



How to Prepare for IAS Interview

The personality test or the interview in civil services examination is the final hurdle to cross and then there is smile for rest of the lives. The personality test carries 300 marks out of the total 2300 mark scheme of the Civil Services Examination based on which the final selection list is prepared. Like the Essay (that carries 200 marks), the success and rank of an aspirant is determined significantly by this small but important segment.

Unfortunately, it is not taken very seriously by most of the aspirants. It is sad to observe, by the time aspirants realize its potential, it's already late. They hover in disbelief, how could their names missing from the list of successful candidates, even after managing some very good score in the main examination? This could scar one with painful regrets of life for not keeping prepared beforehand and getting out of the race while being so close to the target. Years of patience, dreams and committed hard work, amalgamated with long cherished personal, familial and social aspirations, all vanished in a second just for being carelessly loose laced at the final climb.

Not many candidates have managed to score over 100 marks according to the statistics of the 2009 main results. There have been a shockingly high number of double digit scores on the final score-card, against the allotted interview scores. But, this does not mean that there is not much scope to overcome the hurdles of interview or it cannot be strategically prepared and scored well.

The nature of personality test for the Civil Services Examination is different than those of the other services interviews. The candidates aspiring for Civil Services are going to be interviewed by a Board, already aware of their personal as well professional track record. They will be asked questions on matters of general interest, related to national and international importance. The object of the interview is to assess the personal suitability of the candidate for a career in public service by a Board of competent and unbiased observers who themselves having excellent career profile as a bureaucrat under different capacities with years of experience in public services. The test is intended to judge the mental caliber of a candidate.

In broad terms this is really an assessment of not only his intellectual abilities but also social traits and his curiosity in day to day happenings of national and global importance. Some of the qualities to be judged are mental alertness, critical analysis and assimilation, clear and logical exposition, balance of judgments, variety and depth of interests, ability for social cohesion and leadership, intellectual and moral integrity etc.

The technique of the interview is not that of a strict cross-examination but of a natural, though directed and purposive conversation which is intended to reveal the interpersonal skills of the candidate. The interview test is not intended to be a test either of the specialized or general knowledge

of the candidates which has been already tested through their written papers. Candidates are expected to have taken an intelligent interest not only in their academic subjects but also in the events which are happening around them both within and outside their own state or country as well as in modern currents of thought and in new discoveries which should rouse the curiosity of well educated youth.

So here, one is required to be diplomatic in taking up a stand and tackling the issues in a given circumstances. The precision of language, discipline of thought and lot of patience in placing the views are the prerequisites. Remember, your entire personality is going to be judged on every single word to be spoken there. Thus, one needs to be extra careful about selection of words while being interviewed.

The personality test requires the candidates to exhibit not only the art of balanced and precise thoughts, but also the art of delivering them or communicating them effectively. This simply indicates towards the need of a good strategy through experienced guidance and practice in right direction that's all. There are students who have scored 240 plus marks in 2009 examination and most of the toppers and rank holders do get advantage due to their interview scores only.

A brief know how of the phenomenon called IAS-Interview

The IAS interviews are one of those wonderful experiences that one never forgets in one's life time. Being one of the most prestigious and elite services available so far not only in India but the world over, CSE interviews constitute a wide, diverse and a general understanding of literally everything under the sun. Therefore, it demands maturity, humility, rationality, communicability, humbleness, presence of mind and of course, the extensive knowledge base. The knowledge criterion however, is already checked during main examination time, but rest of these things must be reflected in the personality test so that you are given good amount of marks which is decisive in your final ranking and success.

Abraham Lincon, one of the most influential presidents of USA, has said, "If I was given six hours to chop a tree, I would spend the first four sharpening the axe." This saying suggests how good interview preparation for exams like IAS can bring changes in one's life. Your interview session may last for twenty minutes, thirty minutes, or an hour, but you have to prepare yourself for much longer period. Generally, it is going to be 35 minutes or so, but not to worry, they would pass in a flash of seconds.

By preparing ahead of an ensuing interview, you have given yourself a distinct advantage. Many of the aspirants develop a belief that they are smart enough to tackle the interview successfully and there is no need for specific preparation for an interview. However, this belief turns fallacious and they do not fare as well in the interview as they could have after through preparation. This happens not because of their lack of competence but because of lack of their right mental framework in the interview process. This can only be sharpened through practice and desired cognitive realignment under expert's guidance. Yes, amount of practice may vary from person to person depending upon one's personality, maturity, education and exposure. So practice becomes an invariable component of a confident and high mark fetching performance in interview.

Therefore, need of the moment is to have a focused approach for interview. One great army general has said, "If you shed more sweat in peace, you will have to shed less blood in a battle." What is true for a battle is true for an interview too. Therefore, keep yourself fully prepared before you face an interview. This preparation will help you in two ways. First you will never feel surprised or awkward even if you face any unexpected question from the interviewers. Second, when you have prepared

yourself fully, you develop confidence within you. And with this confidence, you can ensure for yourself a well-accoladed, much better rank defining interview score than you could have without any guidance.

