

Fifteenth Edition

Interviewing

Principles and Practices



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Education

Charles J. Stewart | William B. Cash

INTERVIEWING

Principles and Practices

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Principles and Practices

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Charles J. Stewart

Purdue University

William B. Cash, Jr.

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INTERVIEWING: PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES, FIFTEENTH EDITION

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*To the memory of William “Bill” Cash, Jr., student,
co-author, and friend*

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Charles J. Stewart

Charles J. “Charlie” Stewart is the former Margaret Church Distinguished Professor of Communication at Purdue University where he taught from 1961 to 2009. He taught undergraduate courses in interviewing and persuasion and graduate courses in such areas as persuasion and social protest, apologetic rhetoric, and extremist rhetoric on the Internet. He received the Charles B. Murphy Award for Outstanding Undergraduate Teaching from Purdue University and the Donald H. Ecroyd Award for Outstanding Teaching in Higher Education from the National Communication Association. He was a Founding Fellow of the Purdue University Teaching Academy. He has written articles, chapters, and books on interviewing, persuasion, and social movements.

Charlie Stewart has been a consultant with organizations such as the Internal Revenue Service, the American Electric Power Company, Libby Foods, the Indiana University School of Dentistry, and the United Association of Plumbers and Pipefitters. He is currently a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) for children.

William B. Cash, Jr.

The late William “Bill” Cash began his work life in his father’s shoe and clothing store in northern Ohio. While still in high school, he began to work in broadcasting and advertising, and this led to bachelor’s and master’s degrees in broadcasting and speech communication at Kent State University. After completing his academic work at Kent State, he joined the speech communication faculty at Eastern Illinois University and began to consult with dozens of companies such as Blaw-Knox, IBM, and Hewitt Associates. Bill took a leave from Eastern Illinois and pursued a PhD in organizational communication under W. Charles Redding. He returned to the faculty at Eastern Illinois and created and taught a course in interviewing.

Bill Cash left college teaching and held positions with Ralston Purina, Detroit Edison, Baxter, and Curtis Mathis, often at the vice president level. After several years in industry, he returned to teaching and took a faculty position at National-Louis University in Chicago. He became the first chair of the College of Management and Business and developed courses in human resources, management, and marketing.

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PREFACE

This fifteenth edition of *Interviewing: Principles and Practices* continues to focus on the fundamental principles applicable to all forms of interviewing and to seven specific types of interviewing while incorporating the latest in research, interpersonal communication theory, the uses of technology and social media, the role of ethics in interviewing, and EEO laws that affect employment and performance interviews. While we have included recent research findings and developments, the emphasis remains on building the interviewing skills of both interviewers and interviewees. Several chapters address the increasing diversity in the United States and our involvement in the global village as they impact the interviews in which we take part.

A major goal of this edition was to make it more user-friendly by sharpening the writing style, eliminating unnecessary materials and redundancies, making definitions and explanations more precise, and employing different print types to emphasize critical words, terms, concepts, and principles. We have restructured several chapters to provide clarity and logical progressions from point to point.

Changes in the Fifteenth Edition

- Chapter 1 includes a more focused development of the definition of interviewing to enable students to see the similarities and differences of interviewing from other types of interpersonal communication with an emphasis on collaboration between parties. There is a detailed discussion of how technology, beginning with the telephone, has impacted the nature of interviews, the growing use of two-way video technology to conduct interviews, and the serious implications this has for how we communicate interpersonally.
- Chapter 2 includes an expanded treatment of the nature and types of relationships in interviews and how these affect the essential collaborative process that ensues; the importance of trust, self-esteem, and self-worth in what parties are willing to disclose during interviews; the dangers of assuming that communication is taking place; and how gender and cultural differences affect our use and interpretation of language.
- Chapter 3 includes sharper and clearer explanations and illustrations of question types, the uses of questions as the tools of the trade, and a refined treatment of common question pitfalls that make it more difficult to perform interview tasks efficiently and effectively.
- Chapter 4 includes clearer and expanded explanations of interview guides and schedules, question sequences, rapport and orientation in openings, types of openings and closings, and the importance of making openings and closings dialogues rather than monologues.

- Chapter 5 includes expanded discussions of planning for and structuring informational interviews, using criteria for selecting interviewees, conducting and taking part in videoconference interviews, and managing difficult interviewees.
- Chapter 6 includes refined discussions of qualitative and quantitative surveys, sampling techniques, incentives designed to increase participation, advantages and disadvantages of face-to-face interviews, and the telephone survey.
- Chapter 7 includes revised and expanded discussions of searching for new talent (internships, career and job fairs, kiosks, and Web sites), reviewing EEO laws, understanding and adapting to the unique characteristics of the millennial generation, reviewing applicant materials prior to the interview, structuring interviews, asking on-the-job questions, and closing the interview effectively.
- Chapter 9 includes emphases on conducting the performance review interview as a coaching opportunity, selecting an appropriate review model, employing a 360-degree approach, establishing a relaxed and supportive climate, orienting the employee, and avoiding a “gunnysacking” approach in the performance problem interview in which the interviewer stores up grievances and then dumps them on an employee all at once.
- Chapter 10 includes new and revised materials on ethics and persuasion, the criteria essential for successful persuasive interviews, how to establish substantial similarity with the interviewee, the use of questions in persuasive interviews, how to anticipate and respond to objections, and how to be an active and critical interviewee.
- Chapter 11 includes revised treatments of the nature of the counseling interview; the role of lay counselors who are similar to counselees and open, caring, and good listeners; a code of ethics for the counseling interview; trust as the cornerstone of the counseling relationship; respect for and understanding of the interviewee’s capabilities of making sound choices and decisions; the necessity to be culturally aware in today’s global village; and maintaining relational boundaries.
- Chapter 12 includes emphasis on the roles we all play in health care interviews, the critical importance of relationship between health care provider and patient, the sharing control during the interview, the influences of culture and gender in health care interactions, ways to lessen the negative impact of long waiting periods, opening questions, reasons for patient resistance to disclosure during interviews, ways to lessen the loss of information during and after interviews, how collaboration can promote self-persuasion, compliance with recommendations, and closing interviews.

Chapter Pedagogy

The **role-playing cases** at the ends of Chapters 5 through 12 provide students with opportunities to design and conduct practice interviews and to observe others’ efforts to employ the principles discussed. **Student activities** at the end of each chapter provide ideas for in- and out-of-class exercises, experiences, and information gathering. We have made many of these less complex and time-consuming. The **up-to-date readings** at the

end of each chapter will help students and instructors who are interested in delving more deeply into specific topics, theories, and types of interviews. The glossary provides students with definitions of key words and concepts introduced throughout the text.

Intended Courses

This book is designed for courses in speech, communication, journalism, business, supervision, education, political science, nursing, criminology, and social work. It is also useful in workshops in various fields. We believe this book is of value to beginning students as well as to seasoned veterans because the principles, research, and techniques are changing rapidly in many fields. We have addressed theory and research findings where applicable, but our primary concern is with principles and techniques that can be translated into immediate practice in and out of the classroom.

Ancillary Materials



The 15th edition of *Interviewing: Principles and Practices*, is now available online with Connect, McGraw-Hill Education's integrated assignment and assessment platform. Connect also offers SmartBook for the new edition, which is the first adaptive reading experience proven to improve grades and help students study more effectively. All of the title's website and ancillary content is also available through Connect, including:

- A sample interview that illustrates the type of interview, situation, principles, practices, and mistakes parties make to challenge students to distinguish between effective and ineffective techniques, questions, and responses and know how to remedy them.
- An Instructor's Manual, written by Charles Stewart, for each chapter.
- A full Test Bank of multiple choice questions that test students on central concepts and ideas in each chapter.
- Lecture Slides for instructor use in class.

Acknowledgments

We wish to express our gratitude to students at Purdue University and National-Louis University College of Management, and to past and present colleagues and clients for their inspiration, suggestions, exercises, theories, criticism, and encouragement. We thank Suzanne Collins, Mary Alice Baker, Vernon Miller, Kathleen Powell, Garold Markle, and Patrice Buzzanell for their resources, interest, and suggestions.

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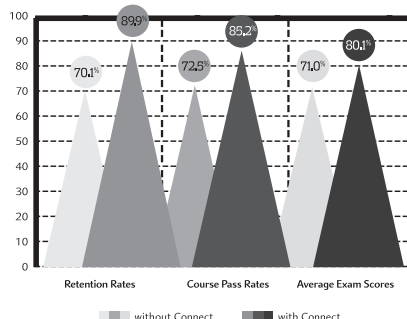
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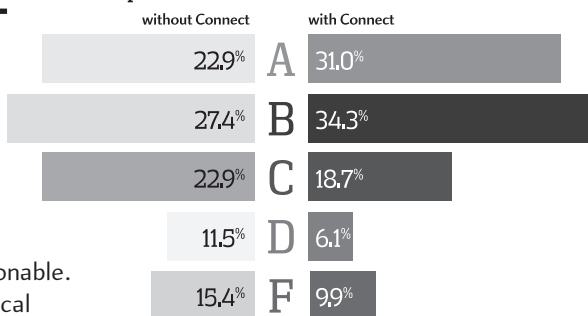
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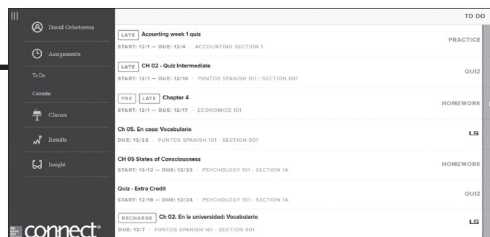
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An Introduction to Interviewing

Interviews are daily occurrences.

A few years ago one of the authors was talking to a hospital administrator at a fund-raising event, and the administrator asked what classes he was teaching. When the author mentioned a class in interviewing that included several nursing students, the administrator replied that nursing students didn't need an interviewing course because jobs in nursing were plentiful. This administrator was exhibiting a common misconception about interviewing, that it is merely a job-seeking activity. In fact, interviewing is the most common form of purposeful, planned, and serious communication. An interview may be formal or informal, minimally or highly structured, simplistic or sophisticated, supportive or threatening, and momentary or lengthy. It may share characteristics with brief interactions, social conversations, small groups, and presentations, but it differs significantly from each.

The objectives of this chapter are to identify the essential characteristics of interviews, distinguish interviews from other forms of communication, identify and discuss traditional types of interviews, and examine the growing roles of technology in conducting and participating in interviews.

The Essential Characteristics of Interviews

Two Parties

Dyadic means two parties.

Each interview is a dyadic—**two party**—process that typically involves **two people** such as a physician and a patient, an applicant and a recruiter, a police officer and an eyewitness, and political candidate and a donor. Some interviews involve more than **two people** but never more than **two parties**. For instance, four reporters may be interviewing a college golf coach, a travel director may be interviewing a husband and wife, or a surgical team may be interviewing the guardians of an elderly relative. In each case, there are **two distinct parties**—an interviewer party and an interviewee party. If a single party is involved (three students reviewing for a political science exam) or more than two parties are involved (four construction management firms bidding for a construction project), the interaction is not an interview.

Purpose and Structure

Interviews are structured.

One or both parties must arrive at an interview with a **predetermined** and **serious purpose**, a component that distinguishes the interview from social and unplanned conversations. Conversations and momentary meetings are rarely organized or



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■ *More than two people may be involved in an interview, but never more than two parties—an interviewer party and an interviewee party.*

Parties
exchange
and share.

planned in advance, but interviews always have a degree of planning and structure that may include an opening, selection of topics, prepared questions, and background information. The predetermined purpose—to get or give information, to seek employment or recruit an employee, to counsel or be counseled, to persuade or be persuaded—will determine the nature of the planning and structure of the interview.

Interactional

Interviews are **interactional** because both parties share and exchange roles, responsibilities, feelings,

beliefs, motives, and information. When one party does all of the talking and the other all of the listening, a speech—not an interview—is taking place with an audience of one or two. John Stewart writes that communication is a “continuous, complex, collaborative process of verbal and nonverbal meaning making.”¹ This collaborative “meaning making” entails a **mutual** creation and sharing of messages that come from words and nonverbal signs (lowered voice, wink, a frown) that may express interest, compassion, understanding, belief, or disagreement during an interview. As communication **processes**, interviews are dynamic, ongoing, ever-changing interactions of message sending and receiving with a degree of **system** and **structure**. Once an interview commences, the parties cannot not communicate.² Even when they communicate poorly, they communicate something.

Questions

Asking and answering **questions** play critical roles in all interviews. They are the dominant feature in market surveys and journalistic interviews. In others such as recruiting, counseling, and health care, questions share time with information sharing. And in others such as sales, training, and performance review, questions play strategic roles in obtaining or clarifying information and in altering a party’s ways of thinking, feeling, or acting. They are literally the **tools of the trade** interview parties use to check the accuracy of messages sent and received, verify impressions and assumptions, and provoke feelings and thoughts. Chapter 3 will introduce you to the types and uses of questions.

Questions play
multiple roles
in interviews.

An interview, then, is an interactional communication process between two parties, at least one of whom has a predetermined and serious purpose, that involves the asking and answering of questions.

With this definition as a guide, determine which of the following interactions constitutes an interview and which does not.

Exercise #1—What Is and Is Not an Interview?

1. Three teachers are reviewing the School Board's proposal for hiring a new Vice Principal.
2. A college recruiter for the women's basketball team is meeting with a family about a full-ride scholarship for April.
3. A police officer is speaking with an eyewitness to the crash of a school bus.
4. A student is talking to his professor about a field project assignment.
5. A member of a survey research team is talking to a stock broker about the effects of low oil prices on energy stocks.
6. A professor is asking questions during her history class about a reading on the cold war.
7. An employee runs into his supervisor at a grocery store and remembers to ask about taking a personal leave day to attend The Final Four.
8. An auto sales associate is discussing a new Chevrolet model with a husband and wife.
9. A tennis player is talking to two surgeons about surgery on her elbow.
10. Two members of a law firm are discussing the ramifications of an intellectual properties case.

Traditional Forms of Interviewing

There are many traditional forms of interviewing, and these are usually identified according to situation and function. As you read this book, you will discover that many require one or both parties to have specialized training, specific abilities, and the willingness to share beliefs, attitudes, and feelings with others. Let us look at seven of these traditional forms.

Information-Giving Interviews

When two parties take part in orienting, training, coaching, instructing, and briefing sessions, they are involved in information-giving interviews, the purpose of which is to exchange information as accurately, effectively, and efficiently as possible. Information-giving interviews seem simple when compared to others—merely relating facts, data, reports, and opinions from one party to another, but they are deceptively difficult. Because this type is so common and critical in health care interviews, Chapter 12 discusses the principles, problems, and techniques of information giving.

Information giving is common but difficult.

Information-Gathering Interviews

When two parties take part in surveys, exit interviews, research sessions, investigations, diagnostic sessions, journalistic interviews, and brief requests for information, the interviewer's purpose is to gather accurate, insightful, and useful information through the skillful use of questions, many created and phrased prior to the interview and others created on the spot to probe into interviewee responses, attitudes, and feelings. Chapter 5 discusses the principles and practices of moderately structured informational interviews such as journalistic interviews

Information gathering is pervasive in our world.

and investigations. Chapter 6 discusses the principles and practices of highly structured surveys and polls. And Chapter 12 discusses information gathering in the health care setting.

Focus Group Interviews

The focus group interview usually consists of six to ten similar but unrelated interviewees with a single interviewer and concentrates on a specific issue or concern such as customer or client perspectives about a new or developing idea, product, or service. The interviewer guides the interview with a carefully crafted set of questions designed to generate interactions among the interviewees that produce a wide range of information, experiences, opinions, beliefs, attitudes, and understandings. Advocates of focus group interviews claim these interactions produce higher quality information and feedback.

Selection Interviews

The most common selection interview occurs between a recruiter attempting to select the best qualified applicant for a position in an organization and an applicant attempting to attain this position. The placement interview occurs when a supervisor is trying to determine the ideal placement of a staff member already in the organization. This interview may involve a promotion, a restructuring of an organization, or a reassignment. Because the selection or employment interview plays such a major role in all of our personal and professional lives, we will focus in detail on the recruiter in Chapter 7 and the applicant in Chapter 8.

Selection is critical in the lives of people and organizations.

Performance Review

When two parties focus on the interviewee's skills, performance, abilities, or behavior, it is a performance review (what once was called an appraisal interview). The purpose is to coach a student, employee, or team member to continue that which is good and to set goals for future performance. Chapter 9 focuses on models for conducting performance reviews and the principles essential for the performance problem interview.

Performance review is essential to employee and employer.

Counseling

When an interviewee has a personal or professional problem, the parties take part in a counseling interview in which the interviewer strives to help the interviewee attain insights into a problem and possible ways of dealing with this problem. Chapter 11 addresses the principles and practices of conducting and taking part in counseling interviews.

Persuasion

In a persuasive interview, one party attempts to alter or reinforce the thinking, feeling, or acting of another party. The sales interview comes immediately to mind, but we are involved in persuasive interviews on a daily basis. They range from informal interactions such as one friend attempting to persuade another to go on a Caribbean cruise to a team from a construction management firm trying to persuade a university board of trustees to select its firm to manage the construction of a multimillion-dollar classroom and office complex. Chapter 10 focuses on the often complex interactions in persuasive interviews.

Persuasion is more than selling a product or service.

Technology and Interviewing

Beginning with the invention of the telephone, technology has had an ever-increasing influence on how we conduct and take part in interviews. Most importantly, interview

parties no longer need to be face-to-face with one another but may be ear-to-ear, keyboard-to-keyboard, or screen to screen.

The Telephone Interview

Telephone interviews have become so commonplace that states and the federal government have passed “Don’t Call” legislation to protect our privacy and sanity, particularly at dinner time. The popularity of telephone interviews is easy to understand. They save time, reduce monetary expenses, and eliminate the necessity of sending one or more interviewers to widespread geographical locations. The telephone is most effective in interviews in which you want to ask brief and simple questions in a short time ranging from 10 to 15 minutes.

The telephone interview is convenient and inexpensive.

A major drawback of the telephone interview is the lack of **physical presence** of the parties. Hearing a voice is not the same as observing another’s appearance, dress, manner, eye contact, face, gestures, and posture. Missing from telephone interviews are the subtle cues interviewers use to indicate that it’s time to switch roles, to continue or end an answer, or that the interview is nearing the closing. While some interviewees prefer the anonymity and relative safety of the interview, others (particularly older ones) prefer face-to-face contacts and fear the growing frauds perpetrated over the telephone. One study found that interviewers prefer face-to-face interviews to the telephone, particularly if it is lengthy, and this negative attitude may affect how interviewees reply.

Two-Way Video Technology

Both parties must focus attention on the interaction.

The growing sophistication of video technology such as Skype has reduced some of the problems associated with the telephone interview and enables parties to observe and hear one another in real time. These technologies enable interview parties in traditional interviews such as journalistic, employment, and medical and nontraditional interviews such as the videoconference to interact visually over long distance, faster, and with less expense. Advocates claim that two-way video interaction is a “virtual interview” because it is almost “like being there in person.” In the “virtual interview,” video production techniques are essential to “send the right vibe.” These include selecting quality microphones and video technology, checking lighting and sound, manipulating the background or set with mood lighting and colors, selecting appropriate furniture, controlling distractions such as pets and family members, and maintaining the “illusion of eye contact.” Unfortunately, even the best technology and manipulation of the scene enable the parties to see only head or upper body shots that are not the same as the total presence of face-to-face interviews. Some people find it difficult to interact freely and effectively with people on screens. With fewer interruptions and the absence of traditional cues that signal when a question has been answered or a point made, turns between parties tend to be longer and fewer in video interviews. This problem is enhanced in the videoconference in which each party may consist of two or more people. Reasons for liking videoconferences and Skype have serious implications for the communication that takes place. These perceived pluses include taking more notes, referring to notes, checking watches, and reading text messages. Both parties must be aware of the



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■ *The Internet can provide important information on positions and organizations and background on interviewers and interviewees.*

importance of upper-body movement, gestures, eye contact, and facial expressions that are magnified on the screen when little else is visible to the other party. This may be why a high percentage of suggestions for being effective in “virtual interviews” pertain to video production concerns and techniques.

