

Communication Skills: Lecture No. 26

Module 8

Lecture 5

INTERVIEW SKILLS



In this lecture, I will discuss how you can create the first best impression in an interview by focusing on the soft skills—that is the non-verbal, body language aspect of communication.

It is important to make a good first impression because *the first impression counts often for far more than what is logical!* The result of the interview will depend largely on the impression you make during the first five minutes. Your subject, marks and experience got you to the interview

but it is the 'soft skills' that will take you to the next level. The following aspects are crucial in determining the initial good impression.

Keep in Mind

1. Punctuality
2. Dress
3. Handshake
4. Body Language




Punctuality

1. Punctuality

Be there before time.

Do whatever it takes to arrive half an hour before.

Late arrival for a job interview is never excusable.



Just be there before time. If you have to travel from one place to another, I would even suggest that you should be there one day before. You should give contingency to the fact that the train or the flight may get cancelled due to inclement weather. Although some panel members might take a sympathetic view and allow a candidate who arrived very late to sit for the interview, seldom a late arrived candidate gets selected in an interview.

Before the Interview

Before you reach the interview venue or at least before you just enter the interview hall, stop by the restroom and make sure that your hair is combed, makeup is fresh, shirt is buttoned, and the pants are zipped. When you arrive at the venue, when you meet new people smile and say ‘good morning/afternoon.’ Greet them with a cheerful ‘Hello! How are you?’ Do not wait for someone to initiate the conversation. Be the first to greet and smile. Developing a conversation with other participant gives you a chance to size-up your competitors. Besides if you create a good rapport with your competitors your stress will be reduced and a positive environment will be generated.

If you are offered something to eat or drink, unless you have plenty of time, it is better to decline politely. While eating/drinking something in a hurry, people generally tend to spill the food on their dress and spoil it. Last minute spoiling of the dress can make an interview candidate very nervous as there will not be any time to change or clean it. Attending the interview, with a coffee stain or something on the shirt can obviously mar the first impression. For the same reason, it is better to avoid drinks and food stuff even when offered during an interview. Apart from saving you from any nervous spill over, avoiding any eatables in an interview creates a professional image.

Keys to Success

Understand that success in an interview is based on three factors:



Those factors are based on how you are perceived.

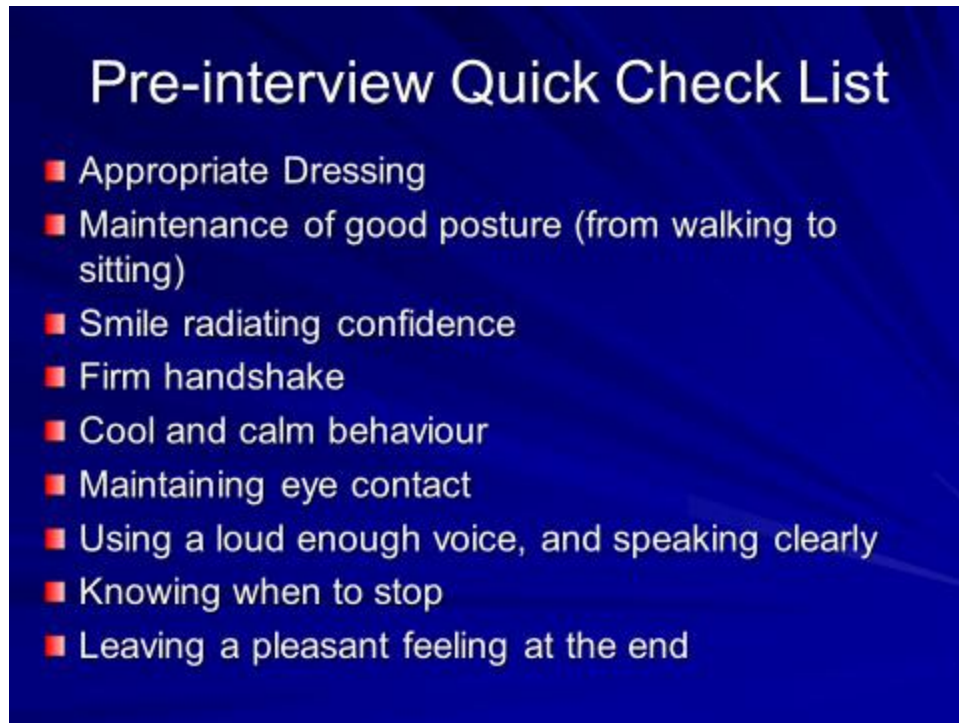
**Others get their perception of you from
three basic types of communication:**