A. KNOW YOURSELF FULLY

For any person, it is desirable that he/she understands him/herself fully before undertaking any new activity. Interview being a new and a different activity, it is desirable that you know yourself fully. One Chinese philosopher has said long back, “the most crucial problem with us is that we don’t know ourselves fully. With the result, either we overestimate or underestimate us.” In fact, psychologically, one’s total personality defined in a broad sense having technical (academic) and behavioral competences can be divided into four quadrants as shown in the following figure:

OPEN	BLIND
HIDDEN	UNKNOWN

In the above figure, all the four quadrants have been shown in equal size just to begin with. In actual practice, the size of each quadrant differs from person to person. Those persons who analyze themselves on continuous basis and improve accordingly are able to increase the size of the first quadrant; those who do not do it are not able to increase it. Let us briefly discuss these quadrants.

1. Open: Open quadrant of one’s personality is that part about which the person concerned is aware but at the same time those who interact with her are also aware about it. In fact, it represents that part of personality which is used very frequently. For example, extroversion/introversion, openness/closeness, emotional maturity/immaturity, etc. are quite frequently known to self as well as to others.

2. Blind: This part of personality is not known to self but is known to others. For example, a person behaves in a particular way but she is not fully aware about why she has behaved in a particular way but others can point out the reason behind this particular behavior. This happens because a person copies behaviors of others either consciously or sub-consciously. Her behavior is affected by both conscious and sub-conscious minds but she can find out the reasons of an action based on her conscious mind while the action based sub-conscious mind is unexplainable.

3. Hidden: Hidden quadrant of one’s personality is that part about which the person herself is aware about but others are not aware. This happens in two situations: first, the person uses that personality characteristics very rarely in her behavior pattern and, therefore, others cannot form exact opinion about this part of personality. Second, the person herself may try to hide this part of personality as people learn to hide many of their ideas and feeling right from childhood.

4. Unknown: Unknown quadrant of personality is not known to the person concerned as well as to others in a given time frame. In fact, people’s qualities are like an iceberg. An iceberg floats on the

water surface. Only its ten percent part is visible while remaining ninety percent part remains under water which is not visible. In a case of a person, what is seen above the person surface is only small part of the qualities. Large part of the qualities which is known as potential is hidden below the surface. Such qualities come on surface when the person faces a crisis which comes in the way of achieving her valued goals. A very small example: a person runs his fastest when a barking dog is behind him.

Based on the above discussion, you can assess your qualities. For doing this, divide your total qualities in two parts – technical qualities and behavioral qualities. So far your qualities falling in quadrant 3 are concerned, you are fully aware about these and you can assess yourself on your own.

About qualities falling in quadrant 2, you are not fully aware about these. Therefore, you can take the help of your well-wishers who know you fully like you parents, trusted friends, etc. Assessing qualities falling in quadrant 4 is problematic. For this purpose, you can recall your experiences of handling crises and what you really did in those circumstances. For example, assess how much efforts you put in preparing yourself for the Civil Services examination. This will reveal how hard working you are in case situation demands, which of course it does; I am sure you agree to this.

You may have various qualities but not necessary in equal proportion. Some of your qualities may be outstanding while some may not be of this level. Therefore, define the degree to which you possess various qualities. For this purpose, either you may use 3- point scale: very good (3) good (2), or average (1) or 5-point scale: outstanding (5) very good (4) good (3) and average (2) and below average (1). Whatever scale you use, use it for assessing all your qualities. This will make comparison among various qualities easy.

Since your academic (technical) and behavioral qualities are in various forms, identify all these forms. For example, your technical qualities may pertain your proficiency in different subjects that you might have studied at different levels of your education. You might be outstanding in some but not necessarily that much outstanding in others. Do not assess yourself simply on the basis of marks scored in examination but assess yourself in the light of your view.

You can do this exercise in your mind or you can write your exercise on a piece of paper. Doing this exercise on a piece of paper is more desirable at the initial stage because when you award a particular grade to a particular quality possessed by you, you think more rationally before awarding the grade. When you do this exercise in your mind, you may tend to adopt a generalized approach and your assessment may not be as objective as you wish. When you undertake exercise of assessing your qualities and writing the result of this assessment on a piece of paper, it will look like the table given below.

In the table, only limited number of qualities has been presented. You can increase the number of qualities up to any level depending on your requirements. While assessing your various qualities, you have honesty of the highest order so that you have realistic assessment of yourself. Do not hesitate to award grade – 1(average) to a quality that you do not possess above this level. After all, you are doing this exercise for yourself and are not going to disclose its results to others so that they become aware about your shortcomings. This approach of assessing your qualities honestly will help you in two ways:

1. When you do this exercise honestly, you become aware about your shortcomings and you can take necessary steps to overcome these shortcomings. Remember: various qualities are not in-born but these are acquirable. You can acquire that by taking relevant steps.