E-Mail

The advent of e-mail enabled us to communicate almost instantly with others around the world at any time of day or night. It is a convenient and inexpensive means of sending and receiving mes-

sages. The question persists as to when sending and receiving “electronic mail” becomes an interview and not what its name clearly implies, mail. An interview is **interactive in real time**. If two parties are sitting at their keyboards at the **same time** and **asking and answering questions** without breaks in the interaction, including probing immediately into answers or altering questions to make them clearer or more effective, an interview is taking place. Otherwise, it is merely an electronic questionnaire. It is wise to make the e-mail interview your last choice such as when time, financial constraints, geographical distances, and unavailability of video technology make a face-to-face interview impossible. In the e-mail interview, there is no opportunity for the parties to see or hear one another, so all nonverbal elements critical to the interpersonal communication process are nonexistent. Some would argue that the e-mail interview is fairer for the person who is orally challenged, but the same argument applies for the person who is verbally challenged. Studies of e-mail interviews identify other disadvantages such as difficulty in opening interviews, establishing rapport, determining emotional reactions, and translating verbal symbols and acronyms.

The Internet lacks the nonverbal cues critical in interviews.

Webinars

Webinars are rarely interviews.

Webinars in which a presenter lectures or speaks to an audience on the Web are becoming popular for conferences, training sessions, seminars, and workshops. They are typically not interviews but electronic presentations. If a webinar is more collaborative and interactive between two parties with questions and answers in real time and perhaps over a telephone line or voice over technology, it may be an interview and more spontaneous and interpersonal than an e-mail interview. It is wise, however, to use a webinar for its primary purposes—training and teaching—rather than interviewing.

ON THE WEB

Learn more about the growing uses of electronic interviews in a variety of settings. Search at least two databases under headings such as telephone interviews, conference calls, and video talk-back. Try search engines such as ComAbstracts (<http://www.cios.org>), Yahoo (<http://www.yahoo.com>), Infoseek (<http://www.infoseek.com>), and ERIC (http://www.indiana.edu/~eric_rec). In which interview settings are electronic interviews most common? What are the advantages and disadvantages of electronic interviews? How will new developments affect electronic interviews in the future? How will the growing use of electronic interviews affect the ways we conduct traditional face-to-face interviews?

Summary

Interviewing is an interactional communication process between two parties, at least one of whom has a predetermined and serious purpose, that involves the asking and answering of questions. This definition encompasses a wide variety of interview settings that require training, preparation, interpersonal skills, flexibility, and a willingness to face risks involved in intimate, person-to-person interactions. The increasing flexibility of technology is resulting in significant numbers of interviews no longer occurring face-to-face, and this is posing new challenges and concerns.

Interviewing is a learned skill, and your first hurdle into becoming a more skilled interviewer or interviewee is to overcome the assumption that what you do often you do well. Ten years of interviewing experience may mean that you have repeated the same mistakes over and over, year after year. Skilled interview participants are aware that practice makes perfect only if you know what you are practicing.

The first step in developing and improving interviewing skills is to understand the deceptively complex interviewing process and its many interacting variables. Chapter 2 explains and illustrates the interviewing process by developing step-by-step a model that contains all of the fundamental elements that interact in each interview.

Key Terms and Concepts

Beliefs	Information-giving interviews	Questions
Collaborative	Interactional	Selection interview
Conversation	Internet	Serious purpose
Counseling	Interpersonal	Skype
Dyadic	Meaning making	Structure
Electronic interviews	Motives	System
E-mail interviews	Parties	Technology
Exchanging	Performance review	Telephone interview
Feelings	Persuasion	Two-party process
Focus group interviews	Predetermined purpose	Videoconference interview
Information-gathering interviews	Process	Virtual interview
		Webinar

Student Activities

1. Keep a journal of interviews in which you take part during a week. How many were traditional, face-to-face interviews and how many were electronic? Which types tended to be traditional and which electronic? How were they similar and different? How did interactions vary? How did lack of presence, eye contact, appearance, facial expressions, and gestures appear to influence electronic interviews? How did you and the other parties try to compensate for this?
2. Make a list of what you consider to be essential characteristics of good interviews and then observe two interviews on television. How well did the interviewers and interviewees meet your criteria? What did they do best? What did they do poorly? How did the settings and situations seem to affect the interactions? If one or both parties were “celebrities,” how did this seem to affect interactions, roles played, amount of time each asked and answered questions, and content of responses?
3. Select a person you know superficially (classmate, co-worker, member of a fitness club) who is willing to be interviewed. Take part in a 10-minute interview and try to discover everything you can about this person. Which topics were covered and which avoided? How did the phrasing of questions seem to affect answers? How did your relationship with the other party affect the openness with which the two of you shared and revealed information?
4. Take part in a traditional job fair and a virtual job fair on or near your campus. After you have taken part in each, list what you liked and disliked about each. What did the face-to-face encounter with a prospective employer offer that an electronic encounter could not? And what did the electronic encounter offer that a face-to-face encounter could not? How did you prepare for each encounter? If the virtual job fair experience entailed simulated interviews, how did you react to these encounters?

Notes

1. John Stewart, ed., *Bridges Not Walls*, 11th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2012), p. 16.
2. Michael T. Motley, “Communication as Interaction: A Reply to Beach and Bavelas,” *Western Journal of Speech Communication* 54 (Fall 1990), pp. 613–623.

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An Interpersonal Communication Process

Interviewing is more than asking and answering questions.

To improve your interviewing skills, you must start by understanding the **deceptively complex process** and its interrelated and interacting variables. An interview is far more complex than merely asking and answering questions or talking to someone. **The objectives of this chapter** are to develop a model of the process that summarizes, explains, and portrays the intricate and often puzzling nature of the typical interview. The completed model in Figure 2.8 looks very complicated because it summarizes a very complicated process.

Two Parties in the Interview

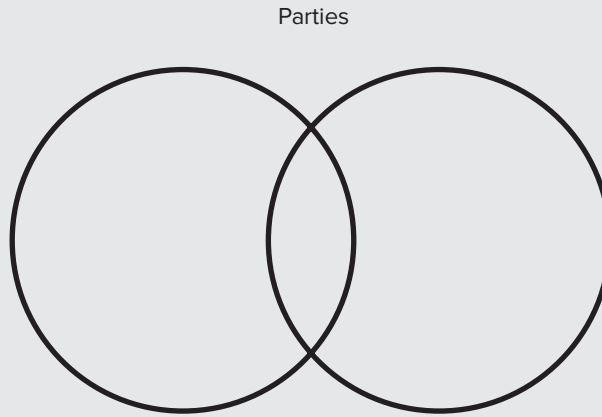
Each party consists of unique and complex individuals.

The overlapping circles in Figure 2.1 represent the two parties in every interview. Each party is a **unique sum** of culture, environment, education, training, and experiences. Each party is an aggregate of personality traits that range from optimistic to pessimistic, trusting to suspicious, honest to dishonest, patient to impatient, flexible to inflexible, and compassionate to indifferent. Each of you has specific beliefs, attitudes, and values. And each party is motivated by ever-evolving needs, interests, desires, and expectations.

You must also be aware that each person in each party communicates **intra-personally** as well as **inter-personally**. You literally talk to yourself. What you say to yourself and how you say it will influence the verbal and nonverbal messages you send and how you experience an interview. In a very real sense, “the whole person speaks and the whole person listens.”¹

Each interview contributes to a relational history.

Even though each party is made up of unique individuals, both parties must collaborate to make the interview a success. The circles overlap in Figure 2.1 to indicate the **relational nature** of the interview process in which the parties interact **with** one another. Each has a stake in the outcome of the interview, and neither party can **go it alone**. This relationship may commence with this interview or be another act in a **relational history** that dates from hours to weeks, months, or years. When parties begin a relational history, interactions may be brief or awkward because neither knows what to expect, how best to start the interaction, when to speak and listen, and what information to share. In some cultures, “all strangers are viewed as sources of potential relationships; in others, relationships develop only after long and careful scrutiny.”² Stereotypes such as age, gender, race, and ethnicity may play significant negative roles in zero-history situations, particularly during the anxious opening minutes of

Figure 2.1 *The interview parties*

an interaction.³ On the other hand, negative expectations and attitudes may exist from previous interactions.

A situation
may alter a
relationship.

Your relationships may be **intimate** (close friends), **casual** (co-workers), **functional** (physicians), **formal** (supervisors), and **distant** (elected officials). They may change during immediate interactions and over time. What might begin as a functional relationship with an attorney or teacher may evolve into a close personal relationship lasting for decades because each interaction affects how you communicate who you are and what you are for each other. Your relationships change as interview situations vary and change. For instance, you may have a formal relationship with a professor in the classroom setting, a functional relationship when the professor is counseling you in an office setting, a casual relationship at a picnic for majors, and an intimate relationship years after you have completed your degree. Sarah Trenholm and Arthur Jensen write that you must acquire **relational competence** to know when and how to adapt to the roles you play in relationships with others and to develop “workable rules and norms” for differing situations.⁴

Relational Dimensions

Your relationships are multidimensional, with five being critical to interviews: similarity, inclusion, affection, control, and trust.

Similarity

A few
similarities do
not equal rela-
tional peers.

You tend to find it easier to interact with others and form relationships when you share gender, race, cultural norms and values, education, experiences, beliefs, interests, and expectations. Important similarities enable you to understand and communicate with one another and thus to establish **common ground** that is portrayed by the overlapping circles in Figure 2.1. Expanding this perceived overlap during an interview reduces perceived

dissimilarities that may impede interactions and development of a meaningful relationship. Beware of surface similarities such as age, race, ethnicity, or dress that may lead you to perceive far more significant similarities with a party than you actually have.

Inclusion

Wanting to take part leads to collaboration.

Interview parties enhance relationships when both are motivated to speak and listen, question and respond, and are open and straightforward. The more you are involved and share in an interview, the more satisfied you will be with the interactions and outcome. It is not merely what you do or gain in an interview but **what you do with another**. It should be a **collaborative, joint effort**. Both parties depend on one another for the success of each interview.

Affection

We interact more freely with persons we like.

You cultivate interview relationships when both parties respect one another and there is a marked degree of friendship or warmth. Establishing a **we** instead of a **me-you** feeling requires communication that both parties see as pleasant, fair, and productive. Relationships waiver when signs of affection are inconsistent, ambivalent, or negative. In one study, parties lowered their loudness to express disliking as well as liking for one another. In others, decreased talk time seemed to indicate liking by showing greater attentiveness or disliking by exhibiting disengagement from the interaction.⁵

Sometimes you come to an interview with an ambivalent or hostile attitude toward the other party because of a relational history or what James Honeycutt calls **relational memory**. He writes that “even though relationships are in constant motion, relationship memory structures provide a perceptual anchor [so that] individuals can determine where they are in a relationship.”⁶ Relational memory may aid parties in dealing with what researchers call **dialectical tensions** that result from conflicts between “important but opposing needs or desires,” or “between opposing” or contrasting “‘voices,’ each expressing a different or contradictory impulse.”⁷ Kory Floyd writes that dialectical tensions are a “normal part of any close, interdependent relationship, and they become problematic only when people fail to manage them properly.”⁸

Control

Hierarchy may hinder the flow of information and self-disclosure.

Since the interview is a **collaborative** process, each party is responsible for its successes and failures. John Stewart has introduced the concept of “nexting” that he claims is the “most important single communication skill.” Each party should be asking “What can I help to happen next,” rather than how can I control the nature and content of this interaction.⁹ The felt need to control interactions may result from personality traits, the competitive spirit our society fosters, and organizational rules. Hierarchies present in families, schools, churches, government, and corporations make **upward** and **downward** communication difficult for each party. Edward Hall writes that “People at the top pay attention to different things from those in the middle or bottom of the system.”¹⁰

Trust

Trust is critical in interviews because outcomes affect parties personally—their income, their careers, their purchases, their profits, their health, and their futures. Trust comes

Trust is essential in every interview.

from **mutual** honesty, sincerity, reliability, fairness, and even-temper—in other words when you see interactions with one another as being **safe**. When you are anxious during interactions, you tend to become cautious and fearful about outcomes, and the first casualty is level of **disclosure**. You are reluctant to be direct and open to share information, beliefs, opinions, and attitudes. The risk may be too great. Cultivate and protect relationships to assure productive interviews.

Global Relationships

Social, political, and work worlds are becoming increasingly global, so it is necessary to understand how relationships are created and fostered in other countries and cultures. The less you know about others, the more likely you are to be anxious when initiating relationships. Martin, Nakayama, and Flores warn, for instance, that “in intercultural conflict situations, when we are experiencing high anxieties with unfamiliar behavior (for example, accents, gestures, facial expressions), we may automatically withhold trust.”¹¹ You may fear the consequences of your words and actions that may offend the other party or make you look stupid.

In the United States, we tend to have numerous friendly, informal relationships and place importance on how a person looks, particularly early in relationships. We create and discard relationships frequently, while Australians make deeper and longer-lasting commitments. Arabs, like Americans, develop relationships quickly but, unlike Americans who dislike taking advantage of relationships by asking for favors, Arabs believe friends have a duty to help one another. The Chinese develop strong, long-term relationships and, like Arabs, see them involving obligations. In Mexico, trust in relationships develops slowly, is given sparingly, and must be earned. Betrayal of trust results in the greatest harm possible to a relationship. Germans develop relationships slowly because they see them as very important, and using first names before a relationship is well-established is considered rude behavior. Japanese prefer not to interact with strangers, want background information on parties before establishing relationships, prefer doing business with people they have known for years, and take time establishing relationships.

Relationships develop differently in different cultures.

Gender in Relationships

Although men and women are more similar than different in how they communicate and how they establish and refine relationships, research has revealed significant differences.¹² Men’s talk tends to be directive and goal-oriented with statements that “tend to press compliance, agreement, or belief.” Women’s talk tends to be more polite and expressive, containing less intense words, qualifiers (perhaps, maybe), and disclaimers (“Maybe I’m wrong but . . .” “I may not fully understand the situation, but . . .”).¹³ Women use communication as a primary way of establishing relationships, while men communicate “to exert control, preserve independence, and enhance status.”¹⁴ Women give more praise and compliments and are reluctant to criticize directly in the workplace while men remain silent when a co-worker is doing something well and take criticism straight.¹⁵ Women report “greater satisfaction with their interactions than do men.”¹⁶ On the other hand, researchers have found that “women are more likely to betray and be betrayed by other women.” Men report they are more often betrayed by other men with whom they are competing.¹⁷

Gender differences have evolved but not disappeared.

Interchanging Roles during Interviews

A single party cannot make an interview a success but can ensure its failure.

While one party may dominate an interview, both speak and listen from time to time, ask and answer questions, and assume the roles of interviewer and interviewee. Neither party can expect the other to make the interview a success. John Stewart writes that “human communicators are always sending and receiving simultaneously. As a result, each communicator has the opportunity to change how things are going at any time in the process.”¹⁸ The small circles within the party circles in Figure 2.2 portray the exchange of roles in interviews.

The extent to which roles are exchanged and control is shared is often influenced by the status or expertise of the parties, which party initiated the interview, type of interview, situation, and atmosphere of the interaction—supportive or defensive, friendly or hostile. These factors determine which approach an interviewer selects—**directive** or **nondirective**.

Directive Approach

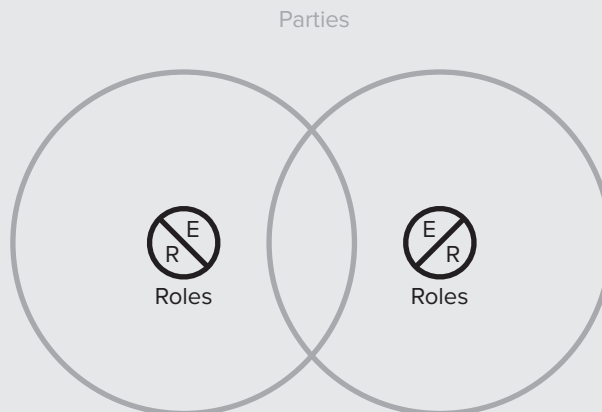
A directive approach allows the interviewer to maintain control.

In a directive approach, the **interviewer** establishes the purpose of the interview and controls the pacing, climate, and formality of the interview. Questions are likely to be closed with brief, direct answers. An interviewee may assume occasional control during the interview, but the interviewer tends to dominate the process. Typical directive interviews are information giving, surveys and opinion polls, employee recruiting, and persuasive interviews such as sales. The directive approach is easy to learn, takes less time, enables you to maintain control, and is easy to replicate.

The following exchange illustrates a directive interviewing approach:

1. **Interviewer:** Did you attend the in-service training last night?
2. **Interviewee:** Yes.

Figure 2.2 *The switching of roles*



3. **Interviewer:** How long did it last?
4. **Interviewee:** Nearly an hour-and-a-half.
5. **Interviewer:** What was the single point you found most insightful?
6. **Interviewee:** That we must remain open at all times to new ideas.

Nondirective Approach

A nondirective approach enables the interviewee to share control.

In a nondirective approach, the **interviewee** has significant control over subject matter, length of answers, interview climate, and formality. Questions are open-ended to give the interviewee maximum freedom to respond. Typical nondirective interviews are journalistic, oral history, investigations, counseling, and performance review. The nondirective approach allows for greater flexibility and adaptability, encourages probing questions, and invites the interviewee to volunteer information.

The following is a nondirective interview exchange:

1. **Interviewer:** How was the in-service training last night?
2. **Interviewee:** It was very interesting and the presenter was excellent.
3. **Interviewer:** What were the main issues covered in the presentation?
4. **Interviewee:** The main one was developing relationships with clients, and the presenter discussed the importance of the first contact in forming a relational history, how to maintain relationships over time, and how to handle conflicts that might threaten a relationship.
5. **Interviewer:** Which points did you find most helpful?
6. **Interviewee:** I think the ones on how relationships develop in different cultures and countries were most helpful since a growing number of our clients are from outside of the United States.

Be flexible and adaptable when selecting approaches.

Although choice of an interviewing approach may be influenced by organizational, societal, or cultural norms and expectations, be flexible in how you employ each approach and consider a combination. For instance, recruiters often start interviews with a nondirective approach to relax the applicant and get the person talking, then switch to a more directive approach when asking questions and giving information, and return to a nondirective approach when answering the applicant's questions.

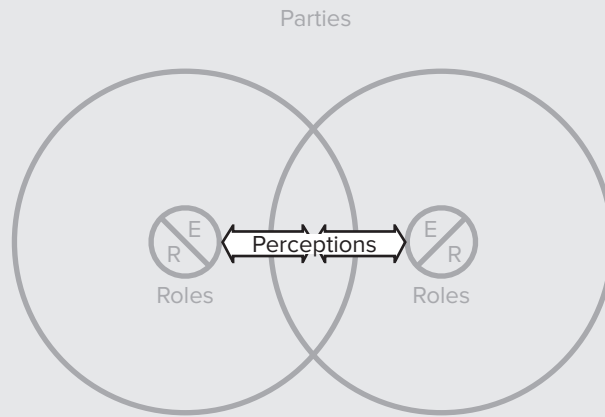
Perceptions of Interviewer and Interviewee

Perceptions drive our interactions.

When you arrive at an interview, you bring two important **perceptions** with you, perceptions of **self** and perceptions of the **other party**, and these may change positively or negatively as the interview progresses. These critical perceptions are portrayed by the double-ended arrows in Figure 2.3.

Perceptions of Self

Your **self-concept** or **self-identity** is a mental portrait of how **you interpret** and **believe others interpret** what and who you have been, are at the moment, and will be in the

Figure 2.3 *Perceptions of self and others*

future. John Stewart writes that we “come to each encounter with an identifiable ‘self,’ built through past interactions, and *as we talk*, we adapt ourselves to fit the topic we’re discussing and the people we are talking with, and we are changed by what happens to us as we communicate.”¹⁹

What we perceive ourselves to be may be more important than what we are.

Self-esteem or self-worth is a critical element of your self-identify because you exert a great deal of mental and communicative energy trying to gain and sustain recognition and approval from family, peers, society, organizations, and professions because you have a “persistent and compelling” need to give an accounting of yourself.²⁰ When you **feel** respected or valued, you have high self-esteem and are likely to be more perceptive, confident, and willing to express unpopular ideas and opinions. When you **feel** disrespected or under-valued, you have low self-esteem and become self-critical, feel uncertain, and are hesitant to express unpopular ideas and opinions. Success in an interview may depend upon your ability or inability to convince yourself that you will be successful—a **self-fulfilling prophecy**.

