

Unit 1

Job Interviews

Learning Objectives

After completing this lesson, students should be able to know:

- what the interview procedure is like;
- how to prepare for an interview;
- how to answer questions about personal details, education, work experience, etc.

Business Profile

Types of Job Interview

A job interview is a process in which a potential employee is evaluated by an employer for prospective employment. After the interview, the interviewer will determine whether a candidate is suitable for the position.

There may be different interviews during a job search. It's important that the candidate understand the purpose of each. Three very common types of interview are telephone screening interview, in-person screening interview and selection interview. There are also other types of interview. No matter which type of interview, the candidate's goal is to present his/her qualifications to the decision-makers. Not everyone the candidate comes into contact with will be a decision-maker. However, the candidate should treat each person as though he/she had the authority to hire him/her (from the parking attendant, to the secretary, to the CEO).

Telephone Screening Interview

This interview saves the employer time by eliminating candidates based on essential criteria such as particular job requirements, education or required skills. Since such an interview

will often occur unexpectedly, it's important that the candidate's job search records are organized and kept where they can be reached at a moment's notice. Keep the resume in view and refer to it as needed.

In-person Screening Interview

This interview is used to verify the candidate's qualifications for the position and to establish a preliminary impression of the candidate's attitude, interest and professional style. A professional screener from the employer's Human Resources Department usually conducts the interview. At this stage, the goal is to select the most suitable candidate who will meet the decision-makers.

Selection Interview

Conducted by the decision-makers, the purpose of this interview is to probe the candidate's qualifications and to assess the comfort level with which the candidate might establish working relationships with others. There may be more than one interview at this stage. As the number of candidates decreases, a candidate may be invited back to meet with the same person and/or with other managers or members of the work group. The candidate's ability to establish rapport and present himself/herself as the right person for the position is critical.

Even if there is only one decision-maker, the opinions of the others will be sought and will probably have an effect on the outcome. When you're invited to interview with a number of people, it's important that you present yourself effectively to each one of them. Remember, they will evaluate your skills and ability to fit in. As always, be yourself, but sell yourself to each person's individual concerns.

Work Sample Interview

This interview is done to allow the candidate an opportunity to "show their wares". It could be a time for a graphic artist to display his/her portfolio or a salesperson make a sales presentation. An office worker may be asked to complete a business letter using a specific type of software program.

Peer Group Interview

This interview is an opportunity to meet and talk with prospective coworkers. Just as in other interviews, the peer group will evaluate the candidate, determining how he/she would fit in.

Group Interview

Sometimes referred to as a panel interview, it usually consists of three or more people, all asking questions. Direct your answer to the individual asking the question, but try to maintain some eye contact with the other members of the group. Don't forget to smile. It shows confidence.

Luncheon Interview

This type of interview assesses how well a candidate can handle himself/herself in a social situation. Employer representatives may include the Recruitment Manager, a person from the Human Resources Department and one or more peer group employees. Meals should be chosen carefully. A spill on the blouse or tie isn't likely to make a favorable impression. Select healthy and easy things to eat so you can answer questions and pay attention to the conversation.

Stress Interview

A stress interview introduces you not to an interviewer, but to an "interrogator". The interview is one in which the candidate is treated as though he/she is the enemy. The interrogator asks a number of offensive questions that are deliberately designed to cause discomfort. Keep cool, take time in responding to the questions, and when it's all over, reward yourself. Don't take it personally. This is usually a test of how you will handle stress on the job.

Videoconference Interview

Conducting an interview via videoconference enables an employer to save travel costs and still have, in effect, a person-to-person interview. If the thought of facing a camera during an interview frightens you, practice before a video camera or a mirror.

Scripts and Key

Part I Warm-up

1. Teaching tips:

- Ask Ss to note down other reasons they can think of.
- Divide the class into small groups.
- Give Ss a few minutes to exchange ideas.
- Encourage Ss to use different expressions of agreeing and disagreeing.
- Ask a few Ss to report their findings (e.g. the agreed best job and most common reason(s), the most unique/strange choice or reason, etc.).

Key: Open.