2. When you are fully aware about your qualities, you can put your outstanding qualities as your strengths if a question is asked about this aspect (this is frequently asked in an IAS interview).

B. REHEARSE STANDARD QUESTIONS

While preparing for examination, some students adopt the practice of writing answers of standard questions to whether they can complete required number of questions within the stipulated time. In the light of this practice, they try to overcome their deficiency if there is any. In the same way, you can rehearse standard questions likely to be asked in the interview. This process will give you confidence as you will be able to eliminate any deficiency that you experience during this process.

For rehearsing standard questions, it is desirable that sit on chair located at a place which does not have any kind of disturbance. Sit In a composed manner as if you are sitting for an interview. If desired by you, hang a large-sized mirror on the wall facing you. This will help you in observing your body language during the process of rehearsing questions. After setting the above environment, you ask a question to yourself and give answer of this. You may ask a question by uttering words or by thinking in your mind. However, while giving its answer, utter words in tone, speed and loudness as if you are actually sitting in the interview. This practice will help you in overcoming deficiency that you may come across during the process.

For rehearsing standard questions, generally, two questions come in the mind of prospective interviewee: (1) how much time should be devoted in a single rehearsing session? (2) How many sessions should be conducted for rehearsal? The answers of these questions are that there cannot be any fixed time duration for a single rehearsal session and number of sessions as these varies from person to person. Some persons take more time for getting fully prepared for the interview while other takes lesser time. However, that much time should be devoted which is sufficient to make an interviewee fully prepared. In the light of this, you can decide time duration for a single rehearsal session as well as number of sessions.

For this you can take the help of some of the interviews of successful candidates either in written form or even in the form of recorded mock interviews that are available with most of the reputed IAS coaching, which if requested shall be provided. By going through these interviews carefully, you must have been in a position to understand that how good, non-controversial and balanced interviews are delivered within the precise word limits and suitable languages. Use this experience for your own evaluation i.e. after the end of a session; evaluate yourself whether you have achieved commensurate proficiency required. These self practiced exercises will be of immense help to you in facing the actual interview successfully.

If your self-evaluation indicates that you have achieved the required proficiency, you can stop the process because beyond this level, this process will not contribute much. If your self-evaluation indicates that you have any type of deficiency, you must repeat this process till you achieve the required proficiency.

C. HAVE MOCK INTERVIEWS

It is desirable that you go through some sessions of mock interviews before stepping into the real interview. A mock interview is the duplication or simulation of an actual interview. Therefore, it is conducted in a same way as actual interview is conducted. The basic objective of a mock interview is to

give an interviewee feeling of an actual interview. This feeling emerges because the mock interview is conducted on similar conditions or creating the similar environment to that of the UPSC.

In order to make the mock interview effective, it is essential that the mock interview is conducted in a way in which the real interview is conducted, both in terms of physical setting as well as interviewers. It is understandable that actual match is very difficult but some reputed institutions are having such facilities. But you got to be careful in choosing them. As many coaching institutes in Delhi and else where shall be eager to provide interview guidance as and when the main result is out, even if they are not competent enough. There are two reasons; one, they tend to make quick money and the second, they cash in some of the bio-data which can be matched when the final results are out and they shall appear with the claim of being the guide of such candidates. Well, physical setting includes furnishing of interview room on the pattern of room meant for real interview. So far as interviewers are concerned, you have two options.

First, you may take the help of any competent interview service provider. However, this may be little difficult to establish but you got to ensure that. Second, you may take the help of your parents/guardians/relatives, friends, or even classmates for this purpose. In such a case, you can have more mock interview sessions depending on your requirements without much waste of time and money. During mock interview, try to avoid mistakes commonly committed by interviewees.

These can be listed below:

Lack of Good First Impression: Many interviewees fail to make good first impression. This happens because of lack of confidence, lack of preparation, and facing such an occasion for first time. Since first impression becomes last impression in many cases of interview, it is essential that you overcome your inhibition if there is any, so that you are able to make good first impression. If need be, you may have more than one mock interview sessions.

Repeating Certain Words Too Frequently: Some interviewees repeat certain words like 'it is nothing but.....', 'I mean that...', 'I feel that.....', 'according to me.....', etc. repeating such words quite frequently by an interviewee during the interview process creates bad impressions in the mind of the interviewers. Therefore, try to avoid uttering such words beyond the required proposition.

Inappropriate Body Language: Generally body language in any oral communication is first followed by spoken language like English, Hindi, etc. Body language also supports spoken words during the entire communication process. Body language consists of facial expression, movements of various parts of the body, and physical posture during the interview process.

Many interviewees fail to use appropriate body language during interview. With the result, whatever they communicate does not become effective. Therefore, it is essential that you synchronize your body language with your spoken language during mock interviews.