Culture and Gender Differences

Many citizens of the global village are less concerned with self than with group.

Self-identity and self-esteem are central in American and Western cultures that emphasize the individual. They are not central in Eastern cultures and South American countries. Japanese, Chinese, and Indians, for example, are collectivist rather than individualist cultures and are more concerned with the image, esteem, and achievement of the group. Attributing successful negotiations to an individual in China would be considered egotistical, self-advancing, and disrespectful. Success is attributed to the group or team. Failure to appreciate cultural differences causes many communication problems for Americans.

Gender matters in self-identity because “gender roles are socially constructed ideas about how women and men should think and behave.”²¹ We expect men to be more assertive, in charge, and self-sufficient and women to be “feminine,” submissive, and to show

empathy and emotional expressiveness. Not all men and women act this way, of course, but we cannot ignore the impact of gender and self-identity on interviews.

Perceptions of the Other Party

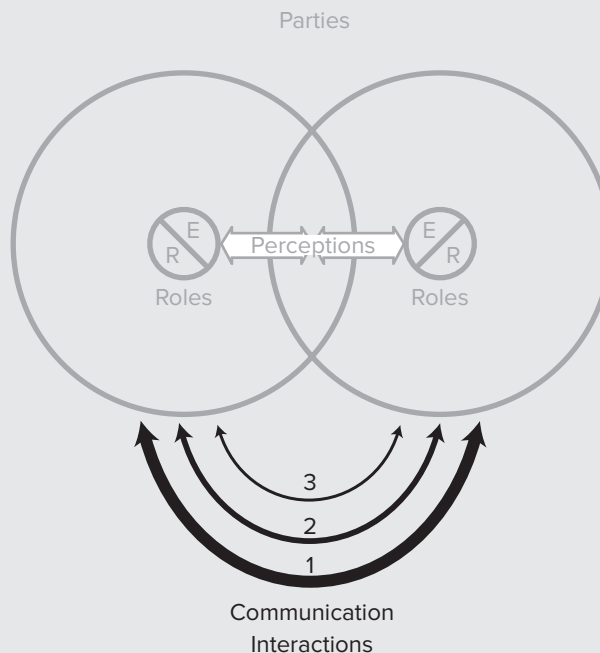
The way you perceive the other party may influence how you approach an interview and how you interact as it progresses. For example, you may be in awe of the other's reputation and accomplishments. The other party may differ from you in size, physical attractiveness, age, gender, race, or ethnic group. Previous encounters may lead you to look forward to or dread an interview. If you keep an **open mind** and are **adaptable**, differences may become assets rather than liabilities. Warmth, understanding, and cooperation in your verbal and nonverbal interactions can overcome negative preconceptions.

Allow interactions to alter or reinforce perceptions.

Communication Interactions

The curved arrows in Figure 2.4 that link the two parties symbolize the communication levels that occur during interviews. Each level differs in relational distance, self-disclosure, risk encountered, perceived meanings, and amount and type of content exchanged.

Figure 2.4 *Communication interactions*



Levels of Interactions

Level 1 interactions are safe and superficial.

Level 1 interactions are safe and nonthreatening. You may portray interaction levels as metaphorical doors with the Level 1 door being slightly open. Questions, for instance, generate brief, socially acceptable, comfortable responses such as yes or no, simple facts, and ambiguous words and phrases such as “Okay,” “Pretty good,” “Not bad,” and “Can’t complain.” Either party may close the door quickly and safely when necessary. The thickness of the arrow indicates that Level 1 exchanges dominate the interview and there is **relational distance** between the parties because no prior or close relationship exists.

Level 2 interactions require trust and risk-taking.

Level 2 interactions are half-safe and half-revealing. Parties delve more deeply into personal and controversial topics and probe into beliefs, attitudes, and positions on issues. The metaphorical door is half-open (the optimist’s view) or half-closed (the pessimist’s view) as parties reveal feelings, opinions, and potentially harmful information. They are more willing to take risks but want an opportunity to close the door when necessary. The thickness of the arrow indicates that Level 2 interactions are less common, and the length of the arrow indicates that a closer relationship is necessary for a successful interview.

Level 3 interactions involve full disclosure.

Level 3 interactions are risk-taking with full disclosure in personal and controversial topics that reveal feelings, beliefs, and attitudes. The metaphorical door is wide open with little opportunity to retreat from or dodge negative reactions. The arrow is thin and short to indicate that Level 3 interactions are uncommon and the relationship between parties must be established and trusting.

Self-Disclosure

We are on the line in many interview settings.

You must strive to move beyond Level 1 to Level 2 to Level 3 to obtain information, detect feelings, discover insights, and attain commitments. This requires maximum **self-disclosure**, and is often not easy to do. Unlike being a member of a group or audience into which you can blend or hide, the interview places your social, professional, financial, psychological, or physical welfare on the line. Interviews deal with *your* behavior, *your* performance, *your* reputation, *your* decisions, *your* weaknesses, *your* feelings, *your* money, or *your* future.

There are a number of ways to reduce the risks of self-disclosure. Understand the relationship you have with the other party. If it is minimal, begin with a safe level of disclosure and be sensitive to the potential effects of your disclosure on the other party and people not involved in the interview. Provide only relevant and appropriate information. Disclose at the level at which the other party reciprocates.²² Be cautious when interacting online because research indicates that we tend to have fewer inhibitions than when interacting face-to-face and make “hyper-personal” revelations we may regret.

Gender

Women disclose more freely than men.

Women tend to disclose more than men and are allowed to express emotions such as fear, sadness, and sympathy. Because women appear to be better listeners and more responsive than men, disclosure is often highest between woman-to-woman parties (perhaps because talk is at the very heart of women’s relationships), about equal in woman-to-man parties, and lowest among man-to-man parties.

Culture

Culture may dictate what we disclose and to whom.

Culture may determine what you disclose, when, to whom, and how. For example, people in the United States of European descent disclose on a wide range of topics including personal information. Japanese disclose more about their careers and less about their families. Asians disclose more to people with high expertise and ability to exhibit honest and positive attitudes than to those who like to talk and show emotions. People in high-context, collectivist cultures such as China are expected to work for the good of the group or team and both know and adhere to cultural norms. They disclose less than those in low-context, individualistic cultures such as the United States and Great Britain. Westerners strive to succeed as individuals and know less about their cultural norms, and this lack of familiarity with cultural norms makes them more flexible. Conflicts may result in interviews when you over-disclose, under-disclose, or disclose to the wrong party from differing cultures. Be aware that perceived similarity, competence, involvement, and the need to take the relationship to a higher level may trump cultural differences in self-disclosing.

While cultures vary, the notion of politeness—maintaining positive rather than negative face—is universal. According to “**politeness theory**,” all humans want to be appreciated and protected. Littlejohn writes,

Positive and negative face are universal motives.

Positive face is the desire to be appreciated and approved, to be liked and honored, and *positive politeness* is designed to meet these desires. Showing concern, complimenting, and using respectful forms of address are examples. *Negative face* is the desire to be free from imposition or intrusion, and *negative politeness* is designed to protect the other person when negative face needs are threatened. Acknowledging the imposition when making a request is a common example.²³

You encounter situations in which politeness is essential whenever you are involved in challenging, complaining, evaluating, disciplining, advising, and counseling. Guerrero, Andersen, and Afifi write that “people face a constant struggle between wanting to do whatever they want (which satisfies their negative face needs) and wanting to do what makes them look good to others (which satisfies their positive face needs).”²⁴ Severe “face threatening acts” include behavior that violates an important cultural, social, or professional rule; behavior that produces significant harm; and behavior for which the party is directly responsible. The desire to be polite—to avoid hurting or upsetting another and to show appreciation, understanding, or agreement—is one of the most common causes of deception.

Verbal Interactions

Perhaps the **greatest single problem with human communication is the assumption of it**. Virtually all of us assume, for instance, that if we share a language—words—we share meanings. Unfortunately, words are arbitrary connections of letters that serve as symbols for nearly everything we encounter in our daily and professional lives, and these imperfect symbols may cause misunderstanding, confusion, embarrassment, hurt feelings, and antagonism. Let us examine some of our assumptions.

Never assume communication is taking place.

Words rarely have single meanings.

Words are rarely neutral.

Slang comes and goes and often determines who's in and who's out.

Naming is an effort to alter social reality.

We assume the words we use are **commonly understood** by those who share our language. Journalism professor Michael Skube at Elon University has been keeping track of common words his students do not know. These include impetus, lucid, advocate, satire, brevity, and novel.²⁵ Many of us assume that words have **single meanings** that are clear to everyone, even when used out of context. But simple words such as game may refer to a computer game, wild animal, sport, prank, or a person willing to try new things. We assume words and their meanings are clear even when they are **ambiguous** such as a “nice” apartment, “affordable” education, “simple” instructions, and a “living” wage. When does a person become “middle aged” or “old?” Since you typically **hear** words rather than see them in interviews, you may run into problems caused by **sound alike** words such as see and sea, do and due, sail and sale, and to, too, and two. Apparently neutral words may have negative or positive **connotations** depending on how a person uses them. When is a running suit “inexpensive” or “cheap,” an SUV “used” or “pre-owned,” a laptop a college “expense” or an “investment?” While we have technical words to describe high-performance automobiles according to their looks, acceleration, power, and mechanical characteristics, we often resort to jargon **common** at the time such as cool, mean, awesome, or hot. We **name** or **label** people, places, things, and ideas to reveal how we see **reality**. A recession becomes a downturn; we purchase a lite beer rather than a diet beer; and we order a quarter-pounder rather than a four-ouncer. We have finally begun to substitute woman for girl, firefighter for fireman, and police officer for policeman. This is **not** so-called **political correctness** but labeling reality and showing respect in a society based on equality. The moral of this discussion of words is that you must select words carefully even with interview parties who share your language and reward your assumptions.

Language and Gender

Gender differences may lead to power differences.

Men and women tend to use language differently. For example, men use power speech forms such as challenges, orders, leading questions, first-person pronouns such as I and me, and memorable phrases such as “Make my day,” “Get a life,” and “Read my lips.” Women use powerless speech forms such as apologies, qualifiers, disclaimers, excuses, indirect questions, nonfluencies such as “Uh” and “Umm,” and third-person pronouns such as we and us.²⁶ Our society expects men to use more intense language than women because it is considered masculine. When women use intense language, they are often seen as bitchy, pushy, or opinionated. While gender is important in how men and women use words, you must recognize that other factors also affect language choice including context of the interview, subject matter, status differences, and roles being played.

Language and the Global Village

Global use of words may be more significant than foreign words.

North Americans value words that are precise, direct, explicit, straightforward, and often start sentences with “I.” Chinese are taught to downplay self-expression. Japanese tend to be implicit in words rather than explicit and to employ ambiguous words and qualifiers. Koreans try to avoid negative or no responses and imply disagreements to maintain group or team harmony. Arab-speaking people employ “sweet-talk” and accommodating language with elaborate metaphors and similes. Idioms such as “bought the farm,” “get your feet wet,” and “wild goose chase” are unique to North Americans and pose

problems even for those who speak English. For instance, Wen-Shu Lee who was fluent in English and taking a graduate class in the United States was confused when a fellow student looked at her notes and commented, “That’s Greek to me.” When she replied that it was Chinese rather than Greek, the American student laughed, and then she realized the student had used a common idiom.²⁷

Language problems are avoidable.

Irving Lee observed many years ago that we tend to “talk past” rather than “to” one another.²⁸ You can reduce this tendency by choosing words carefully, expanding your vocabulary, being aware of common idioms, and learning the meanings of popular and professional jargon. Do not **assume** that the words you use everyday are understood and processed similarly by others different from you in gender, age, race, culture, or ethnic group.

Nonverbal Interactions

Nonverbal signals send many different messages.

Because the parties in interviews are in such close proximity, they are likely to take note of what the other **does** and **does not do**: movement, eye contact, facial expression, touch, glance, change in voice. Any behavioral act may send a message intentionally or unintentionally, correctly or incorrectly. For instance, you can invite turn-taking or change of role by nodding your head, pausing, or leaning back. Poor eye contact may signal that you are hiding something, a limp handshake that you are timid, a puzzled facial expression that you are confused, crossing your arms or raising an eyebrow that you are agitated. Remain **silent** to encourage the other to talk or keep talking, to signal agreement, or to show you are not in a hurry to move on to a new topic or to close the interview. Show interest by leaning forward, maintaining eye contact, or nodding your head.

Any behavioral act, or its absence, can convey a message.

Physical appearance and dress reveal how you view yourself, the other party, this situation, and the importance of the interview. Both are particularly important in initiating zero-history relationships and the first minutes of interviews. You tend to respond more favorably toward attractive and well-dressed people and perceive them to be poised, outgoing, interesting, and sociable. Unfortunately, you may react more favorably toward attractive persons who are neither too fat nor too thin, tall rather than short, shapely rather than unshapely, and pretty and handsome rather than plain or ugly. Few match all of these social criteria, so strive to eliminate these biases during interviews and building relationships.

In mixed messages, the *how* may overcome the *what*.

Verbal and Nonverbal Intertwined

Although we have separated verbal and nonverbal interactions in previous discussions for instructional purposes, it is impossible to isolate one from the other. The nonverbal often **complements** the verbal when you call attention to important words or phrases through vocal emphasis (like underlining, italicizing, or highlighting in print). You complement words with tone of voice, speaking rate, facial expression, and eye contact. The nonverbal **reinforces** words with a head nod or head shake. The nonverbal may **substitute** for words when you point to a chair without saying “Sit here,” or nod your head to say “Enter.” Silence can signal disagreement more tactfully than words. Research indicates that nonverbal signals exchange feelings and emotions more accurately than words; convey intentions relatively free of deception and confusion;

Verbal and nonverbal messages are intricately intertwined.



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■ Be aware of cultural differences in nonverbal communication.

Women are more adept at nonverbal communication.

women are more expressive than men. Women tend to gaze more and are less uncomfortable when eye contact is broken. Men's lower-pitched voices are viewed as more credible and dynamic than women's higher-pitched voices. Female parties stand or sit closer than opposite-sex parties, and males maintain more distance than opposite-sex or female parties.

be more efficient; and impart ideas indirectly. Subjects indicated they thought nonverbal behaviors were more truthful than verbal messages and, if the messages conflicted—they were more likely to believe the nonverbal. *How* trumps the *what*.

Gender and Nonverbal Interactions

Women are more skilled at and rely more on nonverbal communication than men. Facial expressions, pauses, and bodily gestures are more important in women's interactions than men's, perhaps because

Culture and Nonverbal Interactions

Different cultures share many nonverbal signals. People nod their heads in agreement, shake their heads in disagreement, give thumbs down for disapproval, shake fists in anger, and clap hands to show approval. There are significant differences, however. In the United States, African-Americans maintain eye contact more when speaking than when listening. They give more nonverbal feedback when listening than European-Americans. In general, African-Americans are more animated and personal, while European-Americans are more subdued. They avoid eye contact with superiors out of respect, a trait often misinterpreted by European-Americans who see lack of eye contact as a sign of disinterest, lack of confidence, or dishonesty. And African-Americans tend to touch more and stand closer together when communicating than do European-Americans.²⁹

Nonverbal Interactions in the Global Village

Americans are taught to look others in the eye when speaking, while Africans are taught to avoid eye contact when listening to others. An honest "look me in the eye" for a Westerner may express a lack of respect to an Asian. An American widens his or her eyes to show wonder or surprise, while the Chinese do so to express anger, the French to express disbelief, and Hispanics to show lack of understanding. Americans are taught to smile in response to a smile, but this is not so in Israel. Japanese are taught to mask negative feelings with smiles and laughter. Americans are taught to have little direct physical contact with others while communicating, but Mediterranean and Latin countries encourage direct contact. On a loudness scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being high, Arabs would be near 10, Americans would be near the middle, and Europeans would

Be aware of the diversity of nonverbal messages in different parts of the world.

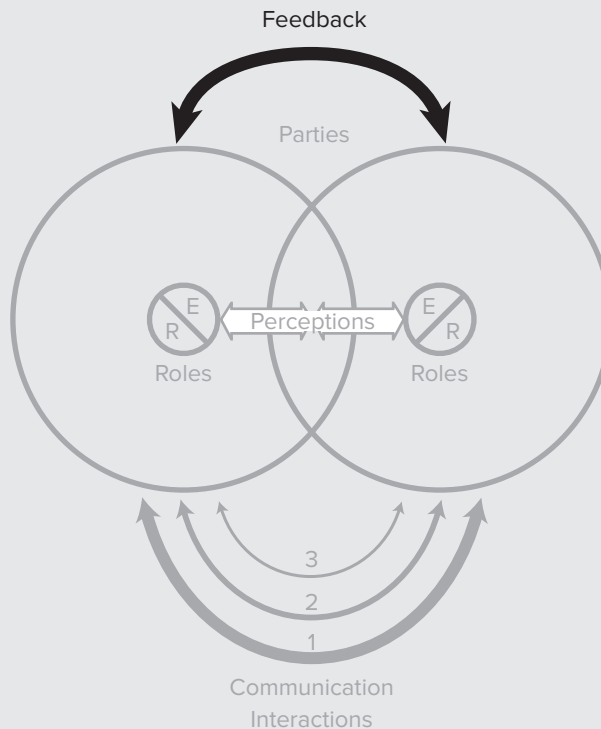
be near 1. Arabs perceive loudness as signs of strength and sincerity and softness as signs of weakness and deviousness. Not surprisingly, many Americans and Europeans see Arabs as pushy and rude. A firm handshake is important in American society but signals nothing in Japan.

Many gestures you observe in different cultures and countries have different meanings. A simple wave means “hello” in the United States and “come here” in Algeria. A finger to the forehead means smart in the United States and stupid in many European cultures. A thumb up means “way to go” in the United States and “screw you” in Iran. A circular motion of a finger around the ear means crazy in the United States and “you have a telephone call” in the Netherlands. Fingers in a circle means “okay” in the United States and is an obscene gesture in Brazil.

Feedback

Feedback is immediate and pervasive in interviews, and is essential when verifying what is being communicated and how. The large, double-ended arrow that links the top of the party circles in Figure 2.5 symbolizes the heavy stream of feedback between interview

Figure 2.5 *Feedback*



parties. Feedback is both verbal (questions and answers, arguments and counterarguments, agreements and disagreements, challenges and compliances) and nonverbal (facial expressions, gestures, raised eyebrows, eye contact, vocal utterances, and posture).

Be perceptive, sensitive, and receptive.

You can detect critical feedback and assess how an interview is progressing by observing and listening to what is and is not taking place or being said. During the interview, does the other party select a power position and move closer or farther apart? Are there changes in tone or attentiveness? Are there changes in eye contact, voice, or posture? Is there more or less willingness to disclose information, feelings, and attitudes? Do not read too much into small nonverbal actions and changes. A person may fidget because a chair is hard, not because a question is threatening; pay less attention because of noise and interruptions, not disinterest; speak loudly because of habit, not because of a hearing impairment. Poor eye contact may indicate shyness or culture, not deceptiveness or mistrust.

It is difficult to listen with your mouth open and your ears closed.

Listening skills are essential to obtaining information, detecting clues, and generating Level 2 and Level 3 responses. Few people listen well. Surveys of hundreds of corporations in the United States reveal that poor listening skills create barriers in all positions from entry level to CEO. An interviewee may not listen carefully to a question, while the interviewer may not listen carefully to the answer. Parties may be so absorbed in their primary roles as questioner or respondent that they do not listen well. Unfortunately, most of our educations prepare us to talk, not listen. There are four approaches to listening—for comprehension, for empathy, for evaluation, for resolution—and each plays a specific role in giving, receiving, and processing information accurately and insightfully.

Listening for Comprehension

The intent of listening for comprehension is to understand content.

When listening for comprehension, you are striving to receive, understand, and remember an interchange as accurately and completely as possible, not to judge. This approach is essential when giving and getting information and during the first minutes of interviews when determining how to react. When listening for comprehension, listen carefully and patiently to each question and answer. Listen to content and ideas as well as tone of voice and vocal emphasis for subtle meanings. Ask questions to clarify and verify.

Listening for Empathy

The intent of empathic listening is to understand the other party.