Visual (how you look)

Verbal (what you say)

Voice (how you speak)

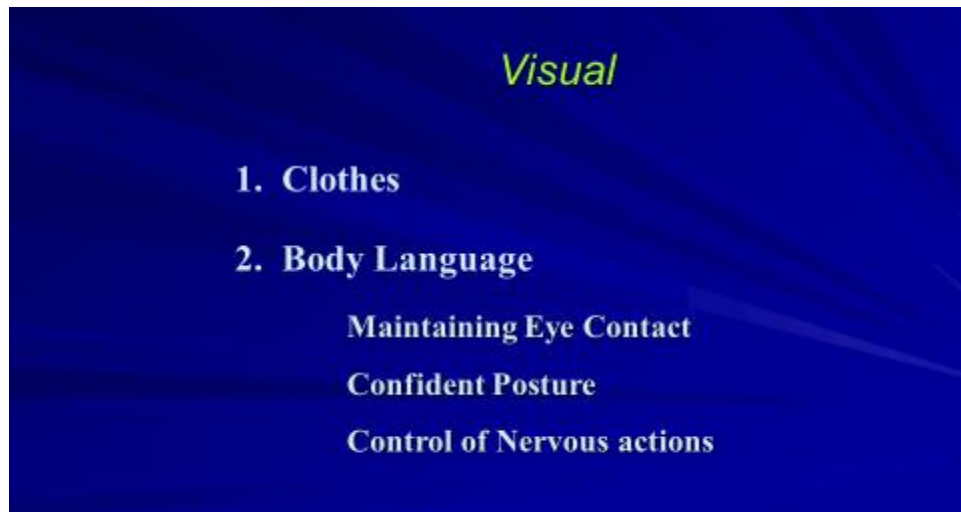
Before I explain the above points in detail, take a look at the pre-interview quick check list, which is actually based on the above aspects.



The *appropriateness of your dressing* is determined by the level of formal/informal, conservative/open expectations of the company. You need to ascertain this before the interview by knowing about the dress code expectations of the company. Keep in mind that very often candidates get rejected owing to their inappropriate dressing.

Maintenance of good posture is significant from the time you enter the interview hall. You should walk straight (instead of slouching), occupy your seat coolly (without stumbling), and smile radiating confidence. You can begin by giving a *firm handshake* and then impress the panelists with your *cool and calm behavior* by controlling any distractive mannerism and staying relaxed throughout. *Maintaining eye contact* with all the members of the interview panel reveals that you are confident, sincere, and straight forward. Speak *clearly* in a *loud enough voice* that is audible to all the interviewers; it should appear to be slightly raised but not shouting. Most of all, while answering questions, you should know when to stop. Afraid of getting a difficult and unanswerable question, you should avoid blabbering endlessly. While leaving, by all your pleasing and courteous behaviour, the interviewers should get a pleasant feeling to have interviewed you.

Coming back to creating the first best impression, let me demonstrate how important it is to focus on your visual communication.



Your visual image is predominantly communicated through the *clothes* you choose to wear and the overall message your body language conveys. Personal appearance, body language, and voice have the greatest influence on another person's initial impression, which is formed, ironically, within one and half to five minutes. They all together provide instant information about one's personality even before the person starts saying something about himself. I hope you remember from the previous lessons what Mehrabian discovered about the impact of nonverbal communication. According to him, the verbal content impacts only 7% of the whole communication!



Keys to Success

Verbal/Voice

Albert Mehrabian:

- 7% of a listeners' impression of what another person is saying is derived from the content;**
- 38% came from vocal characteristics such as tone, volume and pace;**
- 55% of the remaining was from the speaker's facial expressions and body language.**

Display Enthusiasm!

Since 93% is non-verbal, you need to display positive body language right from the start, as for instance, showing enthusiasm on your face. Your appearance will speak volumes before you ever utter a word. You should be well dressed—which does not mean a gaudy display of your wealth. You should dress for the occasion and as far as possible stay conservative and traditional. Avoid jeans and t-shirt; full-suit for men and salwar/saree for women give the traditional/formal look. Ultimately, you should dress for the position you want not the position you have.

You can also consider the following Do's and Don'ts for the dress code for interviews.

2. Dress For Interview Success



Your appearance will speak volumes before you ever utter a word.