2. Teaching tips:

- Divide the class into small groups.
- Give Ss a few minutes to talk about their suggestions.
- Encourage Ss to use different expressions of giving advice.
If I were you / If I were in your position / If I were in your shoes, I would...
How about / What about / Have you thought about...?
Why don't you...?
You should perhaps...
You'd better...
It might help if you...
I don't think you should...
- Have one person in each group as the job candidate, the others being friends who offer suggestions. Ask the group to role-play a conversation.
- Invite two or three groups to act out their conversation.

Hints:

- ♦ Pay attention to 4Ps: preparation, presentation, personality and positive attitude.
- ♦ Dress appropriately.
- ♦ Make full preparation for the interview:
 - ▶ Learn about the position;

- ▶ Learn about the company or organization from their websites;
- ▶ Anticipate questions and prepare your responses.
- ♦ Don't forget to bring a pen/pencil and a writing pad.
- ♦ Pay attention to your manner:
 - ▶ Be punctual;
 - ▶ Be truthful;
 - ▶ Don't show off;
 - ▶ Don't badmouth.

Part II Listening and Speaking

Task 1 FAQs in job interviews

Teaching tips:

Pre-listening:

- Show pictures of Shangri-La Hotel in different cities of the world.
- Give Ss a few minutes to share what they know about the hotel, the position, etc.
- Check Ss' understanding of the position.

Comments on the three questions:

Q1.

It's the ice-breaker of the interview and it's always a challenge to answer because it's so broad. The best approach is to narrow the scope of the question by focusing on those aspects of your educational background and experience that make you qualified for the position. From there, you can talk about your interest in this particular job.

Q2.

When asked this question, you should highlight skills that demonstrate a competency relevant to the job applied for, such as report writing, time keeping or your ability to get things done on time. You can also mention that you are able to get along with people easily, you are a fast worker, or you have an eye for details. The job advertisement will give you information on skills required for the position, so focus on these areas by using examples that demonstrate your skills.

With weaknesses, you can point out one area that is "comparatively" weaker than

others, but will not disqualify you from the job. More importantly, you should follow up with what you are doing or have done to fix your weakness.

Q3.

The best way to respond is to describe the qualifications listed in the job posting, and then connect them to your skills, experiences, as well as job objectives. That way the employer will see that you know about the job and you have the qualifications and enthusiasm to do the job.

Sample answers:

Q1.

I am graduating in June from ABC University and my major is hotel management. I am an outgoing, energetic person. I enjoy teamwork very much. As part of my degree program, I needed to finish different projects with my teammates. I possess excellent interpersonal skills and a very positive attitude. My career aspiration is to become a successful hotelier. During my internship at the Grand Hyatt, I worked as a receptionist. My duties included offering friendly and efficient check-in and check-out service to guests, answering phone calls, taking and passing on messages to guests. I find that if I can make the guests happy, I will be very happy, too.

Q2.

I received honors in several school-wide English and computer contests. I enjoy working with people from different backgrounds. I am good at communicating, organizing and coordinating. If something blocks my path, I will look for a solution. I never give up easily.

Sometimes I receive comments that I need to improve in the area of filing. I am now trying to improve by learning from others.

Q3.

Interest and career development are two of my criteria in choosing a job. Interest is the best motivation. I love the hotel business, so I will definitely devote myself to it. Moreover, high job satisfaction can be attained when the job is what I am interested in.

Career development is very important for me when choosing a job. From what I know, Shangri-La provides equal career advancement for all staff. The job rotation plan and individually tailored training program are really exciting and helpful for young people like me.

Task 2 Inappropriate questions in job interviews

Script:

Mr. Carter: Come in, please.

Yang: Good morning, sir. I'm Karen Yang.

Mr. Carter: Good morning, Miss Yang. I am Kevin Carter, the Administration Manager. Take a seat, please.

Yang: Oh, is that your wife, Mr. Carter? She is so beautiful.

Mr. Carter: Thank you. Ah... Miss Yang, I've gone through your resume. I'd like to ask you some questions now, if you don't mind.

Yang: Of course not. Please go ahead.

Mr. Carter: Well, can you tell me why you would like to work as a medical representative with us?

Yang: I really like this kind of work, and having been a doctor for three years, I want to apply for this position for a change.

Mr. Carter: Don't you think it's a pity for you to leave your present job?

Yang: To some extent, it is. I have learned a lot in the hospital. But I would like to try a different kind of life. By the way, could you tell me how much the new job pays?