When listening for empathy, communicate genuine concern, understanding, and involvement. Empathic listening reassures, comforts, expresses warmth, and shows regard. It is the ability to place your self in another's situation. When listening with empathy, show interest and concern nonverbally, by not interrupting, and by being non-judgmental. Reply with tact and understanding and provide options and guidelines.

Listening for Evaluation

The intent of evaluative listening is to judge content and actions.

When listening for evaluation (*critical listening*), you judge what you hear and observe. You are ready to judge when you comprehend the verbal and nonverbal interactions. Openly expressing criticism may diminish cooperation and level of disclosure. Use evaluative listening only after listening carefully to content and observing nonverbal cues. Ask questions for clarifications of exchanges and validations of your interpretations. Do not become defensive when an interview party reacts critically to your criticisms.

Listening for Resolution

The intent of dialogic listening is to solve problems.

Dialogic listening focuses on *ours* rather than *mine* or *yours* and believes the agenda for solving a problem or task supersedes the individual.³⁰ Dialogic listening is most appropriate in problem-solving interviews in which the goal is the joint resolution of a problem or task. When listening for resolution, encourage interaction, trust the other party to make significant contributions, paraphrase and add to the other party's responses and ideas while focusing on the present, and center your attention on the communication that is taking place.

Listening, like speaking, is a learned skill.

Active and insightful listening is a difficult, invisible skill to attain, partly because our educations and experiences as children, students, employees, and subordinates prepare us to be passive listeners. Become a more effective listener by being as satisfied as a listener as a talker, by attending carefully and critically to both verbal and nonverbal signals, by learning to ignore distractions such as surroundings, appearances, and interruptions, and by knowing which is the most appropriate listening approach to use.

The Interview Situation

Every interview takes place at a specific *time*, in a specific *place*, and with specific *surroundings*. These variables, and how you *perceive* them, impact every aspect of the interactions that take place. The enveloping circle in Figure 2.6 portrays the interview situation and the imploding arrows represent the variables that influence the process.

Initiating the Interview

Who initiates an interview and how it may affect control, roles, and atmosphere.

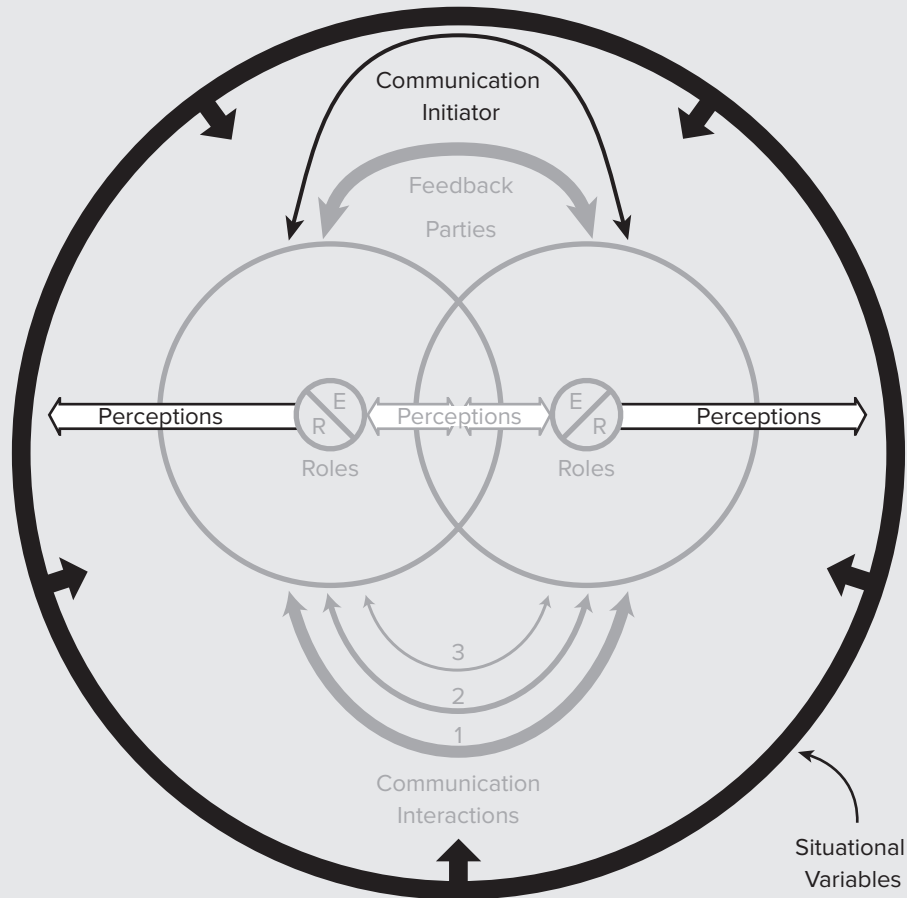
The arrows in Figure 2.6 that emerge from the top of the circle indicate that either party may initiate an interview. For instance, you may initiate an interview with an academic counselor or the counselor may initiate an interview with you. The particulars of the situation often determine who initiates the interaction and why. You may initiate an interview with a physician because of a persistent cough, or a physician may initiate an interview with you to discuss results of medical tests following a recent illness. The initiator may enhance the climate of an interview by initiating the interview directly rather than through a third party and by explaining the purpose, nature, and use of the information to be exchanged.

Perceptions

Perceptions are critical in moving beyond Level 1 interactions.

The arrows that extend from the parties to the situational circle indicate that each may **perceive** an interview situation similarly or differently. For example, a recruiter and applicant may see the purpose, need, and timing of an employment interview similarly. However, the recruiter may see the interaction as a routine event, while the applicant may see the interaction as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. Each may have very different goals, a physician to complete a routine examination efficiently and effectively and the patient to get good news and escape.

You are more likely to communicate at Levels 2 and 3 if you perceive the situation to be familiar rather than strange, informal rather than formal, warm rather than

Figure 2.6 *Situational variables*

cold, private rather than open, and close rather than distant physically, socially, and psychologically.

Timing

Each of us have optimum times for interactions.

Selecting the best time for an interview is tricky because each party may have an ideal time of day for communicating openly and effectively. Some of us are morning people and are ready to go before many people awaken; some of us are afternoon people and work best after lunch; and some of us are evening people and communicate effectively well into the night when most people have gone to bed. The same goes for days of the week and time of year. Monday morning and Friday afternoon have traditionally been

Take into account events before and after interviews.

poor times to exchange information and deal with critical issues. Holiday times are good for some types of interviews and poor for others. Become familiar with interview parties before arranging interviews. The legendary “cold call” that has interrupted dinners and sleeping has led states and the Federal Government to pass “don’t call” legislation. Be aware of events that will or have preceded an interview such as being the third person of the day to ask for a raise, request a person to take a political survey, or request an extension for an assignment. Tax time is not good timing for conducting fund-raising interviews.

Location and Setting

First of all, whose turf is best for an interview. For instance, you may feel more comfortable and less threatened in your home, room, office, business, or in a neutral place such as a lounge area or restaurant. You protect your turf. Think of your reactions when you walked into your room or office and found another person in your chair or at your desk. Create or select a well-lighted, pleasantly painted, moderate-sized room with comfortable furniture, temperature, and ventilation. Some organizations have created professional settings that resemble living rooms, dining rooms, kitchens, and studies that make interview parties feel at home and ready to communicate.

Surroundings help create a productive climate.

Objects and decorations may create an appropriate atmosphere and interview climate. Trophies, awards, degrees, and licenses attractively displayed communicate achievements, professional credibility, and stature in a field. Pictures, statues, and busts of leaders or famous persons communicate organizational and personal history, success, recognition, endorsement, and contacts. Models or samples may display state-of-the-art products and services. Carpeting, wall hangings, wallpaper, and curtains can provide a warm, attractive atmosphere conducive to effective communication.

Control noise to focus attention on the interaction.

Noise in an interview is anything that interferes with the communication process, including background noise, doors opening and closing, music, others talking, objects being dropped, and traffic. The interview may be interrupted by a cell phone or a text message. People coming in and out of the room, walking by an open door, or asking for assistance are common distractions. Eliminate negative influences of noise by selecting locations free of background noise or taking simple precautions.

Territoriality

All of us are territorial animals to varying degrees. You may select a seat, arrange books and papers, and place coats and hats strategically around you to stake out your physical and psychological space. You may resent those who invade this carefully crafted space with their choice of seating, possessions, eyes, voices, or bodies. Think of how you reacted to common invasions of territory such as another student walking into a professor’s office while you were discussing a problem, a nearby diner listening to your conversation with a recruiter, or a colleague talking loudly at the next desk while you were talking to a client.

Relationship affects territorial comfort zones.

Proximity of interview parties affects your comfort level. You may feel uncomfortable with persons who insist on talking nose-to-nose, and react by backing up, placing furniture between you, or terminating the interview. Trenholm and Jensen write about “**territorial markers**” and use the term “**personal space**” to describe an

“imaginary bubble” around us that we consider to be “almost as private as the body itself.”³¹ Researchers have identified intimate distance (touching to 18 inches), personal distance (1½ to 4 feet), and social distance (4 to 12 feet). Two to four feet—approximately an arm’s length or on opposite sides of a table or desk—is an optimum distance for most interviews.

Relationship, status, situation, and feelings of parties toward one another, influence the size of the bubble with which you are comfortable. High-status people stand or sit closer to low-status people, while low-status people prefer greater distances when dealing with superiors. You may maintain a greater distance with a stranger than with close associates, peers, and friends. Some people want to “get in your face” when angry, while others widen the space because their anger is translated into distancing themselves from you physically, socially, and psychologically.

Age, gender, and culture influence territorial preferences.

Age, gender, and culture may determine space preferences. People of the same age stand or sit closer together than those of mixed ages, particularly when the age difference is significant. All-male parties tend to arrange themselves farther apart than all-female or mixed-gender parties. North Americans prefer greater personal distances than do Middle Eastern and Latin American peoples. Arabs and Latin Americans see us as distant and cold, while we see them as intruding into our space. Northern Europeans prefer greater personal distance than Southern Europeans.³²

Seating may equalize control and enhance the interview climate.

Seating

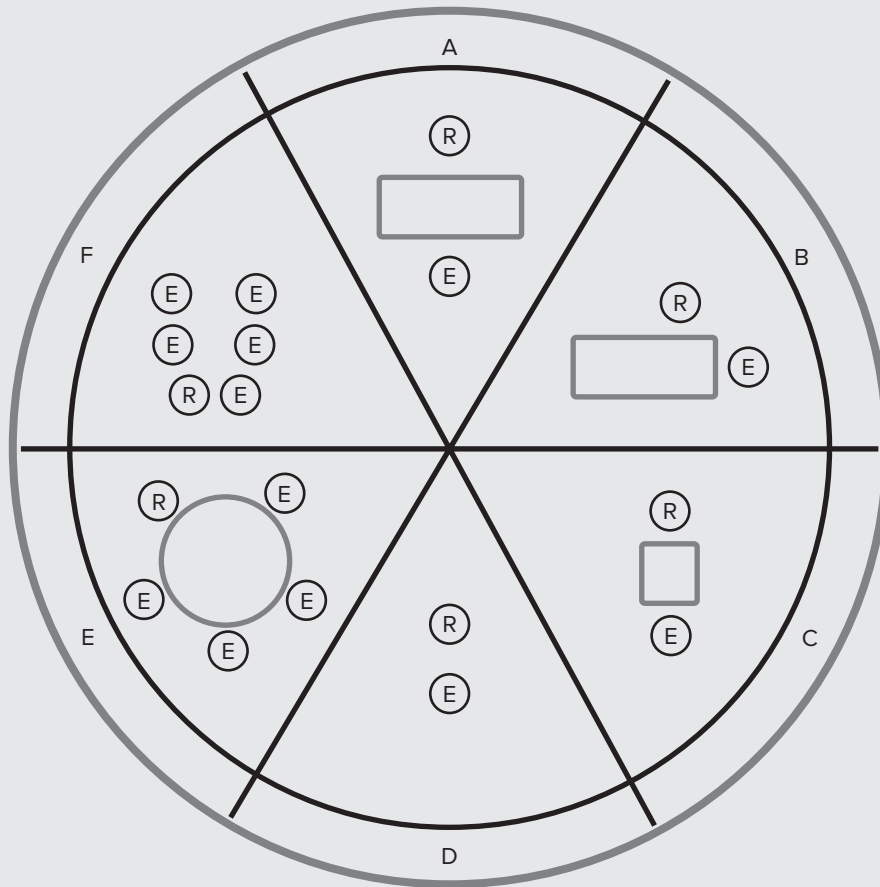
Where you sit and on what you sit is often determined by status, gender, cultural norms, and relationship. A superior and a subordinate may sit across a desk from one another, arrangement A in Figure 2.7, with one sitting in a large leather swivel chair while the other sits on a simple chair. Two chairs at right angles near the corner of a desk or table, arrangement B, creates a less formal atmosphere and a greater feeling of equality between parties. Students often prefer this arrangement with college professors.

Remove physical obstacles and reduce the superior-subordinate atmosphere by placing chairs at opposite sides of a small coffee table or by omitting the table altogether, arrangements C and D. A circular table, arrangement E, is popular in counseling and interviews involving more than two people. It avoids a head-of-the-table position, allows participants to pass around materials, and provides a surface on which to write, review printed items, and place refreshments. Arrangement F is most suitable for a focus group.



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■ A corner seating arrangement is preferred by many interviewers and interviewees.

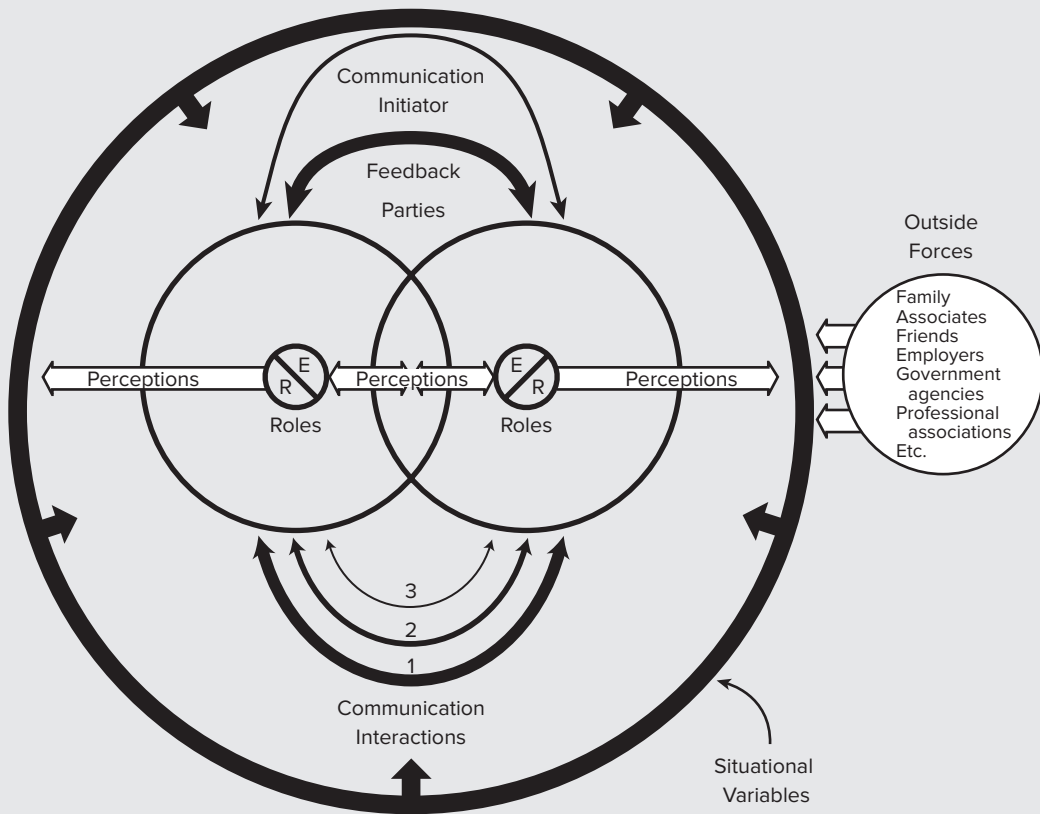
Figure 2.7 Seating arrangements

Outside Forces

Outside forces determine roles in many interviews.

We are not really alone with the other party.

Outside forces such as those identified in Figure 2.8 may suggest or dictate who takes part, when, and where; attitudes assumed; topics covered; structure followed; questions asked; and answers given. Organizational policies, union contracts, pressures of a political campaign, Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) laws, and competitors influence perceptions, levels of exchanges, self-disclosure, and interviewing approach. What may take place *following the interview*—a report you must submit, accounts in the media, possible grievances or lawsuits, reactions of peers—may make parties careful and wary or headstrong and hasty. You may feel pressure to relate that you “followed the rules,” “drove a hard bargain,” “got a deal,” or told the other party “where to get off.” Remember that the interview parties are seldom truly alone in the process.

Figure 2.8 *Outside forces*

Summary

The **summary model** developed step-by-step in this chapter **appears to be very complicated** precisely because the interview is a **very complicated process**. If you are to understand what takes place in an interview and why, you must understand the interacting variables and the roles you play when taking part in a purposeful, planned, and serious interaction with another party.

Each interview involves two parties made up of complex individuals who may have prior relational histories or form a relationship as the interview progresses. In this collaborative process, the parties may exchange roles, maintain and alter perceptions of self, the other party, and the situation; exchange verbal and nonverbal messages; and disclose information, attitudes, opinions, and feelings at one or more levels from very safe and unrevealing to very open and highly revealing. Each party must listen appropriately for comprehension, empathy, evaluation, or resolution and realize that silence may be more effective than talking.

Each party must be flexible and adaptable in choosing which approach to take (directive, nondirective, or a combination) not only because each party is unique and each situation is different, but because each party is molded and affected by demographics such as age, gender, race, and culture. This chapter has tried to enhance your awareness of how demographics and culture affect self-esteem, disclosure, levels of communication, language, nonverbal communication, and territoriality. In the global village of the twenty-first century, be aware of how different people and different cultures communicate.

Key Terms and Concepts

Complex communication process	Levels of interactions	Role competence
Control	Listening	Self-concept
Culture	Noise	Self-disclosure
Defensive climate	Nondirective approach	Self-esteem
Dialectical tensions	Nonverbal interactions	Self-fulfilling prophecy
Dialogic listening	Outside forces	Self-identity
Directive approach	Perceptions	Silence
Downward communication	Personal space	Situation
Feedback	Politeness theory	Supportive climate
Gender	Proximity	Territorial markers
Global relationships	Relational dimensions	Territoriality
Idioms	Relational distance	Upward communication
Initiating	Relational history	Verbal interactions
	Relational memory	

Student Activities

1. Interview four students on your campus: one from Central America, one from southern Europe, one from the Near East, and one from Asia. Ask them to identify and illustrate verbal and nonverbal communication problems they have encountered since coming to the United States. How have they managed to work through these problems?
2. Watch a 10–15 minute television interview with a person who had been accused of a crime or unethical behavior. How effective was the interviewer in getting to Level 2 and 3 interactions? How did the interviewee attempt to avoid disclosing potentially damaging information?
3. Research indicates measurable differences in communication between genders. Observe interactions between two males, two females, and a male and a female to see what differences if any you can detect in proximity, eye contact, gestures, body movements, and territoriality. What influence do you believe the prior relationships of the parties had on these nonverbal and situational factors?
4. Watch three 10–15 minute interviews between sportscasters and professional athletes, one in which an athlete is about to take part in a game, one in which an athlete just won a game, and one in which an athlete just experienced a loss. Which forms of listening did the participants in these interviews use most often? How did the situations appear to have affected the participants' abilities to listen?

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Questions play integral roles in every interview and often dominate the process. Technology editor Jamie McKenzie writes, “Questions may be the most powerful technology we have ever created” because “they allow us to control our lives and allow us to make sense of a confusing world” by leading “to insight and understanding.”¹ Questions need not be complete sentences with question marks at the end. They are *words, phrases, statements, or nonverbal acts that invite answers or responses*.

Questions are literally the “tools of the trade” in interviews and have unique characteristics, perform specific functions, and enable you to perform tasks efficiently and effectively. Each type of question has a name (just like golf clubs, screw drivers, or wrenches) that makes it easier for you to select at the proper time.

The objectives of this chapter are to introduce you to the types of questions, their specific uses and limitations, and common question pitfalls to avoid. Let us begin with the most fundamental types of questions: open and closed.

