning test. Generally you should be notified whether your interview will include an aptitude test. If you are told about it, try to find out as much as possible about it before you go, how long it is likely to last, and how much it contributes to the final decision of whether to appoint the person.

You cannot improve your skills in English or mathematics in the short time you might have before the tests. You should try your best. Find out how long the test will take, and see how many questions there are. Take five minutes off the test time to thoroughly read the test paper then divide the number of questions by the time allowed. Do not give each question more time than you have allowed. For example:

YOU HAVE 30 MINUTES TO ANSWER 10 QUESTIONS

TAKE OFF 5 MINUTES TO READ THE TEST PAPER

25 MINUTES LEFT TO ANSWER 10 QUESTIONS

TWO AND A HALF MINUTES ARE ALLOWED FOR EACH QUESTION

It is a very bad sign if you only get through part of the test paper in the time allowed. Try to answer the best you can and try to answer every question. One third of questions answered would only give you a maximum of 33% if you scored 100% correctly. If you answer the whole paper you may well get many wrong but your chances of a higher score are better. Remember, the other candidates will be facing the same problems as you.

Try to find out what type of interview you will be involved in. When you are invited to interview, the letter you receive may give you a clue. If you are informed that your interview will last for more than 30 minutes then there are probably at least two stages to your interview. If you are unclear about the type of interview, you can telephone the employer and ask for more details. If you have any queries it is better to find out rather than just turn up on the day and hope for the best. The more organised and informed you are the better the chances you will have.

TYPES OF INTERVIEWS - SUMMARY

5

On this page summarise the different types of interview which have been discussed on the previous pages, in your own words. The importance of this exercise is that it is easier to understand an idea if you write about it in your own words.

EXPLORATORY INTERVIEW

FIRST AND SECOND INTERVIEW

SEQUENTIAL INTERVIEW

PANEL INTERVIEW

GROUP INTERVIEW

It is possible to divide the type of questions you will be asked at interview into four areas.

1. THE PAST

- z Your school/college education.
- z Any full/part time work you have done.
- z Past achievements other than academic (e.g. voluntary work).

2 THE PRESENT

- z What you are doing at the moment, academically, or work related.
- z Your present expectations in the careers market.
- z Your hobbies and non work related activities.

3 THE JOB IN QUESTION

- z Which skills you possess, academic or work related.
- z Your potential ability to do the job in question.
- z Your willingness to learn, adapt and improve.
- z Why you should get the job rather than anyone else.

4 THE FUTURE

- z Do you have sufficient ambition, related to work?
- z Where you see yourself being in 3 years time.
- z Is your outlook positive enough?

You should start to think about these points and think how the employer could frame them into questions in an interview. How would you answer such questions? If you are unsure about any of the points listed above you should spend extra time to construct possible answers.

These examples are of possible questions and answers taken from the previous page.

1 THE PAST

z Your school/college education

This point could be turned into a question in many ways and the only difficulty with this point is to recognise it when the question is framed.

Could you tell me a little bit about your school/college education and qualifications?

What do you feel was your biggest achievement at school/college?

Whichever way this question is asked your answer should be easy and straightforward. The question is asking you about your school/college academic achievements. Concentrate on these and do not put too much emphasis on any sports or other school/college activities.

3 THE JOB IN QUESTION

z Which skills you possess, academic or work related.

Remember that section 3 relates to the job in question. The answer to such a question should relate to the skills which directly matter to the job you are applying for. The framework for a possible answer could be as follows:

*I have attained/hope to attain, qualifications in ----- and-----
---and-----, subjects. I have work experience/am interested, in this type of work.
I feel that I am particularly suited to this type of work because...*

It would be useful to consider all the points on the previous page and construct possible questions and answers to them. A good exercise to practice would be to construct as many questions as possible from the points and then to write the answers down which could then be practised as interview preparation.

YOUR SKILLS



THE SKILLS WHICH YOU HAVE CAN BE CATEGORISED INTO FOUR AREAS.

1. FORMAL QUALIFICATIONS.

These are qualifications for which you will have received certificates and include; GCSEs NVQs.

2. WORK SKILLS.

These are the skills which you will have gained in part time or full time work and include practical skills like filing, computer skills, selling techniques, cash till work, etc.

3. PERSONAL SKILLS.

These include communications skills, your ability to work with others as a member of a team, or to work alone, and your personality etc.

4. TRANSFERRABLE SKILLS.

These are skills which you have obtained in parts 2 and 3 which you can transfer into other work areas. **EXAMPLE:** Experience of working with computers may be an indication that you would quickly understand and operate other types of electronic and computer applications. Transferrable skills are very important because they indicate your ability to adapt to situations and may also show that you have potential to develop and advance in employment terms. Many people fail to mention these skills in their CV.