Inhibition: Many interviewees show inhibition during the interview process. In the interview process, an interviewer may ask a question which has not been understood by the interviewee correctly or not understood at all. In such a case, the interviewee should request the interviewer to repeat the question but the interviewee fails to do so out of inhibition. Result, either he gives wrong answer or shows his ignorance about the answer. Both these options go against the interviewee.

Evaluation of Mock Interview Result

After the mock interview is over, it is essential that its result is evaluated so that deficiency, if any, is overcome. While evaluating the result of mock interview, treat it as real interview. The result should be evaluated by yourself as well as by the interviewers. It is better that first you evaluate your own performance in the mock interview and subsequently ask feedbacks from the interviewers. In evaluating yourself in mock interview process, ask the following questions to yourself and answer these in yes or no.

1. Was I enthusiastic enough?
2. Did I let the interviewers start the interview?
3. Did I keep a good posture throughout the interview?
4. Did I make proper eye contact while speaking?
5. Did I listen to questions carefully and, if necessary, ask the interviewers to repeat the questions or to be more specific?
6. Did I express myself clearly and use proper language?
7. Did I take time to think about my answers before giving these?
8. Was I able to be calm, control my nervousness, and demonstrate self-confidence?
9. Did I give positive answers by emphasizing my strengths and skills?
10. Did I answer questions as honestly as possible?

If your answers of above questions are in yes, your performance is good. If the answer of any above questions is in no, try to evaluate why it is so and overcome the deficiency. So far your evaluation is based on your own perception about your performance. To corroborate it, have the feedback from the interviewers. If their feedback matches your self-evaluation, things are in perfect shape. If there is difference between two sets of evaluation, get the feedback from the interviewers where you have gone wrong.

Have a joint session with the interviewers to evaluate feedback. During this process, it is possible that the interviewers may criticize some of your ideas/positions during the mock interview process. Take such criticism positively and with open mind. If they offer some advices, take them seriously and improve yourself in the light of those. Even if your friends or classmates have acted as the interviewers, do not show any resentment because that will go against the basic philosophy of learning. In the evaluation process, if you find multiple shortcomings, try to overcome these shortcomings one by one and have another mock interview session after a gap of few days to test the improvement you have made during this period.

D. AVOID COMMON MISTAKES DURING INTERVIEW

There are some mistakes which are committed by candidates during interview process either knowingly or unknowingly. Some such mistakes which have significant impacts on interview outcomes like lack of good first impression, repeating certain words too frequently, use of inappropriate body language and inhibition etc. which have been already discussed above. Some more mistakes committed during interview process are listed here. Such mistakes may not appear to be significant prima facie but these tend to reduce your chance of being successful.

You can follow the following guidelines to protect yourself from such mistakes.

1. Do not take your cell phone inside the interview room. If you have to carry it inside the interview room, keep it in off position. Ringing of a cell phone distracts attention which is not liked by anyone and may be considered in all probability, as offensive by those aged person.

2. Do not show nervousness during the interview process. Do some exercise/ yoga/ meditation to overcome your nervousness before the interview.
3. Do not brag about your qualities too much. Let your qualities speak about you themselves. If you happen to brag about your qualities too much, it will raise expectations of the interviewers and they would evaluate you against those raised expectations which can prove disastrous for you at the end, and it is not fair also.
4. Do not check time by looking at your wrist watch during the interview process. This is a sign of low confidence.
5. Do not tell a lie at any stage of the interview. In cross checking, it will be revealed and will go against you.
6. Do not make any adverse comment on the facilities provided or about the mode of communication to the UPSC etc. during any point in the interview process, remember all these are secondary stuff.
7. If you are already in job (govt. or private) or are selected in allied (or inferior, for you) services do not criticize your present employer/organization. Similarly, there should not be any criticism of your academic institution or persons related to it. In fact, criticism of any type is taken as a negative approach and is not appreciated.
8. Do not show any type of fidgetiness even if your interview is not proceeding on the line of your expectation. Try to bring the situation back according to your expectation by overcoming those obstacles which has caused this phenomenon/situation and if you cannot, they themselves would do; just keep the patience. They sometimes check your mindfulness and patience during unfavorable and tough times. So take it in that spirit.
9. Do not show any clue, either verbal or non-verbal, that you are very much disparate for this career. Desperation of any kind is not liked. If you do well in the interview, you will be offered the position.
10. If you happen to be not clear about any issue/question asked to you or do not know it at all then be honest and express it or rather confess it humbly with a smile saying 'I do not know sir'. People generally are hesitant to accept their shortcomings and try giving wild guesses or even attempt to bluff them. But dear, you should remember that they are very experienced bureaucrats (mostly) and have seen much of the world than you did, so you can not be fool them or even bluff them. Therefore, better try not to test such ideas however good it may sound to you; just control such instincts/emotions.