A question is any action that solicits an answer.

Open and Closed Questions

Open and closed questions vary in the amount of information they solicit and degree of interviewer control. Information ranges from a single word to lengthy descriptions, narratives, and reports of statistical data. Control ranges from minimal for open-ended questions to maximum with closed questions.

Open questions invite open answers.

Open Questions

Open questions vary in degree of openness in which respondents have considerable freedom to determine the amount and kind of information to give.

Highly Open Questions

Highly open questions place virtually no restrictions on the interviewee.

- Tell me about Prague.
- What do you remember about the tornado hitting your school on that April afternoon?
- Describe the Australian Outback for me.



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■ Open questions let the respondent do the talking and allow the interviewer to listen and observe.

Interviewees can volunteer and elaborate.

and are easier to answer. They encourage respondents to talk and to determine the type and amount of information to disclose. The lengthy answers open questions generate, reveal what respondents think is important and encourage them to provide details and descriptions you might not think to ask for. Such answers are likely to disclose knowledge level, uncertainty, intensity of feelings, perceptions, and biases.

Disadvantages of Open Questions

Interviewees can pick and choose, reveal and hide.

A single answer may consume a significant portion of interview time. On the one hand, respondents may give unimportant or irrelevant information, and on the other may withhold important information they feel is irrelevant or too obvious, sensitive, or dangerous. Keep respondents on track and maintain control by tactfully intervening to move on.

Closed Questions

Closed questions are narrowly focused and restrict the interviewee's freedom to determine the amount and kind of information to provide.

Moderately Closed Questions

Moderately closed questions ask for specific, limited pieces of information, such as:

- What are your favorite classes?
- Which North Carolina beaches have you visited?
- At what times of the year do you prefer to travel?

Restricted questions lead to restricted answers.

Moderately Open Questions

Moderately open questions are more restrictive but give respondents considerable latitude in answers.

- Tell me about your study abroad experience in Prague.
- What were you thinking as the ceiling of the hallway began to rain down on you?
- Describe the Australian Outback at dusk.

Advantages of Open Questions

Open questions show interest and trust in the respondent's ability to disclose important information

Highly Closed Questions

Highly closed questions may ask interviewees to pick an answer.

Highly closed questions are very restrictive, often asking respondents for a single piece of information.

- When were you in Haiti?
- What is the interest rate on your student loan?
- Where were you born?

Bipolar Questions

Bipolar questions offer polar opposites for answers.

Closed questions are **bipolar** when they limit respondents to two polar choices, sometimes polar opposites.

- Did you attend the in-service workshop in the morning or afternoon?
- Do you usually take U.S. 31 or I-65?
- Are you a conservative or a liberal?

Some bipolar questions ask for an evaluation or attitude.

- Do you approve or disapprove of changing time zones?
- Do you like or dislike dark chocolate?
- Are you for or against the state mandated testing of elementary school children?

A yes or no question is likely to generate a yes or no answer.

The most common bipolar question asks for a yes or a no response.

- Have you received a flu shot?
- Are you going to the state conference?
- Do you have a top secret clearance?

Closed questions provide control and direction.

Advantages of Closed Questions

Closed questions enable you to control the length of answers and guide respondents to specific information. They require little effort from either party and allow you to ask more questions, in more areas, in less time. Brief answers are easy to record and tabulate.

Closed questions stifle volunteering.

Disadvantages of Closed Questions

Answers to closed questions often contain too little information, requiring you to ask several questions when one open question would do the job. They do not reveal why a person has a particular attitude, the person's degree of feeling or commitment, or why this person typically makes choices. Interviewers talk more than interviewees when asking closed questions, so less information is exchanged. Interviewees have no opportunity to volunteer or explain information, and they can select an answer or say yes or no without knowing anything about a topic.

Figure 3.1 illustrates the major advantages and disadvantages of open and closed questions. As you narrow a question, the amount of data decreases. As the amount

Figure 3.1 *Question options*

Advantages and Disadvantages of Question Types	Type of Questions			
	Highly Open	Moderately Open	Moderately Closed	Highly Closed
Breadth and depth of potential information	10	7	4	1
Degree of precision, reproducibility, reliability	1	4	7	10
R's control over question and response	1	4	7	10
Interviewer skill required	10	7	4	1
Reliability of data	1	4	7	10
Economic use of time	1	4	7	10
Opportunity for E to reveal feelings and information	10	7	4	1
	10 High	7 Above average	4 Average	1 Low

of data decreases, your control increases, less time and skill are required, and the degree of precision, reliability, and reproducibility increases. On the other hand, as you open up a question, the amount of data increases and interviewees may reveal knowledge level, understanding, reasons for feeling or acting, attitudes, and hidden motives.

Combinations often lead to the best results.

Interviewers may include open and closed questions with varying degrees of constraint to get the information desired. For instance, an interviewer might follow up a bipolar question such as “Are you familiar with the village master plan?” with an open-ended question such as “What do you know about this plan?” An open-ended question such as “Tell me about your internship at C-SPAN” may be followed up with a more closed question such as, “What was your first assignment?”

Primary and Probing Questions

Primary questions make sense out of context.

Primary questions introduce topics or new areas within a topic and can stand alone even when taken out of context.

- How did you prepare for the Bar exam?
- Tell me about your experiences when hiking the Appalachian Trail.
- Which U.S. President of the last century do you admire most?

Probing questions make sense only in context.

All examples of open and closed questions presented earlier are primary questions.

Questions that dig deeper into answers that may be incomplete, superficial, suggestive, vague, irrelevant, or inaccurate are called **probing questions**. Unlike primary questions that can stand alone and make sense, probing or follow-up questions make sense only when connected to the previous question or series of questions.

Types of Probing Questions

Silent Probes

Be patient and be quiet.

If an answer is incomplete or the respondent seems hesitant to continue, use a **silent probe** with appropriate nonverbal signals such as eye contact, a head nod, or a gesture to encourage the person to continue. Silence shows interest in what is being said, and is a tactful way to communicate disbelief, uncertainty, or confusion. An exchange might go like this:

1. **Interviewer:** How was your dinner at The New Age Restaurant last night?
2. **Interviewee:** It was not too bad.
3. **Interviewer:** (silence)
4. **Interviewee:** The salmon was not cooked as thoroughly as I like, but the side dishes were excellent.

Nudging Probes

A nudge replaces silence with a word or phrase.

Use a **nudging probe** when a silent probe fails or words seem necessary to get what is needed. It nudges the interviewee to reply or to continue, and is simple and brief.

I see.	And?
Go on.	So?
Yes?	Uh-huh?

A common mistake is the assumption that all questions must be multiple-word sentences. A lengthy probing question may stifle the interchange or open up a new area or topic, the opposite of what you want.

Ask rather than assume.

Clearinghouse Probes

A **clearinghouse probe** discovers whether a series of questions has uncovered everything of importance on a topic or issue. It encourages respondents to volunteer

information you might not think to ask for and to fill in gaps your questions did not elicit. It literally clears out an area or topic, such as the following:

- What have I not asked that you believe is important in this case?
- Is there anything else you would like to tell me?

A **clearinghouse probing question** enables you to proceed to the next primary question or to closing the interview confident you have gotten all relevant and important information. It is virtually impossible to anticipate everything an interviewee might be willing or able to reveal.

Informational Probes

Pry open vague, superficial, and suggestive answers.

Informational probing questions ask for additional information or explanation. If an answer is **superficial**, ask a question such as:

- How exactly was the contract worded?
- Tell me more about your relationship with the sheriff.

If an answer is **vague** or **ambiguous**, ask a question such as:

- You write that you went to a small college. How many students were enrolled at that time?
- You say you were upset with the judge's decision. How upset were you?

If an answer **suggests** a feeling or attitude, ask a question such as:

- Do I detect a note of anger in your answer?
- You appear to be confused by the zoning board's rejection of your request.

Restatement Probes

Restate or rephrase to get complete answers.

An interviewee may not answer a question **as asked**. Restate tactfully all or part of the original question, perhaps with vocal emphasis to focus attention on important words.

1. **Interviewer:** Why are you interested in pursuing graduate work at the University of Illinois?
2. **Interviewee:** I want to do graduate work at a major research institution where I can teach while doing research.
3. **Interviewer:** I see. And why at the **University of Illinois**?

If an interviewee **makes a mistake** while replying, use a restatement probe that avoids embarrassing or judging the interviewee.

1. **Interviewer:** Who do you believe is the best quarterback in the NFL?
2. **Interviewee:** Brett Farve.
3. **Interviewer:** Who do you believe is currently the best quarterback in the NFL?

When an Interviewee seems **hesitant** to answer, your question may be unclear or difficult to answer. Restate the question in a clearer, easier to answer wording.

1. **Interviewer:** You have received several teaching awards, what is your philosophy of teaching?
2. **Interviewee:** I'm not sure I have a teaching philosophy.
3. **Interviewer:** What do you believe are the essentials of effective teaching?

If a question has more than **two parts or options**, an interviewee may answer only one part or select only one option. Restate the part or option left unanswered.

1. **Interviewer:** When you heard the tornado approaching, what were your first thoughts and actions?
2. **Interviewee:** My first thought was that it sounded exactly like a freight train approaching, and it took a few seconds to realize that it was a tornado.
3. **Interviewer:** And what were your first actions?

Reflective Probes

Reflective questions verify and clarify.

Ask a **reflective probing question** when it appears necessary to **clarify** or **verify** an answer to be certain you have received it as intended. Avoid any wording or nonverbal signals interviewees might interpret as an attempt to lead or trap them into giving a desired answer.

- Those were the **gross** incomes from last year?
- By former President Bush, you are referring to President **George W. Bush**?
- Are you implying that immigrant workers are **not taxpayers**?
- You seem to be saying that you will **not go pro** after this year?

A reflective probe differs from a restatement probe in that the first seeks to clarify or verify an answer while the second seeks to obtain more information following a primary question.

Mirror Probes

Mirror questions summarize to ensure accuracy.

The **mirror probing question** is different from the reflective probing question because it **summarizes a series of exchanges**, not just the immediate response, to ensure **understanding** and **retention** of information, instructions, elements of a proposal, prescribed regimens, and procedures. The purpose is to avoid problems in interviews caused by memory, assumptions, and interpretations. For instance, you might use a mirror question when interviewing a tour agency about a Caribbean cruise:

1. **Interviewer:** Okay, as I understand it, we would stop in the Bahamas, Aruba in the Dutch Antilles, and Costa Rica, and go through the Panama Canal.
2. **Interviewee:** That's correct except that your ship would only go through the lock at Cristobal and into Gatun Lake. If you want to go all the way through the canal to the Pacific Ocean, you would need to make arrangements on an optional excursion.

Skillful Interviewing with Probing Questions

Skillful probing leads to insightful answers.

The skillful use of probing questions is essential to the success of most interviews. Do not stick to a list of questions unless required to do so, anticipate answers prematurely, or be impatient to move on. Listen carefully to each response to determine if the answer is clear and complete. If not, determine in a few seconds what is unsatisfactory about an answer and phrase a probing question. Probing questions discover more relevant, accurate, and complete information and heighten the other party's motivation because you are obviously interested and listening.

Be patient and be persistent.

Probing questions can cause problems. If a person does not respond immediately, you may jump in with a probing question when none is needed. Phrase probing questions carefully and be aware of vocal emphasis. Stanley Payne illustrates how the meaning of a simple "Why" question can be altered by stressing different words.²

Why do you say that?

Why *do* you say that?

Why do *you* say that?

Why do you *say* that?

Why do you say *that*?

A "simple" why question may unintentionally communicate disapproval, disbelief, mistrust, and cause the other party to become defensive and reluctant to disclose openly. A poorly phrased probing question may alter the meaning of the primary question or bias the reply. Be tactful and not demanding.

Exercise #1—Supply the Probing Question

Supply an appropriate probing question for each of the following interactions. Be sure the question probes into the answer and is not a primary question introducing a new facet of the topic. Watch assumptions about answers, and phrase probing questions tactfully.

1. **Interviewer:** What did you think of the President's "State of the Union Address?"

Interviewee: It was about what I expected.

2. **Interviewer:** Are you looking for an internship for this summer?

Interviewee: Sort of.

3. **Interviewer:** Who are you going to vote for in the presidential election?

Interviewee: I don't know.

4. **Interviewer:** How was the concert?

Interviewee: It was awesome.

5. **Interviewer:** What is your management philosophy?

Interviewee: (silence)

6. **Interviewer:** What did you do at Amazon?

Interviewee: I processed returns and things like that.

7. **Interviewer:** How much did your trip to Australia cost?

Interviewee: A ton.

8. **Interviewer:** Why did you decide to study civil engineering?

Interviewee: I like to work outdoors.

9. **Interviewer:** Who did you cheer for in Super Bowl 50?

Interviewee: The Green Bay Packers.

10. **Interviewer:** I understand you think the end of the world is coming soon.

Interviewee: That's partially true.

Neutral and Leading Questions

Neutral questions enable respondents to decide upon answers without direction or pressure from questioners. For example, in an open, neutral question, the interviewee determines the length, details, and nature of the answer. In a closed, neutral question, the interviewee may choose between equal choices. All questions discussed and illustrated so far have been neutral questions.

Leading questions direct interviewees to specific answers.

Interviewer bias leads to dictated responses.

Loaded questions dictate answers through language or entrapment.

An apparent bipolar question may in reality have only one pole.

The **leading question** may **intentionally** or **unintentionally** suggest the answer the interviewer expects or prefers, so the interviewee gives this answer because it is “easier or more tempting” to give that answer.³ This is called **interviewer bias** and may occur because of the way a question is phrased, how a question is asked nonverbally, the interviewee’s desire to please a person of authority, or a conspicuous symbol the interviewer is wearing such as a cross or star of David, a political button, or a police uniform. What may appear at first glance to be a bipolar question is actually a **unipolar question** because one option is made less acceptable than the other. Introductory phrases such as “According to the Constitution,” “As we all know,” or “All true conservatives (liberals) believe that” are likely to lead respondents to give acceptable answers rather than express their true beliefs, attitudes, or feelings.

The **loaded question** is an extreme form of leading question that virtually dictates a desired answer. The use of extreme language is a common way to load a question. This includes name-calling, emotionally charged words, expletives, and unequal options that may lead an interviewee to choose the least onerous choice. Entrapment is another way to load a question. An interviewer may ask a no-win question such as the iconic “Are you still beating your wife” question. Interviewees cannot reply without seeming to admit to an onerous or illegal act.

Regardless of their potential problems in interviews, leading questions are useful and often necessary question tools. Recruiters use them to see how applicants respond under stress. Sales representatives use leading questions to persuade customers to make decisions. Police officers ask leading and sometimes loaded questions to provoke suspects into revealing information and truths. Journalists ask leading questions to prod reluctant interviewees into responding. A counselor may use a loaded question such as “When was the last time you were drunk” to show that a range of answers is acceptable and none will shock the interviewer.

Leading questions have legitimate functions.

Do not confuse neutral **reflective** and **mirror** questions with **leading** questions. Recall that reflective and mirror questions ask for clarification and verification for accurate understanding and information. If they lead an interviewee by accident to give an answer you appear to desire, they have failed to perform their designed task.

The questions below illustrate the differences between neutral and leading questions. Distinguish leading from loaded questions. What makes one more extreme than the other?

Neutral Questions

1. Have you ever smoked pot?
2. How did this river tour compare with the last one?
3. Have you ever cheated on an exam?
4. Do you want a diet Coke?
5. Do you enjoy skeet shooting?
6. What were your reactions to the video on texting while driving?
7. Are you a conservative or a liberal?
8. How do you feel about working out?
9. Are you going to the staff meeting?
10. How do you feel about legalizing gay marriage in this state?

Leading Questions

1. When did you last smoke pot?
2. Wasn't this river tour better than the last one?
3. Have you stopped cheating on exams?
4. I assume you want a diet Coke.
5. You like skeet shooting, don't you?
6. What were your reactions to that stupid video on texting while driving?
7. Are you a conservative or a socialist?
8. Do you hate to work out as much as the rest of us do?
9. You're going to the staff meeting, aren't you?
10. How do you feel about legalizing gay marriage in this state that would destroy the family as we know it and end our religious freedom?

Figure 3.2 compares types of questions available to interviewers and interviewees, including open and closed, primary and probing, and neutral and leading questions.

Exercise #2—Identification of Questions

Identify each of the following questions in four ways: (1) open or closed, (2) primary or probing, (3) neutral or leading, and (4) whether it is a special type of question tool: bipolar, loaded, nudging probe, clearinghouse probe, informational probe, restate-ment probe, reflective probe, or mirror probe.

1. What did you do during the interim semester?
2. Are you saying that you joined the Army to escape the farm?
3. Did you vote in the last primary election?
4. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about your position at CVS?
5. Quitting your job in the middle of a recession was stupid, wasn't it?
6. I see.

Figure 3.2 *Types of questions*

		Neutral		Leading	
	Open	Closed	Open	Closed	
Primary	How do you feel about the new core requirements?	Do you approve or disapprove of the new core requirements?	Most top students favor the new core requirements; how do you feel about them?	Do you favor the new core requirements like most top students I've talked to?	
Probing	Why do you feel that way?	Is your approval moderate or strong?	If you favor the core requirements, why did you initially oppose them?	I assume you favor the new core requirements because you're graduating in two months.	

7. You are concerned about this problem, aren't you?
8. Interviewer: What did you see first when you came upon the accident?
Interviewee: It was a nightmare.
Interviewer: I'm sure. What did you see first?
9. Okay, it sounds like planning for the lecture is set. As I understand, you are taking care of publicity, Jane is handling travel and housing, Fallon is arranging for a dinner prior to the lecture, I will introduce the speaker and handle the Q and A session, and Zack is setting up the reception in the atrium immediately following the lecture. Is all of this correct?
10. And then what happened?

Common Question Pitfalls

Phrase questions carefully to avoid common pitfalls.

Interviewers and interviewees have a variety of question tools that enable them to gather information and insights into experiences, reactions, beliefs, attitudes, and feelings, but they must phrase each question carefully to avoid common **question pitfalls**. Each pitfall makes it more difficult to perform interview tasks efficiently and effectively.

Avoid unintentional bipolar questions.

The Unintentional Bipolar Question

The bipolar question is designed to elicit a yes or no answer or a choice among two poles such as conservative or liberal, like or dislike, approve or disapprove, and agree or disagree. The problem arises when you **unintentionally** ask a bipolar question when you want a lengthy answer or when there are more than two choices from which a

respondent may choose. Be aware of these common phrases that open **bipolar** rather than **open** questions: *Do you, Did you, Are you, Have you, Will you, Were you, Can you, Would you, Is there, and Was it?* If you want an open-ended answer rather than a bipolar one, open your question with words and phrases such as: *What, Why, How, Explain, and Tell me about?*

The Yes (No) Question

Obvious questions generate obvious answers.

The yes (no) question pitfall occurs when you ask a question that has only one obvious or acceptable answer, either a yes or a no. For instance, a physician trying to persuade a patient to stop smoking might ask, “*Do you want to die?*” Or a counselor might ask a student, “*Do you want to graduate?*” Listen carefully to how you are phrasing each question so you do not waste time asking the obvious.

The Tell Me Everything Question

The tell me everything question is the opposite of the intentional bipolar question and the yes (no) question. This pitfall occurs when you ask an extremely open-ended question with no limits or guidelines. When you ask a question such as “*Tell me about yourself*” or “*Tell me about your study abroad experiences in China,*” a respondent may have difficulty determining where to begin, what to include, and when to end an answer. Focus a question on a particular part of self or specific experiences that are most important for the interview.

The Open-to-Closed Question

Ask an open question and then stop.

The open-to-closed pitfall occurs when you ask an open question and then switch it to a closed question, often bipolar, before the interviewee can reply. For instance, you may ask “*Tell me about your trip to New York,*” and then interject “*Did you visit the 9/11 memorial?*” The interviewee is most likely to limit the answer to the memorial, and you lose a significant amount of important information. Avoid this trap by preparing questions in advance of the interview and thinking through each question carefully before asking it.