MAKE A LIST OF YOUR SKILLS IN THESE AREAS.

FORMAL QUALIFICATIONS
WORK SKILLS
PERSONAL SKILLS
TRANSFERRABLE SKILLS

ROLE REVERSAL

9

This exercise is asking you to imagine that you are the employer. Which skills would you look for in a potential employee for each of the following jobs?

- z **BANK CLERK**
- z **HOTEL RECEPTIONIST**
- z **GARDENER**

If you wish you could replace these jobs with ones of your choice.

For each of these jobs which skills should the applicant have in the following areas?

- z **FORMAL QUALIFICATIONS** (GCSEs, NVQs etc.)
- z **WORK EXPERIENCE** (full part/time jobs, holiday jobs etc.)
- z **PERSONAL SKILLS** (e.g. outgoing, honest etc.)
- z **TRANSFERRABLE SKILLS** (skills gained elsewhere which could be used in another job)

For each of these jobs which questions would you ask in order to determine whether a candidate was suitable for the post? List the 10 most important questions:

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10

Once you have made a list of questions for each of the three jobs look through the lists of questions and identify those which are common to all three jobs. These questions are likely to be asked at most interviews.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

10

Think of questions which might be asked at most interviews regardless of the job in question. There are many questions which are common to all interviews. In all make a list of up to 10 of the most common questions which are likely to be asked at most if not all interviews.

THE TEN MOST COMMON QUESTIONS WHICH I CAN THINK OF ARE:

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

Now imagine you are the candidate who has been asked these questions. How would you answer them? Remember to be positive, logical, short and to the point in your answers.

REMEMBER

Relate your answers to the job in question.

AN INTERVIEW EXERCISE

In groups of 4-6 people select a range of occupations which you are actually interested in. Each member of the group will be interviewed in turn, and all the members will be on the interview panel when they are not being interviewed themselves.

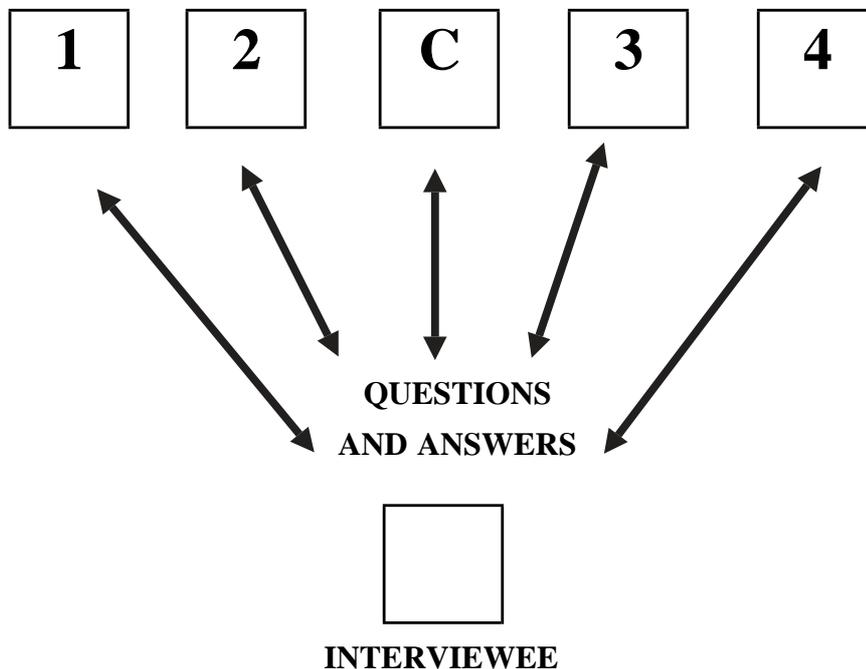
Before each interview, take some time to decide which questions will be asked. Remember that besides the common questions which were identified earlier you should ask specific questions relating to the job in question.

Choose the interview Chairperson, (this should rotate for each interview), and divide the questions amongst the interview panel.

Each interview panel member should keep notes. The panel response sheet on the next page can be used for this purpose. Interviewers may want to add extra sections to the sheet. Discuss this before the interview. It is a good idea that if extra sections are to be added that all interviewers should complete the extra sections.

INTERVIEW PANEL

CHAIRPERSON



The interviewee should concentrate on the person asking the questions and look them straight in the eye when answering. An occasional scan of the whole interview panel is a good idea.