- Be Well Dressed
- Nice Looking & Smiling
- Stay conservative & traditional
- Dress for the position you want
NOT the position you have

Dress Code for Interviews: The Do's

Do's

- ✓ Business-like outfit (the type that reflects your personality, character and values)
- ✓ Clean, ironed clothing
- ✓ Matching clothes – simple
- ✓ Clean, polished, conservative shoes
- ✓ Clean, tidy, well-groomed hair style
- ✓ Fresh haircut a couple of days before interview
- ✓ Clean, trimmed finger nails
- ✓ Clean teeth
- ✓ Appropriate accessories
- ✓ Simple make-up
- ✓ Minimal cologne or perfume



Now when I say appropriate accessories, you should be very cautious about even using some of these accessories. Why? Take for example the use of perfumes. There are perfumes exclusively for women and there are those meant only for men. Imagine a situation where the panel members

smell from a distance jasmine perfume and nonverbally perceive an attractive young woman to enter the interview hall. But unfortunately, a sheepish young fellow enters with a stupid smile! Needless to say that the candidate has failed to create the first best impression owing to an incongruous use of perfume. For the same reason, one should avoid pungent cologne or perfume as it can cause allergy to some interviewers who might psychologically want the candidate to leave as quick as possible and subsequently become unfriendly from the beginning. Similarly, while some interviewers tolerate certain kind of weird hair style, never risk it with a fully punky style as shown in the picture below.



Avoid T-shirts with distractive captions and controversial slogans, which attracts the attention immediately that shocks the reader. Distracting jewellery such as shiny metal ear-rings and bracelets should be avoided. Mouth fresher should be used by those whose mouth emanates bad smell. Chewing gum, while talking to friends appears to be cool, can cause a negative impression of being impolite and self-occupied.

You can also take note of the following dress and accessories tips given according to the gender.

Men	Women
<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Necktie should be silk with a conservative pattern■ Dark shoes (black lace-ups are best)■ Dark socks (black is best)■ Get a haircut; short hair always fares best in interviews■ No beards■ Mustaches are a possible negative, but if you must, make sure it is neat and trimmed■ No rings other than wedding ring■ No earrings (if you normally wear one, take it out)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Always wear a suit with a jacket; (Western context)■ Simple sari/salwar (Indian context)■ No high heels■ No purses, small or large; carry a briefcase instead■ If you wear nail polish (not required), use clear or a conservative color■ Minimal use of makeup (it should not be noticeable)■ No more than one ring on each hand■ One set of earrings only

Avoid showy displays

- Avoid nail polish, especially of different colours
- Rings, of different types and colours



The nails should not be overgrown; they should be neat, clean and trimmed. Similarly, showy display of rings should be avoided (see the picture above).

You should also carefully avoid the following non-verbal blockers.

Avoid non-verbal blockers

- Wearing sunglasses
- Wearing a cap (with funky captions/colour)
- Wearing complete black or dark dress
- Wearing a new, uncomfortable dress
- Using shopping bags to carry files
- Having a close haircut on the interview day

You should carry an interview folder ensuring it is intact with the following items.

Keep the Interview Folder

- Ensure that the folder contains a copy of the application form
- Complete biodata
- With copies of certificates/original
- Notes on the company's profile
- Your plan/vision/proposal, etc

Before you walk in through that door, clear your mind from all negative chatter. Most importantly, *switch off your cell phone*. Even keeping it in silent mode can cause disturbance through vibration. Understand that once you enter the interview hall, *there is nothing more important than the interview*. Let the interviewers know before you even say your first word that you are the right choice. So your body language, especially your smile, ought to emanate that kind of radiance.

Finally, enter into a state of *relaxed concentration*. You could see most of the Olympics divers entering into this meditative stage just before taking that plunge. This simply means freeing your mind from any negative thoughts by meditation and positive visualization. To achieve this, you need to focus on the present moment. Once you get inside the interview chamber, *act spontaneous*, behave naturally, but at the same time, be well prepared. Be your authentic self, which should be professional yet real.



Relaxed Concentration

- Enter into a state of relaxed concentration.
- You'll need to quiet the negative self chatter in your head through meditation or visualization.
- Focus on the present moment.
- Act spontaneous, but be well prepared.
Be your authentic self, professional yet real.

In the next lecture, you will learn more about the structure of an interview and how you should present yourself to create that winning image.

Further References

Further References

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