E. BODY LANGUAGE FOR INTERVIEW

Body language is part and parcel of oral communication. In fact, when we communicate orally to someone, our body language speaks much earlier than our words. For example, the interviewers may perceive your behavior on the basis of the manner you enter the interview room. Therefore, understanding of how you can reinforce your spoken words through your body language is very important

Body language consists of gestures (movement of different parts of body), postures (body positions), and facial expressions by which a person manifests various physical, mental, and emotional states and communicates non-verbally (without using any word) with others.

In some instances, communication takes place through body language alone. Look at how dumb communicate among themselves without using a word; how a news-reader conveys news meant for dumb without using a single word; how a Bharatnatyam dancer conveys the meanings through her actions using different parts of her body. In the case of an interview, body language can stand alone,

for example, when you are answering a question, you can make out easily by looking at the facial expression of the interviewer whether he is happy with your answer or not.

However, in the interview, Body language is also combined with spoken words from both sides-interviewers and interviewees. When both of these are combined, they put emphasis on certain things that is, differentiating things that are more important than others which are usual.

F. AVOID NEGATIVE BODY LANGUAGE

While adopting positive body language is important, it is equally important to avoid negative body language during an interview. Taking guard against negative body language is required because in many cases, body language emerges from one's subconscious mind. Therefore, you are required to know negative body language so that you can take precautions against them. In general, the following aspects of body language are negative and may emerge unknowingly.

Fidgets like playing with one's hair, touching or rubbing chin or nose frequently, biting nails, pulling or tugging of ear, rubbing back of head or neck, moving palm on the table top, clicking ball pens or likes etc. give impression of nervousness. In fact very often people use fidgets to overcome their nervousness. Therefore control all these.

Many inappropriate body gestures and postures like looking at the interview room decoration or other eye-catching elements, avoiding eye contact, waving foot, hands clasped behind back, palms closed, etc. give impression of lack of preparedness and boredom. All these should be avoided.

G. BEGINNING OF INTERVIEW

When your turn for the interview comes, you will be called by the interviewers. A person who has been given the responsibility of calling the candidates will inform you. On this call, collect all your materials (you must have put all these materials in your folder) and proceed towards the interview room. If the door of the room is open, ask the permission from the interviewers by asking gently, "May I come in sir?" enter the room only after the permission is granted. This permission may be either verbal (through words) or gesture(through indication). Walk confidently to the seat meant for the interviewee and wish the interviewers by saying "Good morning madam/sir", or "Good afternoon" as the case may be. Do not sit on the chair unless you are asked to do so. In most of the cases, one of the interviewers says the candidate to occupy the seat. In some cases, the interviewers wish to test the etiquette and manner of an interviewee and delay deliberately in saying her/him to occupy the seat. If this happens with you, ask gently to occupy the seat. After you occupy the seat the interview will begin.

A typical interview is divided into three phases: establishing rapport, gathering relevant information, and closing. Normally, the interviewers follow this sequence in the interview. All these phases are completed in a single sitting. In rapport-establishing-phase, the interview panel tries to establish rapport with the candidate so that he is able to give complete information about himself and his worth related to job requirements. Beginning of this phase is made by briefly reading bio-data of the candidate normally by the chairman of the panel or any interviewer who has been assigned this task. During the period when your bio-data is being read, listen to carefully and nod your head in yes if it is being read correctly.

If there is any mistake (may be because of an error committed by the typist while preparing copies of your bio-data required by the interviewers, or by oversight of the reader, or mistake committed by the

reader deliberately to test your proficiency), interrupt the reader immediately but politely. Your action will be taken positively by the interviewers as it shows your attentiveness. If you wait for the reader to finish his reading, the interviewers will take it negatively as they may perceive that you are not quite attentive. However, this practice of interruption should not be adopted during question answer session. After reading of you bio-data, the interviewers may ask you informational questions as well.

In some cases, the interviewers may choose to put some information questions like the place of your residence, mode of journey from you place to interview place, or similar such questions of this nature before going through reading of your bio-data in order to establish better rapport.

After establishing rapport with you, the interviewers will move to next phase of the interview. In this phase, the interviewers will make an attempt to solicit as much information as possible from you to judge your suitability as a good administrator, both technically as well as behaviorally. In this phase, questions related to the technical and behavioral aspects are asked. Technical aspect will include your graduation subjects to whatever professional or higher academic achievements you have made. It may also include about your optional subjects for both P.T as well as Main examination. Therefore, one should have a brief brush-up done before hand.

Normally, this phase takes maximum time out of the total time allocated for the interview. After finishing information gathering phase, the interviewer proceeds to last phase of the interview that is, closing phase. After probing you to the required level, the interviewers may ask questions of national and international importance, which are generally from the current affairs or happenings during the time or even before. They may ask you to give your opinion or take a stand on certain issues. There you got to be extra careful and this is where the Mock interview guidance come in handy.

After all these get over, the panel chairman indicates about closing the interview session by wishing the candidates. You should come out very gently keeping your smiles on, conveying your thankfulness and final wish.