PANEL RESPONSE SHEET

QUESTIONS ASKED

ANSWERS GIVEN (TICK)

	GOOD	RELEVANT	NOT RELEVANT	POOR
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				

BODY LANGUAGE AT START OF INTERVIEW MID INTERVIEW END OF INTERVIEW	
QUALIFICATIONS REQUIREMENT MET? EXPERIENCE REQUIREMENT MET? WILLING TO LEARN?	
PERSONALITY OF CANDIDATE	
OTHER COMMENTS	

The interview panel should take time to discuss the performance of candidates after each interview. Each panel member should be honest and direct about their feelings regarding the candidate. Remember to consider the body language of the person as this factor can be very important in a real interview.

Bad body language includes candidates who:

- z cross their arms and legs,
- z avoid the eyes and faces to the interviewers,
- z fidget in their chair,
- z look down or away from the interview panel,
- z touch their face repeatedly/nervously.

All of these reactions are natural but are seen as negative and defensive. The candidate who expresses these reactions is uncomfortable and will probably also give shorter and less coherent answers. Some people are naturally more nervous in interview situations than others and need to practice interview situations to begin to overcome these feelings.

Good body language includes candidates who:

- z do not cross their arms or legs,
- z face towards the interview panel at all times,
- z sit upright in their chair,
- z look at the interviewer when answering questions.

As a candidate you should keep an open mind about the criticisms which the interview panel may express. Remember that these are not real interviews. The panel should give you a good idea of how you 'come across' to others, and give you ideas of how to improve your performance.

In particular you should try to assess your performance by dividing the comments about you into categories such as:

- z Body language.
- z Responses to easier/common questions.
- z Response to particular types of questions.
- z Your performance at different stages of the interview; the start, middle and towards the end.

Having secured an interview, it is important that you maximise your chances of getting the job itself. There is some preparation which is essential and requires detailed consideration.

You should '**double check**' the **date**, the interview **time** and the **place** where the interview is to be held by telephoning the employer. If you live near to where the interview is to be held, it may be a good idea to go there before the interview to see how long it takes. Remember to use the form of transport on your 'dummy run' which you intend to use on the day of the interview itself. Make sure you arrive at the interview **AT LEAST** ten minutes before the time given to you. It is better to arrive much earlier than even one minute late. **If you are late for the interview you will not get the job.**

You should dress sensibly for the interview even if you are applying for a job which does not require smart clothing. Men should wear a suit and tie, and women should be careful in deciding style and colour of dress. Remember, you are not going to a party but a serious businesslike event. Employers prefer a sensible rather than a flamboyant style.



There is little point rehearsing your interview questions on the day of the interview. Try to spend the time before your interview relaxing. Do not worry about forgetting the preparation you have already done. It will be there when you need it. By the day of the interview you will either be properly prepared or not. Worrying at this stage will not help you at all. If you find after the event that you were not properly prepared for the interview then it is something which you can try to correct for the next time.

When you are inside the building waiting for the interview do not take any actions which will complicate matters. If asked whether you want a drink, refuse it. A coffee cup will only add to the confusion if you are invited into the interview with a cup in your hand.

Make sure that you do not rush anything. If asked a question, think about it before replying. Do not rush your entry to or exit from the interview room. When you are nervous, your natural reaction is the 'get it all over with'. Try to resist this because it will only lead to mistakes.

Finally, remember that all the other candidates are feeling just as you are and that you have at least the same chance of getting the job as any of the others have.

This mock interview will only deal with some of the general questions of an interview.

You have arrived for an interview for the job of your choice.

You have arrived ten minutes early, and have reported to the reception desk. The receptionist asks whether you would like a cup of coffee. Your answer is **NO**. Remember, if you are called into the interview before you finish your coffee, this will only complicate matters.

Now you probably have about ten minutes before your interview. If the interviews are running late you may have to wait longer. If the receptionist does not tell you that the interviews are running late, then the probability is that they are roughly on time.

Try to keep calm and collect your thoughts. It does not matter whether you rehearse your interview preparation now because either you are ready or you are not! Try instead to relax. Try to breathe long slow breaths and relax your shoulders.

One of the interviewers arrives and greets you. Stand up and shake hands if and when the interviewer holds out his or her hand. Do not put your hand out first.

TRY TO KEEP EYE CONTACT

You are shown into the interview room. There are another two people in the panel. Shake hands with them if they offer to shake hands with you. Remain standing until you are invited to sit. The interviewer in the middle is probably the most important member of the panel. Whichever one of them introduces the rest of the panel is the chairperson of the panel. Try to register the position in the company of each of the interviewers and assess which one is the most important. You will try to impress that person the most.



The first proper question will probably be an 'ice breaker':

Q: TELL US A LITTLE BIT ABOUT YOUR ACHIEVEMENTS AT SCHOOL/COLLEGE.

This type of question is always about something you already know and is designed to relax you. Be short, positive, and neutral in your answer.