Mr. Carter: Sure. There is a five-month probationary period and you can only get RMB2,000 for each month. After that, we'll determine your salary according to your performance.

Yang: Oh, I see. Then, what about the paid holidays, insurance, and things like that?

Mr. Carter: Every employee in our company enjoys life insurance and unemployment insurance. In addition, they enjoy two-week paid holidays.

Yang: That sounds fine. How much time will it take for me to be promoted here?

Mr. Carter: I'm not sure. It depends on your ability and performance. Maybe we'll send you to one of our branches, if you like.

Yang: No problem. I hate staying at one place all the time. But in which cities do you have your branches? And, where is your company based?

Mr. Carter: Our company is based in New York, with branches in many cities, such as Philadelphia, Beijing and London.

...

Key:

<i>Is that your wife, Mr. Carter? She is so beautiful.</i>	<i>Avoid asking your interviewer personal questions or making personal comments.</i>
Could you tell me how much the new job pays?	The interviewer might infer from these questions that you are only interested in your own needs and not those of the company. Wait until the interviewer raises these subjects to discuss them.
What about the paid holidays, insurance, and things like that?	
How much time will it take for me to be promoted here?	
But in which cities do you have your branches? And, where is your company based?	It is unwise to ask about things you should have already known. You are only telling the interviewer that you haven't done your homework.

Part III Language Focus

Follow-up practice

Teaching tips:

- Ask Ss to note down the key points of the interview.
- Divide the class into pairs. Get Ss to allocate the roles.
- Ask Ss to role-play the job interview according to the noted points and with the help of the expressions in Language Focus.
- If time allows, ask Ss to swap roles and role-play the interview again.
- Invite a pair to act out the interview in class.
- Give comments and suggestions for improvement.

Script:

Cai: May I come in?

Ms. Smith: Yes, please.

Cai: Good morning, Madam. My name is Cai Ning. I am coming to your company for an interview, as requested.

Ms. Smith: Fine, thank you for coming, Miss Cai. Please sit down. I am Anne Smith, Assistant Manager for the Personnel Department.

Cai: Nice to see you, Ms. Smith.

Ms. Smith: Nice to meet you, too. Would you like to have a cup of coffee or tea?

Cai: Tea is fine. Thank you.

Ms. Smith: I've read your CV. It looks good. Now, I wonder if you can tell me more about yourself, for example, your personality.

Cai: Well, I think I'm a serious-minded girl. I'm calm and I don't panic in a crisis. I like jokes and have a good sense of humor. And I also enjoy working with all kinds of people. I can even get along with people who are bad-tempered or something like that.

Ms. Smith: Well, then, what do you consider your strengths and weaknesses?

Cai: Strengths and weaknesses? Well, I think my ability to work with all types of people is a particular strength.

Ms. Smith: Yes.

Cai: My weakness? Er, I suppose I'm a little bit perfectionist. I'm quite often dissatisfied with what I've done. I always think I can do it better or in a different way.

Ms. Smith: I wouldn't call that a weakness. I'd call that a strength.

Cai: Well, apart from that, I suppose sometimes I am not patient enough.

Ms. Smith: Now, can you tell me about your past experience?

Cai: I have six years' financial industry experience, working for several companies. For the past two years, I have been working in an investment bank.

Ms. Smith: What qualifications have you had for this position?

Cai: I graduated from Peking University in 2001, majoring in accounting. I speak fluent English and I can deal with bookkeeping and accounting in English quite well.

Ms. Smith: Why did you leave your last position?

Cai: I want to find a job that is challenging, where I can grow.

Ms. Smith: Now, is there anything else you'd like to ask me?

Cai: Yes. If I get this job with HDC, would I be able to work abroad in one of your overseas branches?

Ms. Smith: Oh, yes, certainly. Our staff regularly does six-month placements in other branches.

Cai: Oh, that's great.

Ms. Smith: Right, time is pressing, I'm afraid, so thank you very much for coming to see me and we'll be in touch with you before the end of the week.

Cai: Thank you for seeing me.

Ms. Smith: Goodbye.

Cai: Bye.