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The Double-Barreled Question

The double-barreled question pitfall occurs when you ask a question with two parts or topics such as, “*Tell me about your trips to Rome and Venice*” or “*Which colleges do you support financially and why did you choose these?*” Respondents may address each part superficially rather than give a long answer, answer only the part they can recall, or answer the part they want to answer. If you do not repeat the portion that is unanswered,

■ How you ask a question may bias the answer you receive.

Ask one question at a time.

you will get only one answer instead the two needed. You may have to ask several probing questions to get the information you would have received by asking two separate questions.

Push only when there is a need to push.

The Unintentional Leading Question

The leading question pitfall occurs when you **unintentionally** ask a question phrased to influence an answer instead of a neutral question. You may be unaware that you did this verbally or nonverbally or that interviewees gave answers they **thought you wanted to hear**. Avoid this pitfall by phrasing and asking questions nonverbally that are clearly neutral. Listen carefully to every question and ask yourself “How would I reply to this question?”

Don’t guess; ask!

The Guessing Question

The guessing question pitfall occurs when you try to **guess** information instead of **asking** for it. A string of guessing questions may fail to accomplish what a single open-ended or informational question can. For instance, instead of asking “*Were you in your car when you saw the accident?*” ask “*Where were you when you saw the accident?*” Instead of asking “*Did you attempt to apply CPR?*” ask “*What did you do?*”

Curiosity may be fatal to interviewers.

The Curious Question

The curious question pitfall occurs when you ask for information you do not need. For example, are you merely **curious** about a person’s age, marital status, income level, or religious beliefs that have nothing to do with the interview and its stated purpose. The interviewee has the right to say this information is none of your business or to ask the purpose of the question. If a question may **appear** to be irrelevant, explain why this information is relevant and necessary.

What does the interviewee know of relevance to this topic?

The Too High or Too Low Question

The too high or too low pitfall occurs when you fail to prepare questions that take into consideration the interviewee’s levels of knowledge and expertise. Questions above these levels may cause embarrassment or resentment for appearing uninformed, ill-informed, uneducated, or unintelligent. Questions below these levels may be insulting. Know whether a respondent is a layperson, novice, or expert on a topic or issue and phrase your questions accordingly.

Delve into inaccessible areas only when necessary.

The Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell Question

The don’t ask, don’t tell pitfall occurs when you delve into information and emotions that interviewees may be incapable of addressing because of social, psychological, or situational constraints. For instance, we learn at an early age that it is more socially acceptable to be humble rather than boastful. So when we are asked to assess our beauty, intelligence, creativity, or bravery, we are most likely to pose an “Aw shucks” attitude or make a joke of our answer. We are told that there is an appropriate time and place for everything but that some areas are usually off limits or taboo such as sex,

personal income, religious convictions, and certain illnesses. For instance, we find it easier to discuss physical rather than mental illnesses. Explain why a question is essential to ask, and delay “touchy” or “taboo” questions until you have established a comfortable climate and positive relationship. Phrase questions carefully to lessen social and psychological constraints and to avoid offending interviewees.

Gender and cultural differences may affect social and psychological *accessibility*. Research indicates that women disclose more information about themselves, use more psychological or emotional verbs, discuss their personal lives more in business interactions, have less difficulty expressing intimate feelings, talk more about other people’s accomplishments and minimize their own, and appear to be more comfortable when hearing accolades about themselves.⁴ Cultures also differ in readily accessible areas. Learn as much as you can about an interviewee prior to an interview to determine what can and cannot be asked and how it should be asked.

Avoid pitfalls by preparing and thinking.

Avoid common question pitfalls by planning questions prior to the interview so you do not have to create them on the spot in the give-and-take of the interaction. Think before uttering a question, stop when you have asked a good open question instead of rephrasing it, use bipolar questions sparingly, avoid questions that are too open-ended, ask only necessary questions, ask for information at the interviewee’s level, avoid complex questions, and be aware of the accessibility factor in questions and answers. Know the common question pitfalls well enough that you can catch yourself before tumbling into one.

Exercise #3—What Are the Pitfalls in These Questions?

Each of the following questions illustrates one or more of the common question pitfalls: unintentional bipolar question, yes (no) question, tell me everything question, open-to-closed question, double-barreled question, unintentional leading question, guessing question, curious question, too high or too low question, and don’t ask, don’t tell question. Identify the pitfall(s) of each question and rephrase it to make it a good question. Avoid a new pitfall in your revised question.

1. Do you like or dislike catfish?
2. You’re concerned about the stock market, aren’t you?
3. Tell me about General Electric.
4. Tell me about your trip to the Normandy beaches; were they different than you expected?
5. Did you like the band concert?
6. (asked during a recruiting interview) Are you a registered Republican or Democrat?
7. Would you label yourself as a genius?
8. (asked of a student) Do you want to fail my class?
9. Did you join the Air Force ROTC to become a fighter pilot?
10. Tell me about LaSalle and the courses you are taking.

ON THE WEB

Browse an Internet site to locate a variety of question–answer interactions that vary in intensity from happy to sad, cooperative to uncooperative, friendly to hostile, and understanding to patronizing. Identify the different types of primary and probing questions in these interactions. Which question pitfalls can you identify? Which of these pitfalls were accidental and which purposeful? Use search engines such as the Knight Ridder Newspapers (<http://www.kri.com>), CNBC (<http://www.cnbc.com>), and CNN (<http://cnn.com>).

Summary

You have a limitless variety of question tools to choose from, and each tool has unique characteristics, capabilities, and pitfalls. Knowing which question to select and how to use it is essential for interviewing effectively and efficiently. Each question has three characteristics: (1) open or closed, (2) primary or probing, and (3) neutral or leading. Open questions are designed to discover large amounts of information, while closed questions are designed to gain specific bits of information. Primary questions open up topics and sub-topics, while probing questions probe into answers for more information, explanations, clarifications, and verifications. Neutral questions give respondents freedom to answer as they wish, while leading questions nudge or shove respondents toward specific answers.

Phrasing questions is essential to get the information needed. If you phrase questions carefully and think before asking, you can avoid common question pitfalls such as curious; don't ask, don't tell; double-barreled; guessing; open-to-closed; tell me everything; too high, too low; unintentional bipolar, and unintentional leading.

Key Terms and Concepts

Bipolar question	Loaded question	Reflective probe
Clearinghouse probe	Mirror probe	Restatement probe
Closed question	Neutral question	Silent probe
Curious pitfall	Nudging probe	Tell me everything pitfall
Don't ask, don't tell pitfall	Open question	Too high, too low
Double-barreled pitfall	Open-to-closed pitfall	Unintentional bipolar
Guessing pitfall	Primary question	Unintentional leading
Informational probe	Probing question	Yes (no) pitfall
Leading question	Question pitfalls	

Student Activities

1. Watch an interview on C-SPAN that lasts at least 15 minutes. Which types of questions does the interviewer employ? Which seem to be the most effective? How does the relationship between interviewer and interviewee appear to affect question types and responses? How does the situation appear to affect question selection and responses?

2. Prepare two sets of 10 questions each, one with all neutral questions and one with four of the questions rephrased as leading questions. Conduct six interviews, three with all-neutral questions and three with the mixture of neutral and leading questions. Compare the answers you received and determine how types of questions may have influenced these answers. Why do you think some interviewees ignored the direction you provided in leading questions while others did not?
3. Create a list of closed questions, including bipolar questions, on a topic of importance in your state. Interview four people: a friend, a family member older than you, an acquaintance, and a stranger selected at random. Which ones gave you the shortest, least revealing answers? Which ones volunteered the most information regardless of question type? What does this tell you about using closed questions and the relationship between parties?
4. Listen to several interviews on television, including ones with politicians, company representatives, sports figures, and people who have experienced a crisis. Identify the question pitfalls exhibited in the questions asked and how they seemed to affect responses. Which were the most common pitfalls? Did you identify question pitfalls not covered in this chapter?

Notes

1. Joyce Kasman Valenza, "For the best answers, ask tough questions," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, April 20, 2000, <http://www.joycevalenza.com/questions.html>, accessed September 26, 2006.
2. Stanley L. Payne, *The Art of Asking Questions* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980), p. 204.
3. Robert L. Kahn and Charles F. Cannell, *The Dynamics of Interviewing* (New York: John Wiley, 1964), p. 205.
4. Lillian Glass, *He Says, She Says: Closing the Communication Gap between the Sexes* (New York: Putnam, 1993), pp. 45–59; Kory Floyd, *Interpersonal Communication* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2011), p. 99.

Resources

Anderson, Rob, and G. Michael Killenberg. *Interviewing: Speaking, Listening, and Learning for Professional Life*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Devito, Joseph A. *Interviewing Guidebook*. Boston: Pearson Education, 2010.

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Every interview has a **degree of structure**, and this degree is determined by interview type, situation, purpose, length, and complexity. Although specific types of interviews may require some unique differences in structure, basic principles and techniques apply to all interviews. **The objectives of this chapter** are to introduce you to these principles and techniques and explain how to apply them to the opening, body, and closing of interviews.

The Body of the Interview

When preparing for an interview, it is tempting to begin by thinking of questions to ask. Focus instead on the **purpose** of the interview. What exactly do you **need** in **this** interaction with **this** party? With a clear purpose in mind, develop an **interview guide**.

Interview Guide

An interview guide contains topics, not questions.

An **interview guide** is a carefully structured outline of relevant topics and subtopics to be addressed in the interview. The guide identifies specific areas of inquiry to ensure coverage of all important topics. It is not a list of questions, but it will assist in phrasing questions, recording answers, noting impressions and insights, and recalling information when the interview is over.

Structural Sequences

An interview guide provides a clear and systematic outline for the interview, so review sequences learned over the years. Five sequences are common in interviews.

A **topical sequence** follows natural divisions of a topic or issue. For example, if you are planning to interview an attorney about law schools you might attend, your guide would include such topics as ranking among law schools, areas of specialization, quality of the law school review, number and type of law firms that come to campus for interviews, and cost. The traditional **journalist's guide** consisting of six key words—who, what, when, where, how, and why—is useful in many interview settings.

A **time sequence** treats topics or parts of topics in chronological order. For instance, in an interview with a fire inspector about a recent fire in a residence hall on campus, start with when the fire was detected, and then proceed to when the first crews

Sequences help organize topics and impose a degree of structure on interviews.

arrived at the hall, when they started attacking the fire, when they had it under control, and when they left the scene.

A **space sequence** arranges topics according to spatial divisions: left to right, top to bottom, north to south, or neighborhood to neighborhood. For instance, when interviewing a person about a house on Ocean Isle Beach for a family gathering, you might begin with the number and arrangement of bedrooms, and then proceed to the kitchen facilities, dining areas, recreational rooms, swimming pool size and area, and end with the beach.

A **cause-to-effect sequence** explores causes and effects, but not necessarily in that order. For instance, if it is known that a school bus went off the road and rolled two times before landing on its side, you might focus on possible causes of the accident (driver error, driver distraction, mechanical failure, slippery roadway). If the cause(s) of the school bus accident are known, you might focus on the effects of the accident on the student occupants (death and injuries) and then on the bus (collapse of the top, broken windows, seats coming loose).

A **problem-solution sequence** consists of a problem phase and a solution phase. For instance, if you are concerned about reports that canine flu has appeared in your area, you might interview a veterinarian about the threat this flu might pose for your 10-week-old puppy and how you can avoid this danger.

Developing an Interview Guide

With your purpose firmly in mind, start creating an interview guide by determining the major topics you want to cover in the interview. For example, if you are studying international business and are interested in spending a semester abroad, talk to professors familiar with your interests, study abroad opportunities, and experiences of students who have recently studied abroad. Major topics may include the following:

- I. Top programs abroad in international business
- II. Cultures
- III. Expenses
- IV. Teaching and learning facilities
- V. Research facilities

Once you have identified major topic areas, place subtopics under each.

- I. Top programs abroad in international business
 - A. Vienna
 - B. Prague
 - C. Berlin
 - D. Paris
- II. Cultures
 - A. Language
 - B. History
 - C. Historical sites
 - D. Arts and music

A guide ensures the consideration of all important topics and subtopics.

- III. Expenses
 - A. Food
 - B. Housing
 - C. Travel
 - D. Academic
- IV. Teaching and learning facilities
 - A. Learning and support services
 - B. Courses and independent study
 - C. Resources for learning
 - D. Electronic learning media
- V. Research facilities
 - A. Laboratories
 - B. Libraries
 - C. IT and computing facilities
 - D. Entrepreneur center

Interviews may include more than one sequence or none at all.

With major topics and subtopics outlined, consider subtopics of subtopics. These might include potential language problems or cultural differences and academic costs such as tuition, fees, insurance, or supplies. Sometimes it is difficult to know enough to list all important topics under subtopics until an interview commences. Interviewers often employ more than one outline sequence in an interview because of the nature of topics and subtopics.

Interview Schedules

A Nonscheduled Interview

A nonscheduled interview is merely an interview guide.

If an interview will be brief such as determining date, time, and place of a meeting or a few biographical details, you might conduct the interview from a guide. This is called a **nonscheduled interview**. A nonscheduled interview conducted from an interview guide gives maximum freedom to probe into answers and adapt to the interviewee and situation as the interview progresses. It requires considerable skill, however, because there are no prepared questions and it may be difficult to maintain control during a freewheeling interaction.

A Moderately Scheduled Interview

A moderately scheduled interview lessens the need for instant question creation.

A **moderately scheduled interview** consists of all major questions with possible probing questions under each. The sentences and phrases in a guide become questions. The moderate schedule, like the nonscheduled interview, not only allows freedom to probe into answers and adapt to different interviewees and situations, but it also imposes a greater degree of structure, aids in recording answers, and is easier to conduct and replicate. It is unnecessary to phrase every question on the spot because they are thought out and carefully worded in advance. There are fewer pressures during the interview. Since interview parties tend to wander during unstructured interviews, listing questions makes it easier to keep on track and return to a structure when desired. Journalists,

medical personnel, recruiters, lawyers, police officers, and insurance investigators, to name a few, use moderately scheduled interviews.

A Highly Scheduled Interview

Highly scheduled interviews sacrifice flexibility and adaptability for control.

On paper a **highly scheduled interview** may look little different from a moderately scheduled interview, but they are very different in execution. Unlike a moderate schedule, all questions in a highly scheduled interview are asked exactly as they are worded on the schedule. There are no unplanned probing questions, word changes, or deviation from the schedule. Highly scheduled interviews are easy to replicate and conduct, take less time than nonscheduled and moderately scheduled interviews, and prevent parties from wandering into irrelevant areas or spending too much time on a topic. Flexibility and adaptation are not options, however. Probing questions must be planned. Researchers and survey takers use highly scheduled interviews.

A Highly Scheduled Standardized Interview

Highly scheduled standardized interviews provide precision, replicability, and reliability.

The **highly scheduled standardized interview** is the most thoroughly planned and structured. You ask all questions and answer options in identical words to each interviewee who then picks answers from those provided. There is no straying from the schedule by either party. Highly scheduled standardized interviews are the easiest to conduct, record, tabulate, and replicate. However, you may not probe into answers, explain questions, or adapt to different interviewees. Respondents cannot explain, amplify, qualify, or question answer options. **Built-in interviewer bias** may be worse than **accidental bias** encountered in nonscheduled and moderately scheduled interviews. Researchers and survey takers use highly scheduled standardized interviews because their procedures must produce the same results in repeated interviews by several interviewers.

Combined schedules enable interviewers to satisfy multiple needs.

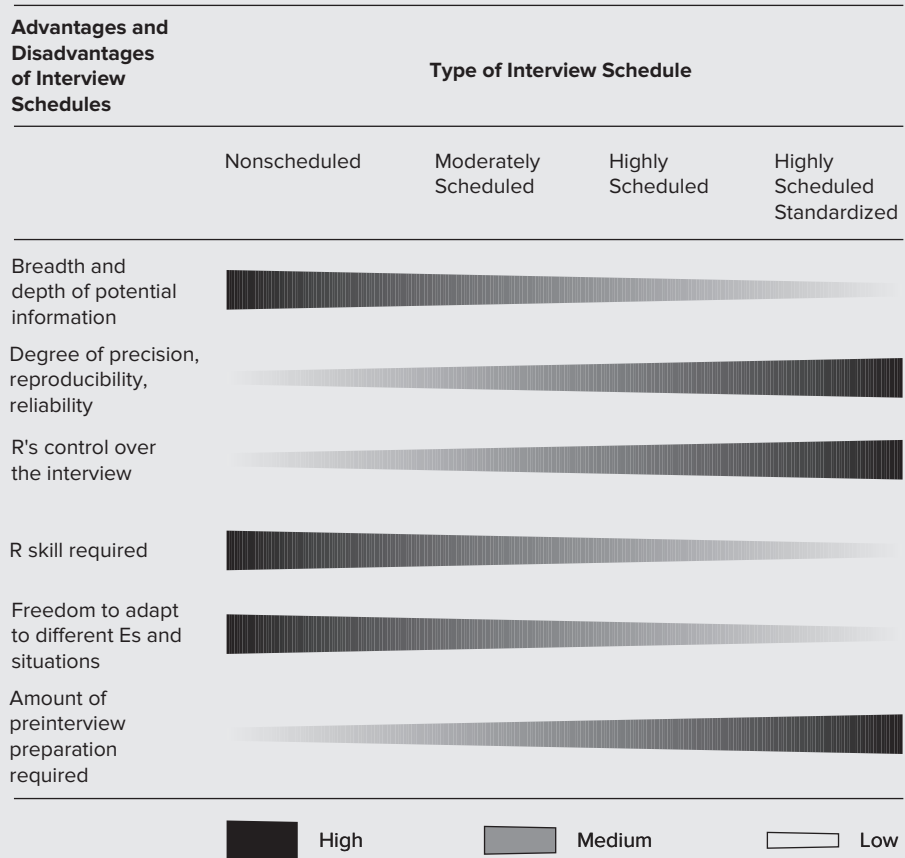
Each interviewing schedule has unique advantages and disadvantages. Choose the schedule best suited to your needs, skills, type of information desired, and situation. One type of schedule does not fit all interview types and situations. A schedule designed for a survey would be a terrible schedule for an employment interview. Consider a strategic combination of schedules. For instance, use a nonscheduled approach when obtaining easily accessible information at the start of an interview and then switch to a moderately scheduled approach when carefully crafted questions are essential. When conducting a survey, employ a highly scheduled approach to ask open-ended questions and then switch to a highly scheduled standardized approach to obtain easily quantifiable information. Figure 4.1 reveals the advantages and disadvantages of each type of schedule and combinations.

Exercise #1—Interview Schedules

Which schedule or combination would be most appropriate for each of the situations below: nonscheduled, moderately scheduled, highly scheduled, highly scheduled standardized? Explain why you would select this schedule.

1. You are a journalist interviewing witnesses to a hit and run on campus resulting in critical injuries to two students.
2. You are a recruiter for a computer software firm conducting interviews at a job fair arranged on campus.

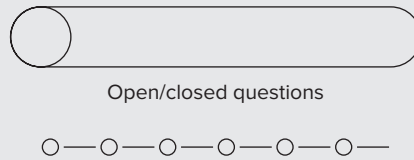
Figure 4.1 *Structural options*



- 3. You are conducting a survey of graduating seniors as part of a nationwide study of the status of the job market for college graduates.
- 4. You are a developer of an apartment complex near a college campus and are attempting to persuade a member of the city council to vote for your proposal.
- 5. You are a member of the Parks and Recreation Board and missed the last meeting because of a family emergency. You are interviewing another board member to learn what was discussed and agreed upon at that meeting.

Question Sequences

Once an appropriate **interview schedule** or combination of schedules is determined, choose appropriate **question sequences**. There are six options: tunnel, funnel, inverted funnel, hourglass, diamond, and quintamensional design.

Figure 4.2 *The tunnel (string of beads) sequence*

Tunnel Sequence

A tunnel sequence works well with informal and simple interviews.

The **tunnel sequence**, or string of beads, is a comparable string of open or closed questions. See Figure 4.2. Each question may cover a specific topic, ask for a specific piece of information, or identify an attitude or feeling. A tunnel sequence looks like the following.

I understand that you took part in the 24-hour endurance bicycle race at the Subaru test track to help raise money for the CASA for Kids Fund yesterday.

1. When did you decide to take part in this race?
2. Who organized your team?
3. Where did you get your bicycle?
4. How long did you prepare for this grueling race?
5. What was the toughest part of the race?