A: I attended Greens college for _____ years and studied _____ and _____ gained/hope to gain qualifications in _____ and _____.

Remember that this question is not really important, but intended to 'break the ice'. It is very likely that questions will follow later which will ask detailed questions about your qualifications.

Q: WHAT SKILLS DO YOU THINK ARE REQUIRED IN THE JOB YOU ARE APPLYING FOR, AND WHICH OF THESE SKILLS DO YOU HAVE?

The first real, and indeed potentially very difficult question comes in two parts; firstly what are the skills required to do the job you are being interviewed for, and secondly, which of these skills do you have? Do not mix up your answer. Answer the first part of the question first and when you have finished then reply to the second part. Remember to be logical.

A: The main skills required for this post are: firstly _____, secondly _____, thirdly _____. I also think that it is important for the individual to have skills in _____, and _____.

In my school/college experience and work experience (if relevant) I have attained skills in _____, and _____ which I think will enable me to fulfil the duties of the post. I also feel that the personal skills I have in _____ means that I am equipped with the right attitude and commitment for the post.

You will note that the answer is step by step, logical, and short. Remember that the skills you outline in the first part of your answer should be the skills which you have and which you can then emphasise in the second part of your answer. The fact that your answer was to the point and logical will win you 'points' in the interview. Some candidates might take ten minutes to answer this question and they will lose 'points' because in their answer there will be much which does not relate directly to what they are being asked. The panel will also be bored by a long answer.

Q: THIS POST REQUIRES SOME ANTI-SOCIAL HOURS, AND SOME WORK AT WEEKENDS. HAVE YOU ANY DIFFICULTIES WITH THIS?

This is a straightforward question. You will already know the answer. If you don't have any difficulties with the hours then win more 'points' by emphasising your adaptability and flexibility. If you do have difficulties you should try to be tactful and try to 'limit the damage' by being very clear that the restrictions you do have will not become worse if you get the job.

The question of unsocial hours are often directed at women to determine whether having children will become a problem. Companies with good practice guidelines will not ask these types of questions to only women. If you are female and think the question is (or any question is) sexist, do not get upset. You are trying to secure a job. If you do not get the job, the time to challenge the company is after the refusal of employment.

A: I am aware of the unsocial hours from the details I received previously. I have no difficulty with this at all.

A: I could work some unsocial hours, and weekends, but I would require some advance notice. However, if I did have some advance notice there should be no problem at all.



**BUT REMEMBER, DON'T PROMISE EVERYTHING
IF YOU CAN'T DELIVER LATER**

Q: HOW MUCH TRAINING DO YOU THINK YOU WILL NEED IN ORDER FOR YOU TO BECOME FULLY TRAINED?

This is a difficult and possibly unfair question since you might not know exactly what you need to be trained in until you are actually doing the job itself. The answer could also act against you. If you said you needed a great deal of training then the panel might think that you are going to cost the company too much, and if you say you do not need any training the panel might think you are being 'bigheaded' and over confident. The best way to answer this question would be to admit to needing some training but then refer the panel back to the skills you already have.

A: I feel there may be areas where I will need some training but there are also many areas in which I am already experienced, or fully trained. For instance I already have the skills to _____, and _____ and _____.

Q: ARE YOU APPLYING FOR ANY OTHER JOBS AT THE MOMENT?

This question is a difficult one if you are presently unemployed or entering the jobs market for the first time. If you say you are not applying for any other jobs, the panel might feel that you are not really committed to getting a job. If you say that you have applied for many jobs in the recent past, the panel might feel that if you were not good enough for other employers then you may not be good enough for them. The best way out of this question is to admit to applying for some jobs but that this particular job is what you are really interested in.

A: I have applied for some jobs recently, and I am awaiting some feedback from those employers. But I can say that this particular post appeals to me more than any of the others because I am interested in this type of work and _____.

Q: IS THERE ANYTHING YOU WOULD LIKE TO ASK US?

This question indicates that the interview is nearly over. **DO NOT RELAX!** You should ask a question which is neutral and safe. Do not ask about salary, holiday entitlement, or sickness entitlement etc. If you cannot think of a question to ask say;

A: I did have some questions but I feel that they have all been answered during your introduction and during the interview.

The chairperson will thank you for attending the interview and you will be shown out. If you get the opportunity to ask at this point, find out when a decision is likely to be made. Otherwise telephone when you get home.

ASSESSMENT SHEET

You need to assess your performance at interview after each one so that you can identify your strengths and weaknesses. Make a list of the questions you were asked, as far as you can remember them. Then write down what answers you gave. Decide whether you were satisfied with the answer or how you could improve it for future use.

QUESTIONS ASKED	ANSWER GIVEN	IMPROVEMENTS
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		