Key:

Name: Cai Ning

Personality: serious-minded; calm; humorous; easy-going

Strengths and weaknesses:

Strengths: the ability to work with all types of people

Weaknesses: perfectionist; impatient

Work experience: six years' financial industry experience with several companies; two years' experience in an investment bank

Qualifications: graduated from Peking University in 2001 majoring in accounting; fluent English; bookkeeping and accounting proficiency in English.

Reasons for leaving last job: Want to find a job that is challenging.

Questions about the job: Would I be able to work abroad in one of your overseas branches?

Language expansion

About the job and company

- What do you know about this company?

I understand that you are one of the major global players in air industries, operating in more than 20 countries.

- Why are you the best person for the job?

I have been working in sales for five years. I think my experience in this field can bring the benefits to this position and your company.

- Is there anything else that you would like to know about the job or company?

Yes, would you please tell me what my responsibilities would be if I had this job?

About future plan

- What are your goals for the next five years?

In five years' time, I think I will have achieved a lot if you give me an opportunity to work in your company. I hope to be promoted to the position of Sales Manager by then.

- How do you plan to achieve this goal?

I will work hard, meet challenges and improve myself in an all-round way. I have confidence in myself.

- How long will you stay in our company?

Well, that's hard to answer. If I got this position, I'd say I would stay in this company as long as my work and efforts are still valuable to the company.

About salary

- What kind of salary do you have in mind?

What would you offer to someone with my qualifications and potential? / I will consider any reasonable offer. / I'm aware of the range in the marketplace. I'm sure you'll come up with a most appropriate offer that will be based on my background and ability.

About abilities and skills

- What special skills do you have?

I can speak and write English fluently. / I'm good at communicating with people. / I'm good at numbers. / I've been working on computer programming for five years. I'd say I'm kind of expert in this field.

About strengths

- Can you tell me something about your strengths?

I'm confident and honest. / I don't panic in a crisis. / I never give up easily. I'm persistent in looking for a solution. / I think I can work with all kinds of people.

About weaknesses

- What are your weaknesses?

Perhaps I'm a bit straightforward. / I'm kind of perfectionist. I want to be perfect in doing everything. / Sometimes, I'm a little bit indecisive.

Part IV Viewing and Speaking

Video 1 Applying for the position of financial consultant

Pre-viewing

1. Teaching tips:

- Divide Ss into small groups.
- Ask Ss to:
 - 1) rank the importance;
 - 2) compare their ranking with other group members;
 - 3) give explanations;
 - 4) change the ranking if convinced.
- Encourage Ss to use different expressions of agreeing and disagreeing.
- Ask two group representatives to give their ranking and explain the change if there is any.

Key: Open.

Viewing

Script:

Chen: Good morning, Ms. Mandel.

Ms. Mandel: Good morning. Sit down, please.

Chen: Thank you.

Ms. Mandel: You are Chen Bo, aren't you? I am Cathy Mandel, Director of the HR Department.

Chen: Yes, I'm Chen Bo. Nice to meet you, Ms. Mandel.

Ms. Mandel: Nice to meet you, too. I've gone through your resume and would like to know more about you.

Chen: Thank you for your interest in me.

Ms. Mandel: To start with, would you like to tell me a bit about yourself?

Chen: Sure. I'm a senior student at Guangdong University of Finance. I expect to graduate this summer. My major is international finance.

Ms. Mandel: So, why did you choose our company?

Chen: As far as I know, your company is one of several leading international consultant corporations which came to China after China entered WTO. I think working here would give me the best chance to use what I've learned at university.

Ms. Mandel: As a major in international finance, what do you think you can do in consultancy?

Chen: Well, I know how to tackle problems. For example, I know I must first analyze the problem and work out its major cause. Then I will be able to search for ways to solve it from the available data.

Ms. Mandel: Sometimes data is not enough. Have you got any relevant experience in this field?

Chen: Last year, during the probationary period, I was involved in the restoration of a factory in Nanjing. I really learned a lot from the experience, especially how to assess people's strengths and abilities.

Ms. Mandel: Can you cope with hard work under pressure and in a tough environment?

Chen: No problem. I don't care about pressure or the environment as long as I enjoy the work.

Ms. Mandel: Good. Now, do you have any questions to ask?

Chen: Yes, I've got one. Are there any opportunities for Chinese employees to be transferred to the head office in New York or other branch offices around the world?