H. COMMUNICATION SKILLS:

Communication skills are in the form of one's ability to express one's views and listen to other's views effectively. The first rule is to be a good listener. It is not found frequently in practice. Candidates are always found to be eager in talking or giving answers. But one should know that the answers become relevant only when you have responded correctly to what ever has been asked to you not what you know or think on something else. So first of all develop the habit of paying attention to what people have to say then only one should try to respond through introspections.

Well, couple of points for how you should make your responses. You should be very careful in choosing the words in whatever language you happen to speak on, as couple of words here and there and the meanings change. So always speak your minimal, try to be as precise as you can but at the same time be clear at you exposition. If you are well prepared you could also use persuasive communication. Persuasive communication aims at persuading others to see a problem from multiple perspectives and try to press to the point you are more comfortable about. Remember most of the times your interview is guided by what you have answered. Most of the questions would arise from what you have answered already. So, with persuasive communication you can more or less devise the course of your interview. But, this needs thorough practice and adequate preparation. So prepare your selves well.

I. PROBLEM SOLVING SKILLS:

Problem-solving skills are relevant for evolving solutions to a problem or set of problems. A problem is a gap between desired state of affair and actual state of affair at a particular point of time. In order to overcome this gap, relevant action is required. For identifying this action, problem-solving skills are required. Problem-solving skills are relevant not only for case-based group discussion as widely perceived but are relevant to topic-based group discussion too. Your problem-solving skills will be reflected in your following actions during group discussion process

- While discussing a topic or case, adopt systems approach, that is, treat the topic/case as a system and identify its different components (technically called subsystems) and their interrelationships. For example, if you are talking about status of education in India, classify education into three categories: primary education, secondary education, and higher education; these three categories of education have high relationships – a higher-level education is highly dependent on a lower-level education.
- In order to identify issues involved in topic/case, apply your creative power. Through this power, you can identify root causes underlying issues. For example, while discussing the reasons for poor status of education in India, do not just mention lack of funds, lack of discipline in the society, etc. These may not be root causes but intervening causes resulted from root causes, for example, lack of commitment on the part of concerned governments or similar such causes.
- While suggesting a solution to any problem, check its feasibility and its effect on other components of the system, otherwise, there is likelihood that your solution may solve one problem but may generate more problems. If possible, also mention how your solution can be implemented. For example, if you mention that governments should allocate more funds to education, also mention from where these funds should come as governments always feel lack of funds.

J. UNDERSTANDING SKILLS TO BE EVALUATED:

As mentioned earlier, UPSC is placing high importance on those candidates who have skills relevant for becoming good team players. These skills are problem-solving skills, human skills, communication skills, initiative taking, and leadership skills. These are known as core skills for a good administrator. This is the reason why these skills are being included and checked right from the preliminary levels which is reflected in the new Preliminary syllabus-2011. These are also reflected in last year's main examination. Evaluators focus on these skills while evaluating performance of candidates during the personality test as well. So you got to inhere these attributes through extensive mock practices, with your behavior and with your attentiveness.

K. NINE-POINT AGENDA TO FACE INTERVIEW SUCCESSFULLY

To be successful in interview of any type and for any kind of position, you may follow the following guidelines:

1. Good First Impression. There is a famous saying, "in an interview, interviewers form their opinions about interviewee in first few minutes, rest of the time is used to reinforce those opinions." This happens because of the effect of first impression. About the first impressions, a general saying is, "first impression is the last impression." Looking at these phenomena, it is essential for you that you create good impression in the mind of the interviewers.

First impression or subsequent impressions is a matter of perception of the interviewers about you. This perception is formed on the basis of totality of your personality that is reflected by you the moment you enter the interview room and your pattern of interaction with the interviewers within first few minutes. They will

observe you first outwardly and subsequently inwardly. In order to make good first impression based on your outward features, it is desirable that your attire should be elegant and sober, professional briefcase/portfolio/bag, professional hairstyle, and other outlook.

You should walk very confidently from the door to the chair in proper manner, sit on the chair in proper manner only after taking due permission, maintain proper eye contact with the interviewer who is asking question and use appropriate body language. Though many of these are outward things but they speak about you and are important for making good first impression. For inward things, use sweet and polite tone while talking to the interviewers or answering their questions, show your seriousness about the job and interview process even if you do not intend to join the job after being selected (in rarest of the rare case), and similar such things which show that you believe in high level of etiquette and mannerism.

2. Be a Good Listener. In an interview, be a good listener. This will serve two-fold objectives, first, when you listen attentively, you tend to understand questions correctly. This understanding will help you to answer the questions second, when you listen attentively, it will impress the interviewers by creating a feeling that you are taking genuine interest in whatever they are asking about. In the listening process, your facial expression should be such that you are taking active interest in what an interviewer is saying.