The tunnel sequence is common in polls, surveys, journalistic interviews, and medical interviews designed to elicit information, attitudes, reactions, and intentions. Answers to closed questions are easier to record and quantify.

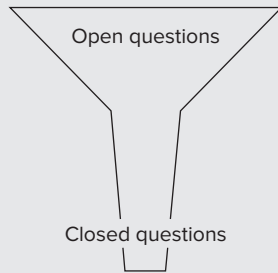
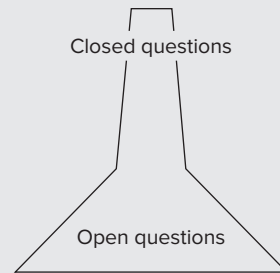
Funnel Sequence

A funnel sequence works well with motivated interviewees.

A **funnel sequence** begins with broad, open-ended questions and proceeds with more restricted questions. See Figure 4.3. The following is a funnel sequence.

1. Tell me about your internship at ESPN.
2. What did you do on a typical day?
3. What were your impressions of ESPN?
4. Which events did you cover?
5. How long were you at ESPN?

A funnel sequence is most appropriate when respondents are familiar with a topic, feel free to talk about it, want to express their feelings, and are motivated to reveal and explain attitudes. Open questions are easier to answer, pose less threat to respondents, and get people talking, so the funnel sequence is a good way to begin interviews. It lessens the chances of conditioning or biasing later responses. If you begin an interview with closed questions, you may force a respondent to take a polar position or signal that you want only brief answers. Open questions invite respondents to explain and qualify positions.

Figure 4.3 *The funnel sequence***Figure 4.4** *The inverted funnel sequence*

An inverted funnel sequence provides a warm-up time for those reluctant to talk.

Inverted Funnel Sequence

The **inverted funnel sequence** begins with closed questions and proceeds toward open questions. It is most useful in motivating interviewees to respond or when interviewees are emotionally involved in an issue or situation and cannot readily reply to open questions. See Figure 4.4. The following is an inverted funnel sequence.

1. When did you hear the first shot?
2. How many shots did you hear?
3. What did you see when you went outside?
4. How did you react when you saw your neighbor lying in his yard?
5. What did you do until the first responders arrived?

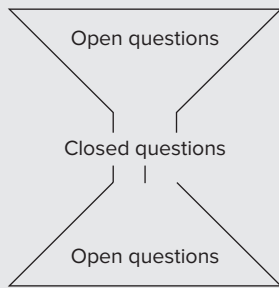
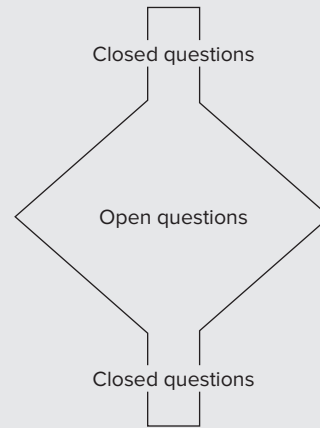
The inverted funnel sequence is appropriate when interviewees feel they do not know enough about a topic or are hesitant. Closed questions serve as warm-ups and memory enhancers when open-ended ones might overwhelm a person or result in disorganized and confused answers. This sequence may end with a clearinghouse question.

Combination Sequences

A combination of sequences enables you to approach interview situations and interviewees with flexibility and adaptability. For example, the **hourglass sequence** begins with open questions, proceeds to closed questions, and concludes with open questions. This sequence allows you to narrow your focus before proceeding to broader concerns when the situation or topic warrants it. See Figure 4.5. A **diamond sequence** places funnel sequences top-to-top by beginning with closed questions, proceeding to open questions, and closing with closed questions. See Figure 4.6.

Quintamensional Design Sequence

George Gallup, the famous poll designer, developed the **quintamensional design sequence** to assess the intensity of opinions and attitudes. This five-step approach proceeds

Figure 4.5 *The hourglass sequence***Figure 4.6** *The diamond sequence*

The quinta-
dimensional
design is
effective at
assessing
attitudes and
beliefs.

from an interviewee's awareness of the issue to attitudes uninfluenced by the interviewer, specific attitudes, reasons for these attitudes, and intensity of attitude. For example:

1. *Awareness:* What do you know about the new environmental regulations on using coal to generate electricity?
2. *Uninfluenced attitudes:* How might these regulations affect you?
3. *Specific attitude:* Do you approve or disapprove of these new regulations?
4. *Reason why:* Why do you feel this way?
5. *Intensity of attitude:* How strongly do you feel about this—strongly, very strongly, not something you will change your mind on?

Opening the Interview

It takes two
parties to
launch an
interview
successfully.

When you have determined a specific purpose and developed an appropriate structure for an interview that may include some or all of the questions to be asked, create an opening adapted to the purpose, parties, and situation. What you say and do or fail to say and do during the few seconds or minutes of the interaction are critical to your relationship with the interviewee and success of the interview. The **opening** sets the tone and mood of the interview and affects willingness and ability to go beyond Level 1 interactions. The tone may be serious or lighthearted, optimistic or pessimistic, professional or nonprofessional, formal or informal, threatening or nonthreatening, relaxed or tense. A poor opening may lead to a **defensive climate** with superficial, vague, and inaccurate responses.

The opening is critical to **motivating** both parties to participate willingly and to communicate freely and accurately. Motivation is a **mutual product** of interviewer

and interviewee, so every opening must be a **dialogue**, not a **monologue**. Do it *with* the other party, not *to* the other party. Too often interviewees are given little opportunity to say anything beyond single-word responses to opening questions. Interrupting interviewees is common. A study of physicians interacting with patients, for instance, revealed that physicians did not permit patients to complete their closing statements 69 percent of the time.¹

The Two-Step Process

The opening must establish rapport and orient the other party to encourage active participation and willingness to continue with the interview. Interview type, situation, relationship of the parties, and personal preferences determine what is included in the opening and how long it will last.

Rapport

Do not overdo small talk or compliments.

Establishing **rapport** is a process of creating and sustaining a **genuine relationship** between interviewer and interviewee through enhancing feelings of **goodwill** and **trust**. If the relationship is long-standing and positive, consider a simple greeting, tasteful humor, and personal inquiries or references to families, mutual acquaintances, the weather, sports, or news events. Accompany each with nonverbal actions such as a firm handshake, good eye contact, a smile, and friendly voice. Several factors may determine what is **appropriate**, including local and national customs, organizational traditions and policies, status differences of the parties, formality and seriousness of the situation, and interview type. Avoid calling strangers, superiors, or high-status persons by their first names or nick names unless instructed to do so. Do not prolong the rapport stage or overdo “sweet talk” such as praise, congratulations, and admiration. Know when enough is enough and always be sincere.



© PhotoAlto/SuperStock RF

■ What you do and say in the opening seconds sets the tone for the remainder of the interview.

Orientation

If the other party is **unfamiliar** with the purpose, length, and nature of the interview; how the information will be used; or why and how they were selected, address these during the opening. Do not **assume** the interviewee party understands what is going to take place during the interview and why. If uncertain, ask.

Interviewers often **assume** that when the other party **appears similar** to them in some ways—gender, age, ethnic background, culture, appearance, language, education—they are similar in ways critical to the purpose and success of the interview.

Be careful of assuming too much or too little about the other party.

LaRay Barna warns that “The aura of similarity is a serious stumbling block to successful intercultural communication. A look-alike facade is deceiving when representatives from contrasting cultures meet, each wearing Western dress, speaking English, and using similar greeting rituals.”² You may falsely assume that you share similar nonverbal codes, beliefs, attitudes, or values. “Unless there is overt reporting of assumptions made by each party, which seldom happens, there is no chance of comparing impressions and correcting misinterpretations.”

Rapport and orientation are often intermixed to reduce **relational uncertainty**. By the end of the opening, both parties should be aware of the genuineness of the relationship, relevant similarities, desire to take part, and level of trust. Poor openings mislead and create problems as an interview progresses. Think about a situation in which you thought you were taking part in a political survey or discussing security concerns in your neighborhood only to discover that the interview was a disguised pitch for a political candidate or a security system for your apartment. The sample opening below illustrates the rapport and orientation steps for an interview taking place at the door of an apartment.

1. **Interviewer:** Hi. I’m Tim Bowers representing an organization of apartment renters such as you who are concerned about the numerous break-ins that are occurring in apartment complexes in this area.
2. **Interviewee:** Hi Tim. Is this a sales pitch for a security system? I’ve been getting calls almost every evening for the last two weeks wanting me to buy an expensive alarm system.
3. **Interviewer:** No; I’m not trying to sell you anything. I live in the Riverside apartments a couple of blocks from here and want to talk for a few minutes about setting up a neighborhood watch system to stop the break-ins. My apartment was robbed a few weeks ago, and I lost my laptop, tablet, and television. It’s been a mess.
4. **Interviewee:** I’m sorry to hear that. So far I have been lucky. My name is Chloe Stark. I am about to send some business e-mails and do not have much time this evening.
5. **Interviewer:** I fully understand. I’m a graduate student at State and have a research paper to complete this evening. If you have about ten minutes, I would like to tell you about the neighborhood watch some of us are trying to form in this area. We would like to get your ideas and how you think this might work.
6. **Interviewee:** Okay. I do have a few minutes to see what you have in mind and who makes up your organization. Come in.

In some interview situations such as sales and surveys, you may have a carefully crafted opening from which you must not deviate because each interview must be as identical as possible. This is not the case with most interviews, however, and you should be as creative and adaptive as possible to each interviewee and situation. The “all occasions” opening may be an immediate turn off. **Verbal opening techniques** build rapport and inform the other party.

When possible adapt the opening to each interviewee and situation.

State Your Purpose

Explain **why** you are conducting the interview.

Example: (A junior student to a senior student) I understand that you spent the spring semester studying abroad in Brasilia. That's one of the locations I'm looking into for next spring, and wonder if you could tell me about your experiences in Brasilia and Brazil.

Summarize a Problem

Begin with a brief summary when an interviewee is unaware of a problem, vaguely aware of it, or unaware of details. The summary should **inform** the interviewee.

Know when to end the opening and move on.

Example: (An associate and a supervisor) As you know, we have been encountering some problems with the new composite panels we started using on the Model 23 this fall. It's taking longer to align and install these panels that seem more pliable than those used in the past. I would like to talk to you about some ideas associates on the line have for speeding up this process.

Explain How a Problem Was Discovered

Explain *how* a problem was detected and perhaps *by whom* without placing the interviewee on the defensive.

Example: (A coach and a pitcher on the softball team) Alice [a trainer for the team] has informed me that you have experienced some pain in your left shoulder after the last two games and that it seems to be getting worse.

Offer an Incentive or Reward

Offer an incentive to motivate an interviewee that is significant and appropriate for the situation.

Example: (Interviewer and a student living in an apartment complex) I'm conducting a survey of residents to determine what the owners might do to make Westwood Apartments an even better residence for students. Your input will impact what they focus on in the next few months.

Request Advice or Assistance

Make a request for assistance that is clear, precise, and appropriate for the interviewee.

Example: (Student and a counselor) I would like to apply for an internship for next summer but don't know where to start or what might be available in my field.

Be sincere in offering incentives or requesting advice.

Refer to the Interviewee's Position on an Issue

Be tactful, positive, and accurate when identifying the interviewee's position on an issue.

Example: (Journalist and a public school superintendent) I have read your guest editorials that have opposed the state's ever-increasing funding of charter schools

while lessening state regulations of these schools. I would like to talk to you about your proposals for addressing these concerns.

Identify the Person Who Sent You

Identifying a person the interviewee knows and respects may create a positive connection and begin to establish a relationship. Be sure references have given you permission to use their names.

Example: (Student and a geologist) I'm writing a paper on geological formations of mountain ranges outside of North America, and Professor Hauser in the geology department suggested that I talk to you about your experiences in the Himalayas.

Identify Your Organization

Know what to do if references to an organization generate negative reactions.

It may be important or necessary to identify the organization you represent to establish your identity and legitimacy. Be prepared for situations in which interviewees may have unfavorable attitudes toward your organization because of negative experiences or publicity resulting from published complaints, product recalls, lawsuits, investigations, or scandals.

Example: (A home builder and a prospect) Good morning. I'm Jason Matthews with Rolling Hills Construction.

Ask for a Specific Amount of Time

Make an appointment for interviews of more than 5 or 10 minutes.

Request an amount of time necessary to achieve your purpose. Avoid the most misused and unrealistic request, "Got a second?"

Example: (Client to an attorney). Hi John. Do you have about fifteen minutes to discuss a copyright concern?

Ask a Question

Ask an easy to answer, open-ended question that is nonthreatening and starts the orientation stage of the opening. Beware of closed questions an interviewee can answer with a "No."

Example: (A recruiter to a prospect) What are you looking for in a position?

An interviewee may be turned off by obvious yes-no question.

Example: Are we going to do anything important in class today?
Are you busy?

Make the opening a dialogue between two parties.

Carefully craft each opening from these techniques so it is appropriate for the interviewee and situation. **Involve the interviewee in the opening as a partner rather than bystander; make the opening a dialogue rather than a monologue.** When you are the interviewee, insist on playing an active rather than passive role.

Nonverbal Communication in Openings

What you say in an opening is highly important, but so is **how** you say it. Nonverbal communication—voice, face, gestures, and appearance—is critical in creating a

First impressions often determine the tone and flow of communication.

positive first impression that motivates the interviewee to respond and take part in the interview. How you communicate nonverbally in the first few minutes of the interview reveals level of sincerity, trust, trustworthiness, warmth, and interest.

Territoriality

As human beings, we naturally value our space (office, room, home, place at a table, the surrounding area when standing) and see intrusions as violations of social and organizational norms that dictate proper behavior. Always knock before entering a room, even when the door is open. Wait until the party signals verbally or nonverbally for you to enter and sit down. Never interrupt a conversation. Wait your turn. Women in our society continue to enjoy less territoriality than men. Judy Pearson writes that in the United States, “Few women have a particular and unviolated room in their homes while many men have man caves, studies, or work areas which are off limits to others. Similarly, it appears that more men than women have particular chairs reserved for their use.”³ Be aware of these outdated norms and practices but show equal respect to the space both men and women value and protect.

Appearance, Dress, Face, and Voice

Appearance and dress should send appropriate opening signals.

Appearance, dress, face, and voice communicate interest, sincerity, warmth, urgency, attractiveness, neatness, maturity, and professionalism. Do not signal catastrophe when the interview is routine, friendliness when you are going to discipline a person, warmth when angry, happiness when a major problem needs urgent attention, or closeness with strangers.

Touch

Know when and with whom touch is appropriate.

When shaking hands is appropriate for the relationship and the situation, give a firm handshake. Do not overdo handshaking with acquaintances and colleagues or during informal interviews. Touching is appropriate only when parties have an established and close relationship and expect it.

Reading Nonverbal Communication

Sex and culture regulate nonverbal communication in openings.

Interpersonal communication theorists emphasize the importance of nonverbal clues. For instance, Trenholm and Jensen write, “People read a lot in our facial expressions. They infer some personality traits and attitudes, judge reactions to their own messages, regard facial expressions as verbal replacements, and, primarily, use them to determine our emotional state.”⁴ Regarding first impressions, Floyd notes that “the quality of a person’s clothing is a relatively reliable visual cue to his or her socio-economic status” and type or style of clothing may enable us, often quite accurately, to identify an interview party with a particular cultural or political group.⁵ Stewart warns us, however, that we “tend to *notice* those behaviors [and possibly appearance and dress] that are consistent with the beliefs we have about another and ignore those that are inconsistent.”⁶

The importance of nonverbal communication in openings is indisputable. The trick is to interpret the behavior accurately without underestimating or overestimating its importance in the process. Even people with similar backgrounds differ significantly in nonverbal behavior and the signals they send. For instance, men and women tend

to communicate in different ways. Lillian Glass has catalogued 105 “talk differences” between American men and women in basic areas of communication: body language, facial language, speech and voice patterns, language content, and behavioral patterns. She has found that men touch others more often, tend to avoid eye contact and not look directly at the other person, sound more abrupt and less approachable, make direct accusations, and give fewer compliments.⁷ Other research indicates that women are more skilled at “rapport talk” that establishes and strengthens relationships while men are more skilled at “report talk” that analyzes issues and resolves problems.

While Americans may share rules for greeting others, these rules may not be shared with other cultures. Shaking hands, for instance, is a Western custom, particularly in the United States, so do not ascribe meaning to firmness or lack of firmness when interviewing persons from other cultures who may see handshaking as merely a quaint Western custom of little importance. While Americans expect persons to look them in the eyes to exhibit trust, openness, and sincerity, other cultures consider such eye contact to be impolite and insulting. The United States is not a touching society, but do not be shocked if a party from Italy or Latin America touches you during an opening.

Exercise #2—Interview Openings

How satisfactory is each of the following openings? Consider the interviewing situation and type, the techniques used, and what is omitted. How might each be improved? Do not assume that each opening is unsatisfactory.

1. This is an interview between a professor and a student about a field project.

Interviewer: Professor Kuang, got a minute?

Interviewee: If that's all it will take.

Interviewer: Uh, I need a bit longer than that.

2. This is an interview between an assistant manager and a manager.

Interviewer: I can't believe the rumor that you have let Jessie go.

Interviewee: It's not a rumor.

Interviewer: Is it too late to talk about this?

3. This is an interview in a large publishing company between two editors.

Interviewer: Are you busy?

Interviewee: If I'm not, we're both in trouble.

Interviewer: I'm sorry. I meant do you have time to talk about the new political science series.

4. This is an interview between a recruiter from a large medical facility and a senior in nursing.

Interviewer: Hi Sam. (pointing to a chair) Did you have any trouble finding us?

Interviewee: Not really.

Interviewer: Good. Well let's get down to business.

5. This is an interview in the hallway near the U.S. Senate chamber between a NBC Capitol Hill correspondent and a senator. The senator is arriving for a hearing on homeland security.

Interviewer: Senator Morgan (waving and shouting), what's your reaction to the bombing in Paris?

Interviewee: We'll be discussing it during the hearing.

Interviewer: What are your initial reactions?

Closing the Interview

Take your time
and be tactful
in what you say
and do in the
closing.

Take the closing of each interview as seriously as you do the opening, because each interaction affects a relational history positively or negatively. For instance, a well-planned and executed closing may enhance the other party's perception of you, the importance of the role played in the interview, and attitudes toward future interactions. On the other hand, an abrupt or ill-planned closing may reduce your credibility and make the other party feel "used" or "taken advantage of."

It is natural to relax and let your guard down when the closing is approaching. Be attentive to everything you say and don't say, do and don't do during the final minutes of an interview. The other party will be listening and watching for signals that reveal interest, appreciation, and sincerity and when the closing is commencing. Focus on this interaction, not on your next task or interview. Be sure the other party is aware the interview is ending.

We signal closings nonverbally before exchanging words. In their classic study of "leave-taking" in interpersonal interactions, Mark Knapp and his colleagues identified a variety of subtle and not so subtle actions that signal closure.⁸ Interviewers may straighten up, lean forward, uncross legs, place hands on knees as if preparing to rise, look at a watch, pause briefly, or break eye contact. More obvious actions are standing up, moving away, or offering to shake hands. Whether subtle or not, nonverbal actions signal that one party wants to close the interview. As an interviewee, watch for signals to detect when a closing is commencing so you are not surprised or have an awkward ending. At the same time, be aware that a person may be checking a watch to see if there is adequate time for additional questions or information sharing, uncrossing legs to get more comfortable, or breaking eye contact to think of a new question. After noticing that students started into leave-taking mode when they glanced at their watches during interactions, the authors placed small clocks inconspicuously on their desks to avoid sending false messages.

Both parties
make closings
successful.

Guidelines for Closing Interviews

First, make the closing a **dialogue** rather than a **monologue**. As an interviewer, encourage interaction through verbal and nonverbal signals including silence. As an interviewee, respond actively to questions, offer opinions and facts not mentioned, and express appreciation when appropriate.

Second, be sincere and honest in the closing. Make no promises or commitments you cannot or will not be able to keep.



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■ Remember that the interview is not completed until the interviewer and interviewee are out of sight and sound of one another.

Be careful of what you do and say.

care, employment, counseling, and sales interviews), explain what will happen next, where it will happen, when it will happen, and why it will happen. When necessary, make an appointment before leaving.