Ms. Mandel: Um, probably. I think you are likely to be sent to work in an overseas branch to get experience later on once you've proved your worth.

Chen: Oh, great. If I'm accepted, I will do my best for the company.

Ms. Mandel: I wish you luck! We'll notify you of our final decision by Friday.

Chen: Thank you, Ms. Mandel. Goodbye.

Ms. Mandel: Goodbye.

Key:

Reasons for joining the company	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is one of the leading international consultant corporations which came to China after China entered WTO. • Working in this company would give him the best chance to use what he has learned at university.
Relevant work experience	He was involved in a factory restoration in Nanjing.

Questions	Are there any opportunities for Chinese employees to be transferred to the head office in New York or other branch offices around the world?
Result of the interview	Chen Bo will be notified of the final decision by Friday.

Post-viewing

Teaching tips:

- Divide the class into groups of three/five (odd number is preferred for voting).
- Have Ss exchange ideas within the group and then vote for the job offer decision.
- Ask two group representatives to report on their group discussion and decisions.
- Encourage other Ss to offer their own views.
- Give comments and help Ss summarize the reasons.

Hints:

1)

Strengths:

- ♦ Degree in international finance.
- ♦ Passion/determination for the job.
- ♦ Being young and energetic.
- ♦ Fluency in English.
- ♦ Good appearance.
- ♦ Knowing how to tackle problems.

Weaknesses:

- ♦ Little related experience or training.

2) Open.

Video 2 Applying for the position of Sales Manager

Pre-viewing

1. Teaching tips:

- Divide the class into pairs.
- Have Ss discuss the three questions and put together a group answer.

- Ask three pairs to share their answers with the class, each dealing with one question.
- Invite other Ss to offer their own views.

Hints:

- 1) People may change jobs for job challenge, better pay, promotion, better working environment, more flexible working hours, etc. They may also look for new jobs because they move to a new place or lose their original jobs.
- 2) Managing and training the sales team, developing the sales strategy and implement it, coordinating with other departments of the company, ensuring the achievement of the pre-set sales target, etc.
- 3) Strong presentation, communication and negotiation skills, work experience in sales position, university degree in business management or relevant major, willing to travel, being detail-oriented, etc.

Viewing**Script:**

Wang: May I come in?

Mr. White: Yes, please do.

Wang: Good morning, sir. My name is Merry Wang. I've come for an interview, as requested.

Mr. White: Nice to meet you, Miss Wang. I am Harry White, Director of the HR Department. I was expecting you. Please, take a seat.

Wang: Thank you.

Mr. White: Well, Miss Wang, you are applying for the position of Sales Manager, right? How did you know about our company?

Wang: I got to know your company from your TV commercials. They are elaborately designed and produced, and leave me deep impression. And in the summers of 1997 and 1998 I worked as a salesgirl for your company in Guangzhou.

Mr. White: Really? That's good. Then you must know something about our company?

Wang: Yes, a little. Your company is very famous. Your cosmetics and skincare products are very popular with women all over the world.

Mr. White: Huh, that's right. Miss Wang, can you tell me which university you attended?

Wang: Sun Yat-sen.

Mr. White: And what degree have you got?

Wang: I have a bachelor's degree in business administration.

Mr. White: How is your English? You know, some staff members in our company are Americans, so conversational English is very important.

Wang: I passed TEM 8 at college, and I am good at oral English. I think I can communicate with Americans quite well.

Mr. White: Good. I know you are now with United Butter. What is your chief responsibility there?

Wang: I've worked there for five years, since I graduated from college. Two years ago, I was appointed Brand Manager—responsible for the Panda line of biscuits.

Mr. White: Why do you want to change your job?

Wang: I want to change my work environment, seek new challenges and broaden my experience. That's why I want to move into sales.

Mr. White: What do you think is the most important qualification for a salesperson?

Wang: I think it's self-confidence and quality products.

Mr. White: I agree with you. What salary would you expect to get here?

Wang: Well, I would leave it to you to decide after you consider my abilities. My current annual income at United Butter is 150 thousand. But, er,...could you tell me a little more about what the job entails?

Mr. White: You would be in charge of all the sales activities, for all hair products in northeast China. This would involve market analysis, client service and development, sales promotion, and regular customer satisfaction surveys. You'd report directly to the Regional Sales Director. Do you have any other questions?