3. Communicate Effectively. An effective communication is one which sends the subject-matter of the communication in a way that the receiver of the message understands it in the same way as intended by the sender. Besides sending the subject-matter, effective communication also involves putting higher emphasis on more important matter. In written communication, this is done through underlining the more important matters or putting them into italic or bold form. In the case of oral communication, this is done by changing tone style supported by body language. In order to make your communication effective, you can observe the following points:

After an interviewer has finished his questions, pause for a moment and organize your answer in a correct manner.

Use appropriate words to communicate your answer. For answering a technical question, you may use technical words but for answering a non-technical question, it is not necessary to use technical words.

Follow the principle of brevity. It implies that you should answer a question in a very specific way that is required by a question. For example, if you have been asked to define a term, limit yourself to its definition only. Similarly, if you have been asked to narrate the features of an object, just mention the various points. Details of various points are not required at this stage. If the interviewers ask for detail of any point, narrate its detail. This way, time allotted to each candidate for interviewing is utilized properly.

4. Ask for a clarification. If an interviewer has asked a question which you could not hear properly, may be because of lack of appropriate loudness of voice of the interviewer, disturbance of any kind, or your own inattention, it is better that you ask gently to the interviewer to repeat his question again. Similarly, there may be possibility that an interviewer may ask a question whose meaning is not as precise as wished. In such a case, you simply say, "sir, do you mean.....?" do not feel shy that the interviewer will feel agitated. On the contrary, he will be happy that your approach is precise and this will go in your favor. Instead of giving wrong answer to a question, it is better to ask for repetition and clarification. However, this practice, if adopted quite frequently, becomes annoying. Keep this phenomenon in your mind while using this practice.

5. Discuss but do not argue. It is better that you treat an interview as a discussion forum and not an argument forum. Discussion involves deliberating on issues that may emerge from a question. In order to sort out the issues, it is possible that there may be questions over questions, particularly in an in-depth interview. If an interviewer expresses her opinion on an issue with you do not feel agreed, you gently say about your reservation. If the interviewer does not agree with your view and still persists on her earlier stand, it is better not

to drag this discussion to prove the interviewer wrong. If you adopt contrary practice, this will lead to argument and counter-argument which may go against you.

6. Admit Your Mistake. If in answering any question, you make a mistake and the interviewer points out it, accept your mistake. A mistake is a wrong judgment of a situation and acting on that. Therefore, committing a mistake is not very unusual phenomenon while, committing a mistake is a natural phenomenon, persisting on that mistake after it has been discovered is a blunder. Therefore, if you commit any mistake during the interview process, admit it and offer an apology. Do not bring your ego which is false in this process.

7. Be Polite. It is better that you remain polite throughout the interview process. Even if any unpleasant situation is created by an interviewer (this may be done deliberately to test your patience), do not lose your temper. If you lose your temper to protect your ego, you may be treated as a highly emotional person. Remember, these personality traits are not considered suitable for any job. If you are polite in the interview, it conveys that you have respect for other's perspective; you are open-minded to accept new ideas and change yourself accordingly, as per the demands of a given situation. All these will go in your favor.

8. Display Proper Etiquette and Manner. Interview is a formal process though, sometimes, this process may be conducted by the interviewers in such a way that it appears to be an informal process. This is done deliberately to put a candidate at unease so as to extract maximum possible information about her/him. If such a situation comes before you, do not forget to display the etiquette and a manner of a formal interview process.

It may also happen that during your interview, some refreshment is brought to the interviewers. Generally, on such an occasion, refreshment is also served to the candidate sitting in the interview room. If such a situation comes before you and the interviewers ask you to take refreshment, do not deny this offer as it is against etiquette. If you do not take any particular item of refreshment served (many persons do not take tea or coffee at all), say politely about it and take only the remaining items.

9. Create Good Last Impression. Take an interview just like a one day cricket match, batsman score runs at a brisk rate during the first few overs; this rate goes down in the middle overs; but this rate goes brisk again during the last few overs to score a winning total. In the same way, if you have created good first impression in the beginning of the interview but have faulted in giving the best possible answers of some questions, you can erase the memory of such faulted answers by creating good last impression.

For creating good last impression, you can follow the same approach which you might have used in creating good first impression with a slight difference. Generally, chairman of the interview panel closes the interview by saying to the candidate, "thank you" and wishing him good luck.

SOME DO'S AND DON'TS

L. ARRIVE ON TIME TO THE INTERVIEW LOCATION

Try to arrive at interview location at least 15-20 minutes earlier than the interview schedule mentioned in the UPSC call letter. Those who live in Delhi may not have much problem in arriving at the interview location, which is the UPSC building known as Dhaul Pur House, located at Shahjahan road, New Delhi, as they must be familiar with this famous place. Those who are coming from far off places to attend the interview should plan their journey in such a way that they reach the city sufficiently in advance. Before arriving at the interview location, ensure that you have the following items which will be required during the interview process:

Interview call letter.

All educational certificates, mark sheets and testimonials in original as well as their photocopies.

Your passport size photographs (3-4 copies).

A folder/portfolio bag etc. to keep the above items.

After reaching the venue of the interview, contact a person at the reception/UPSC gate who will let you know to whom and where you have to meet to complete the pre-interview activities.

M. COMPLETING PRE-INTERVIEW ACTIVITIES

As in many organizations certain pre-interview activities have to be completed by every candidate, UPSC is no different. One has to do the following activities before one gets the chance to face the interview:

1. Taking signatures of the candidates.
2. Verification of certificates, mark sheets, testimonials, etc.
3. Filing up of traveling bills or claiming traveling allowances and other permissible allowances.
4. Any other activities specified there in.

After completing the above activities, take a seat in the room marked for the purpose and wait for your turn to be called for the interview. During this intervening period, do not think about the interview as this kind of thinking create anxiety in you. You may read some literature. You may find some newspapers/magazines in the waiting room of the UPSC or else you are advised to carry some of your own. If you wish, you can talk to other candidates as well. But do not show your eagerness in finding what the candidate before you have spoken in the interview or what questions have been asked to her/him etc. Your course of interview is bound to be different than the others for sure, so why to take tension or worry for unnecessary things. Do avoid them. If waiting period is too long, do not be impatient. In fact, in many cases this waiting period, if it is too long, becomes boring and anxiety-producing. Therefore, find avenues to overcome the boring and anxiety-producing phenomenon. The best way is to read the news papers and introspect on some of the editorial analysis.

N. INTERVIEW ATTIRE

Many interviewees are perplexed, how they should be dressed for the interview. This phenomenon is natural as the first interview of an interviewee is quite significant for his/her career. A poor performance in the first interview is likely to demoralize him/her while a good performance is likely to boost his/her morale.

This morale is quite significant for success. Interview attire is important because it reflects the total personality of a person, her way of thinking and doing, and her approach in life. Dignified attire helps in creating good first impression in the mind of interviewers. Therefore, your attire should match the occasion

While choosing your interview attire, treat attending the interview as sales function, product packing plays very important role. However this packing must be according to the need. It should be attractive, aesthetically matched but not vulgar. Therefore, in choosing your interview attire, take into account your age, position for which you are to be interviewed, dress code of the organization (UPSC) concerned, and season of the interview (normally it is autumn, but may change in few years). In the light of these, ensure that your attire meets the following requirements:

1. In the matter of interview attire, never confuse an interview with a social function. Your attire should be according to the requirements of the interview. Do not wear such a dress for which you will be remembered for and not for your interview performance.
2. Your attire should be rightly tight; not too tight that you cannot sit comfortably; not too loose to be over-sized. Your dress should be neat and well iron pressed. It is not necessary that you wear only new bought dress. It is preferable that you wear a dress which is not shiny but sober.

• INTERVIEW ATTIRE FOR WOMEN

If you are a woman candidate, following guidelines will help you in choosing your interview attire:

Dress: You have an option either to wear a lady-suit or a sari depending upon your comfort-level and personality. In most of the cases women look great in Saris, thereby making Saris more preferable.

In such a case, you should wear single-light colored sari with matching blouse. Printed suit having large-sized design should be avoided. Similarly, trousers and shirt should also be avoided unless you want to make your own personality-statement. Jeans are not suitable in any case.

Others: Avoid jewellery to the maximum possible level. Keep your clothes simple, leaning towards conservative. Apply minimum make-up/cosmetics and avoid long polished nails. If you wish to carry a purse, it should be small and matching with your style as you might be required to carry a portfolio for keeping your required documents. Your hair style should match your professional requirements.

• INTERVIEW ATTIRE FOR MEN

If you are a male candidate, following guidelines will help you in choosing your interview attire:

Dress: A light colored shirt (white or light blue), a blue or steel grey trousers and a matching tie should be enough. But, you can also choose navy blue or grey color fabric. In case the fabric has stripes, these should be of very light color otherwise these are likely to over-shadow your personality. Shirts should

be of full sleeves and off-white, sky blue or cream color. Avoid dark striped shirts. For a tie, avoid multi-color printed shades. Your tie should match your suit. Socks should be of a dark color, preferably navy blue or dark gray. Shoes should be of leather with laces.

Color of shoes may be black or dark brown; but, preferably use black leather shoes, which is neatly and meticulously polished. While choosing shoes and socks, ensure that both match each other. Your interview is going to be scheduled during Autumn, which is like summer in Delhi, so choose your shirt and trousers as mentioned above. Tie of the matching color is preferable. Avoid half-sleeve shirt even though you may be required to wear this type of shirt at your work place. Similarly, jeans should be avoided.

Others : Besides dress, you may require to take care of other items of attire. Avoid wearing too much jewellery like so many rings even if you are wearing these regularly. Rings with stones should be avoided at the time of interview. Wearing simply a wrist watch will be enough, avoid fragrances and cologne that have high smell content. Your hair style should be of professional level and not of fashion level.

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