Wang: Yes, only one. When can I have your decision?

Mr. White: I need to discuss with other board members. We'll notify you of our decision as soon as possible. But...to be honest, you seem to be a good candidate with the right kind of experience and personality. You're high on my list.

Wang: That's good! Thank you, Mr. White. I look forward to hearing from you. Goodbye.

Mr. White: Goodbye.

Key:

1. F 1) In the summers of 1996 and 1997, Merry worked as a salesgirl for this company in Guangzhou.
T 2) Merry passed TEM 8 at college, and she is good at oral English.

- F 3) Merry has worked for United Butter for two years since she graduated from college.
F 4) Merry will be in charge of the marketing activities in southeast China.
T 5) Merry's current annual income in United Butter is 150 thousand.

2.

Curriculum Vitae

Name: Merry Wang
Nationality: Chinese
Address: 348 Main Road, Guangzhou, Guangdong
Telephone: (020) 1234-5678
Email: merrywang@hotmail.com

OBJECTIVE

A position of 1) Sales Manager.

SUMMARY OF QUALIFICATIONS

- 2) Five years' successful experience at United Butter.
- Motivated and enthusiastic about developing good relations with clients.
- Effectively working alone or as a team member.

EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

2003-present Working at United Butter, being the 3) Brand Manager for two years, responsible for the Panda line of 4) biscuits.

EDUCATION

1999-2003 Sun Yat-sen University, Guangzhou, Bachelor of 5) Business Administration

SKILLS

Computer skills: Windows, MS Office, Excel, Lotus 123, Microsoft FrontPage

Language skills: passed TEM 8 at college; being good at 6) oral English

INTERESTS

Bowling, traveling, yoga

Post-viewing

Teaching tips:

- Divide the class into small groups.
- Have Ss exchange ideas within the group.
- Ask two group representatives to share their ideas with the class.
- Encourage other Ss to offer their own views.
- Give comments and help Ss summarize the answers.

Key: Open.

Part V Case Analysis

Teaching tips:

- Ask Ss to take detailed notes while listening.
- Ask Ss to exchange ideas in pairs. Remind them to give examples to support their points.
- Give Ss a second chance to listen to the interview if they failed to note down the key information.
- Allow Ss a few minutes to prepare an improved version of the interview.
- Choose a few pairs to role-play the revised interview in class.
- Invite other Ss to give comments and suggestions for improvement.

Script:

Interviewer: Where do you see yourself in three years?

Candidate: Well, I see myself in sales, you know. I must say, I would rather like to establish my own company, you know, in my home town.

Interviewer: What specifically about our company attracted you?

Candidate: Well, first of all, you know, I want to leave my present company. It's too small, and you know, I don't like the boss. He doesn't know how to motivate people. You know, he is also bad-tempered. You know, the job is routine and boring.

Interviewer: Um...

Candidate: Can I ask you a question? If I get this job, you know, would I be able to work abroad in one of your overseas branches? You know, I like traveling.

Interviewer: Our staff members regularly do six-month placements in other branches.

Candidate: Oh, well, that's what I'm interested in.

Interviewer: What do you think of your strengths and weaknesses?

Candidate: Strengths and weaknesses? Well, that's hard to answer. You know, I'm very humorous. I think that's my particular strength. My weaknesses? I suppose I don't have any, you know.

Interviewer: OK. Is there anything else you'd like to ask?

Candidate: Oh, yeah. If I get this job, can I take time off for vacation? You know, I love travel.

Interviewer: I'm afraid I can't answer that.

Candidate: And also, when can you give me a definite answer about this job?

Interviewer: I guess you'll just have to wait until the end of the week. Well, I'm afraid we have to stop here. Thank you very much for coming to see me.

Hints:

She is not likely to get the job because she did poorly in the interview.

Things went wrong:

- ♦ Use filler words ("you know") too many times.
- ♦ Bad-mouth former employer.
- ♦ Inappropriate answers to interviewer's questions, e.g. ...I would rather like to establish my own company...
- ♦ Ask inappropriate questions, e.g. Can I take time off for vacation?
- ♦ Self-conceit—"have no weaknesses".
- ♦ Too much emphasis on travel.