Sixth, don't introduce new topics or ideas or make inquiries when the interview has in fact or psychologically come to a close. A **false closing** occurs when verbal and nonverbal messages signal the interview is coming to a close only for you to open it back up. This may be awkward for both parties and such after-the-fact interactions are likely to add little to the interview.

Seventh, avoid what Erving Goffman called **failed departures** that occur when you have brought an interview to a close and taken leave from the other party. Then a short time later you run into the party in the hall, parking lot, or restaurant.⁹ The result may be awkward because both of you have said your good-byes and have nothing more to say. Practice situations to determine what you might say when this happens.

Regardless of technique, involve the interviewee in the closing.

Closing Techniques

Be creative and imaginative when closing interviews. Adapt each closing to the interviewee and the situation. The following techniques may begin the closing process or complete the closing.

Use a Clearinghouse Question

A clearinghouse question enables you to determine if you have covered all topics, answered all questions, or resolved all concerns. The request must be an honest and sincere effort to ferret out unaddressed questions, information, or areas of concern.

Have I answered all of your questions?

What have I not asked that you think is important for me to know?

Questions, intentions, and inquiries allow you to close effectively.

Declare Completion of the Intended Purpose

State the task is completed. The word *well* often signals many closings so, when you hear it, you automatically assume that leave-taking is commencing and begin to wind things up. Is this what you want to happen?

Okay, I think that's all of the information I need.

Well, that's all the questions I have at this time.

Make Personal Inquiries

Be genuinely interested in the other party.

Personal inquiries are pleasant ways to end interviews and to enhance relationships. Be sincere and give the interviewee adequate time to reply.

What are your plans after graduation?

How is your daughter doing in Costa Rica?

Make Professional Inquiries

Professional inquiries are more formal than personal ones, and must be sincere and express genuine interest.

How are things going for you at Ford?

What products are you developing in Seoul?

Signal That Time Is Up

Do not rush the closing but end the interview when most appropriate.

Abide by the time limit agreed to in advance or during the opening, but be tactful and do not appear to be running an assembly line.

We are about out of time, so . . .

I'm sorry to say that our time is up.

Explain the Reason for the Closing

Explain why the interview must end.

I see you have another person waiting to talk to you.

I have a class in 10 minutes, so . . .

Express Appreciation or Satisfaction

Express appreciation and satisfaction for what you have received—information, assistance, evaluation, a story, a sale, a position, a recruit, or time. Be sincere.

Thank you for all of the information you have given me on housing near campus. It will help me to decide where to apply.

Thanks for taking part in my survey.

Arrange for the Next Meeting

If a subsequent interview is necessary, arrange it now.

When appropriate, arrange the next meeting.

I would like to think about the options we have been discussing; could we meet on Tuesday at the same time?

There are so many facets of your experiences that I find interesting. When might we meet again?

If it is unnecessary to set a specific time for another interview, simple phrases may communicate intervals between interactions. For instance, “See you,” or “Until next time” signal short intervals. “Let’s stay in touch” and “Don’t be a stranger” signal moderate intervals. “Good-bye” and “So long” tend to signal lengthy or forever intervals. “We’ll be in touch” and “Don’t call us; we’ll call you” may signal the traditional “brushoff” that means never. Be aware of cultural differences and expectations between parties. Interviewees from other cultures not familiar with the “Don’t call us; we’ll call you” phrase have been known to quit their current positions in anticipation of immediate job offers that never came.

Summarize the Interview

A summary closing is common for informational, performance, counseling, and sales interviews. Repeat important information, stages, or agreements or verify accuracy and agreement.

I think this has been a good meeting. We both agree then that the annual 5-k walk-run along the Heritage trail will be our major fundraiser for the year and that October would be an ideal month. We’ll ask the coach of the women’s crew team to be the kickoff speaker and her team members to lead the run at 1:30.

Plan the closing as carefully as you do the opening and body of the interview.

When planning an interview, consider which closing technique (or a combination) is most suitable to close this interaction with this party at this time. Focus on what your words and actions are **saying** to the other party at this critical time in the interview.

Your role in an interview and your relationship with the other party may require some techniques, rule out others, and determine who will initiate the closing and when. Usually you will combine several verbal and nonverbal techniques into effective closings.

Exercise #3—Interview Closings

How satisfactory is each of the following closings? Consider the interviewing situation and type, relationship, the techniques used, nonverbal communication, and what is omitted. How might each be improved? Do not assume each closing is unsatisfactory.

1. This is a recruiting interview for an HR position with a national chain of home improvement stores. The applicant will soon graduate with a degree in management.

Interviewer: Well, it’s been a productive interview. We appreciate your interest in our organization.

Interviewee: Thank you.

Interviewer: (Looks at notes but not at the applicant) We'll be in touch. Good luck with your search.

2. This is an interview with Zach and Marge who are looking for a lakeside cottage to rent for the summer.

Interviewer: This cottage seems to meet your needs and is a good price for this area of the lake.

Interviewee: Yes (looking at Marge), well, we need to think about it as we are just beginning to look around.

Interviewer: Okay.

3. This is a performance review of Darrell Smythe who works as a claims adjuster for an insurance company.

Interviewer: You're doing a great job Darrell, just keep in mind some of my suggestions. How's your son doing on the high school baseball team?

Interviewee: He threw a no hitter last week against Deer Creek.

Interviewer: See you soon.

4. This is an interview between a journalist and a whistle blower who has been working for a defense contractor developing a new attack aircraft for the Army.

Interviewer: Well (leaning forward and looking at the interviewee), this has been a very disturbing revelation of the cost overruns being ignored by both the contractor and the Army. Can I get in touch with you at the same cell phone number?

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: Good. (leaning back) And how long have you known about this?

Interviewee: About 18 months.

5. This is a telephone survey interview being conducted by a survey research organization on an upcoming primary election.

Interviewer: That's all the questions I have.

Interviewee: When will the results be announced?

Interviewer: Why do you ask?

Interviewee: I'm curious about its timing.

ON THE WEB

This chapter has presented guidelines and techniques for developing effective openings and closings. Use the Internet to locate sample interviews on issues such as education, the economy, foreign affairs, and medicine. Critique the openings

and closings used in these interviews. Two useful Internet resources for locating interviews are CNN (<http://cnn.com>) and C-SPAN (<http://indycable.com/cabletv/comastindyupgrade/ch24.htm>).

Summary

Each part of the interview—opening, body, and closing—is vital to its success. Do not underestimate the importance of both words and nonverbal actions and reactions during all three stages. Be conscious of cultural differences that affect the meaning of actions such as handshaking, eye contact, voice, touch, and gestures.

The opening influences how both parties perceive themselves and one another. It sets the tone for the remainder of the interview, orients the interviewee, and influences the willingness of both parties to communicate beyond Level 1. The opening may determine whether the interview continues. Select opening techniques most appropriate for each interview.

Carefully structure the body with an appropriate sequence that guides the interviewer’s questions, areas of information, or points systematically and allows the interviewee to understand where the interview is going and why. A nonscheduled interview is simply an interview guide with topics and subtopics an interviewer wants to cover. A moderately scheduled interview contains all major questions and possible probing questions under each. A highly scheduled interview includes all questions to be asked during an interview. A highly scheduled standardized interview contains all questions to be asked with prescribed answer options under each. Question sequences allow strategic structuring of questions within scheduled interviews.

The closing brings the interview to an end and may summarize information, verify agreements, arrange future contacts, and enhance relationships. A good closing should make both parties glad they took part and pleased with the results. Be sincere and honest by not rushing the closing, by making promises and commitments that you can and will keep, and by making sure both parties are actively involved.

Key Terms and Concepts

Accidental bias	Hourglass sequence	Problem-solution sequence
Built-in interviewer bias	Interview guide	Question sequences
Cause-to-effect sequence	Interview schedules	Quintamensional design sequence
Closing	Inverted funnel sequence	Rapport
Closing techniques	Journalist’s guide	Relational uncertainty
Combination schedule	Law of recency	Space sequence
Culture	Moderately scheduled interview	Territoriality
Defensive climate	Nonscheduled interview	Time sequence
Diamond sequence	Nonverbal closing actions	Topical sequence
Failed departures	Nonverbal communication	Tunnel sequence
False closings	Opening	Verbal opening techniques
Funnel sequence	Orientation	
Highly scheduled interview	Outline sequences	
Highly scheduled standardized interview		

Student Activities

1. Select an interview topic and a person you would choose to interview. Develop the body of the interview with a carefully phrased and limited purpose. Create an interview guide (beginning with major topics, proceeding to subtopics) and select one or more outline sequences. Turn your guide into an appropriate question schedule: moderately scheduled, highly scheduled, or highly scheduled standardized. Determine which question sequences you would employ.
2. Watch a televised interview of at least 15 minutes in length. How was the interview opened verbally and nonverbally? How involved was the interviewee? Which type of schedule did the interviewer employ? Which question sequences did the interviewer employ? How was the interview closed verbally and nonverbally? How involved was the interviewee? Rate the effectiveness of each stage of the interview according to the guidelines presented in this chapter.
3. Watch a televised interview of at least 15 minutes in length. Try to construct an interview guide of topics from this interview. From this guide, see if you can detect one or more question schedules and question sequences. From your reconstruction of this interview, what conclusions would you draw about the interviewer's preparation? How would you improve the guide and schedule(s)?
4. Make arrangements to interview an experienced interviewer: for example, a journalist, police officer, counselor, recruiter, insurance investigator, fund raiser. Answer these questions as you prepare for this interview. How will you determine which opening techniques to use? How will you determine whether to operate from an interview guide (a nonscheduled interview), or a moderately scheduled, a highly scheduled, or highly scheduled standardized interview format? How will you determine which closing techniques to use? How will purpose, relationship, situation, and time influence your choices?

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The Informational Interview

The informational interview is the most common interview.

The **informational interview** is an every day occurrence for most of us because we employ it to obtain facts, opinions, observations, reactions, feelings, and attitudes. It is a staple of journalists, recruiters, police officers, attorneys, supervisors, counselors, professors, and students to name a few. Informational interviews may be as brief and informal as a staff member asking a committee chair when and where the next meeting is scheduled or as lengthy and formal as a journalist interviewing the President of the United States. The purpose of the informational interview is to obtain relevant information as accurately and completely as possible in the shortest amount of time.

Asking for information sounds simple, but it requires skillful questioning, listening, observing, and probing. Unfortunately, few of us, including professional interviewers, are trained in interviewing. Chip Scanlon, author of books and columns on journalism, writes that “Journalists get little or no training in this vital aspect of their jobs. Most learn by trial and error.”¹ The most effective informational interviewers are skilled in the basics of interviewing and are curious, friendly, organized, patient, and persistent.

The objectives of this chapter are to introduce you to the fundamentals of informational interviews that include the many components of planning the interview, conducting the interview, and performing the roles of interviewer and interviewee.

Planning the Interview

There are no simple formulas or easy short cuts in informational interviewing. Pulitzer-Prize winning investigative reporter Eric Nalder writes that interviews are as varied as the conversations we have and the people we talk to.² Informational interviews require careful and thorough planning because each is a process “that involves a series of decisions and actions designed to get the best possible information.”³

Your purpose controls how you prepare for and what you do during each interview.

Formulate Your Purpose

The first critical decision in the planning process is to formulate a purpose that answers this question: Why am I going to conduct this interview? Craft it carefully because it determines everything you do and do not do from that moment until the interview is completed. Your purpose should indicate what information you need (facts, opinions, observations, feelings, attitudes), how you will use this information (make a decision,

ON THE WEB

Use the Internet to research your college or one that you might select as a graduate or professional school. Focus first on the college or university, then on the school or college within this larger structure, and finally on the department. What kinds of information

are readily available? How up-to-date is the information? What kinds of information are not included that you would have to discover through interviews with faculty or students?

take action, write a report, create a profile, make an arrest), and how soon you need it (meet today's publishing or broadcasting deadline, write a weekly report, prepare an end of semester research paper). Ken Metzler, a long-time professor of journalism, writes that when you know exactly what you want, "You're halfway there."⁴ With a clear idea about what you want to learn in this interview, begin your research.

Research the Topic

The Internet and databases are essential resources for interviews.

Research serves five essential functions for informational interviews. First, it reveals what information is available in other sources. Do not waste interview time asking for information you can find easily and quickly on Web sites, and in organizational reports, newspaper files, social media, data bases, archives, reference works, and previous interviews. Some journalists recommend that research time should be ten times the interview time.

Second, research may uncover aspects of a topic you might have failed to consider such as personal experiences, unique insights, causes of feelings or attitudes, and unaddressed or under-appreciated sides of issues. Research prevents you from making **false assumptions** and including **inaccuracies** in questions. Journalist Jaldeep Katwala warns, "Be sure of your facts. There's nothing worse than being told you are wrong by an interviewee—especially when it's live."⁵

Be skeptical of what you find on the Internet and how you use it.

Third, research will reveal that much of what you read in books and articles and access on the Internet and social media is inaccurate or downright false. Exercise discretion when reviewing the information you discover. Beware of hidden agendas and political bias that lead to shoddy data and manipulation. Think of the wise saying that "Statistics don't lie, but liars make statistics." Although juries and the public tend to place great value on eye-witness accounts, they have proven to be highly unreliable.⁶ How recent is the information you have discovered? Sources may have changed their minds on critical issues such as educational reform, global warming, same sex marriage, and "illegal" immigration.

Show you have done your homework.

Fourth, research enables you to ask insightful and thought-provoking questions and indicate that you have done your homework. Your level of knowledge along with understanding and using correctly professional and social jargon, technical terms, and the respondent's name, title, and organization establishes credibility with the interviewee and induces this person to answer questions openly and freely. Evidence of your research also indicates you cannot be fooled easily and motivates the interviewee to



© Realistic Reflections

■ Select interviewees with several criteria in mind.

Is there a person you must interview?

Does the person have the information you need?

An interviewee may be too willing to take part.

Who might be your key informant?

to get more information about an assignment in your Civil War history class, your Civil War history professor will be your interviewee. If you need to interview the mayor of your city about his proposal to fund a new soccer stadium, the mayor will be your interviewee. At other times, you will need to choose from among several possible interviewees. Use four criteria to aid you in making this often difficult decision.

Level of information: Check each potential interviewee's level of knowledge by becoming familiar with the person's education, training, experiences, positions, and achievements. *Primary sources* are those directly involved with the information needed; *support sources* are those with connections to primary sources; and *expert sources* are those with superior knowledge or skills related to the information needed. For instance, you may need an interviewee with a high level of expertise such as a first responder at the World Trade Center on the morning of 9/11, or you may want to interview a person who was on the street near the Trade Center on that fateful morning. Each has a unique level of information and insights into this tragedy.

Availability: An ideal interviewee may be too busy, reside too far away, be out of the area until after a deadline, or available only for a few minutes when you need to conduct an in-depth interview. If distance is a problem, consider the telephone, Skype, or video conference. Never **assume** a person is unavailable until you ask. There are many stories about interviews with high status, famous, and seemingly reclusive people simply because the interviewer decided to ask or was persistent in asking.

Willingness: If a potential interviewee rejects your request for an interview, try to discover why. Does this individual mistrust you or your position, organization, or profession? Has this person been "burned" in previous interviews and is fearful of what will happen to information after the interview ends? Does the person see the interview as an invasion of privacy or fear the dredging up of old issues and embarrassing events? In short, a person may see nothing of value in an interview that warrants the time and risks involved. Before abandoning a potentially excellent interviewee after gentle persuasion, assurances, and mild threats, consider using what Raymond Gorden calls a **key informant** who can assist you in securing cooperation.⁷ A key informant may be

respond honestly and in depth. Do not tell an interviewee what you know; let your questions and reactions reveal what you know. Resist the temptation to cram your questions full of information you have discovered.

As you conduct your research, be sure to make note of possible areas and subareas of the topic or issue that will eventually form your interview guide.

Choose the Interviewee

Your purpose often dictates the choice of interviewee. If you want

Is this person able to give you the information you need?

A person may be physically or psychologically incapable of giving information accurately.

Status difference and similarity may affect motivation, freedom to respond, control, and rapport.

an aide, former associate, family member, or friend of the potential interviewee or of you. On the other hand, be cautious of persons who appear to be too anxious to be interviewed.

Capability: You must discover if a potential interviewee is capable of giving information freely and openly. Consider biases and prejudices, inability to tell the truth, proclivity toward exaggeration or oversimplification, or state of health that may affect a person's memory or ability to communicate. An eyewitness or survivor of an accident or wartime experience may be in a state of shock or have psychologically suppressed memories of a horrific event. Interviewers are often skeptical or disappointed when interviewees cannot relate minute details and timing of events that took place decades ago when most of us cannot recall what we had for dinner last evening. Copywriter Star Zagofsky writes that "The truth is that some people have a good story to tell on a subject and others don't. Some people are naturally talented at being interviewed and others aren't."⁸ And some are adept at evading questions and phrasing answers that reveal little or nothing of value. Journalists Eugene Webb and Jerry Salancik say you should know a "source well enough to be able to know when a distortion is occurring, from a facial expression that doesn't correspond to a certain reply."⁹ Your often difficult task is to choose an interviewee who best meets these four criteria.

Examine Your Relationship with the Interviewee

A positive relationship is critical in informational interviews because you will delve into sensitive areas such as beliefs, attitudes, feelings, values, and information an interviewee may prefer not to share. Review carefully the relationship that exists between you. Start with the basics of relationships such as desire to take part in the interview, affection and respect for another, inclination toward control or dominance, and mutual trust. The **status difference** between interviewer and interviewee offers advantages for each party.

When an interviewer is *subordinate* to an interviewee (student to professor, associate to manager, vice president to president):

- The interviewer need not be an expert.
- The interviewee will not feel threatened.
- The interviewee will feel freer to speak.
- The interviewee might want to help the interviewer.

When an interviewer is *superior* to the interviewee (lieutenant to sergeant, CEO to division head, physician to nurse practitioner):

- The interviewer can control the interview.
- The interviewer can reward the interviewee.
- The interviewee may feel motivated to please the interviewer.
- The interviewee may feel honored to be a participant.

Some organizations give high-status-sounding titles to representatives to enhance their superior aura: chief correspondent rather than correspondent, vice president instead of sales director, editor rather than reporter, executive rather than supervisor.

Status is a critical criterion for some interviewees.

When the interviewer is *equal* to the interviewee (student to student, associate to associate, researcher to researcher):

- Rapport is easily established.
- There are fewer communication barriers.
- There are fewer pressures.
- A high degree of empathy is possible.

Interviewees often prefer interviewers similar to them in age, gender, race, culture, educational level, or professional field. For example, a Vietnam War veteran may feel that only a person of similar age and military experience can understand what it was like fighting in the jungles of Vietnam. A woman may feel that only a female physician can understand her health issues. A senior executive of a corporation, a university president, or a senior member of Congress may expect a newspaper or television network to send a correspondent of similar status to them. Interviewees may consider interviewers of lesser rank to be an affront to their status and importance.

Study the Situation and Location

Choose the best possible setting.

Consider and weigh variables that may affect your interview. Although it may be ideal for you to select the timing and location of the interview, they are often not your choice to make or to make alone.

Sarah Stuteville recommends that you strive to interview in a place that has some relevance to the story of your subject you'll have much greater success . . . not only because you'll gain a further sense of context" but because "people are often more comfortable (and open) when they're in a familiar place or what feels like 'their territory'."¹⁰ A U.S. Senator may specify his office, a defense attorney the courthouse, a political candidate her campaign headquarters, a mother and father their home. Eric Nader recommends that the interview location should be mutually beneficial to both parties. He writes that it is essential to interview people "at the place where they are doing the thing that you are writing about." It is important not only to *hear* answers but to *see* and get the *feel* of things.¹¹ When Nalder was writing a book on oil tankers, a member of a crew told him that he could not understand crews and life on oil tankers until he'd been aboard in the Gulf of Alaska during the violent January seas "puking your guts out." Nalder took this advice and gained exceptional insights from his experiences and those of his interviewees.

Know all there is to know about each situation.

Prepare yourself for each situation to reduce surprises during interviews. Consider relevant events that have taken place before the interview or will take place following the interview: accidents, natural disasters, elections, protests, closing of a manufacturing plant. Are you ready for horrific scenes of destruction or filthy conditions, human suffering or death, cruelty to animals, emotional outbursts, and threats to health and safety?

Work with the other party in choosing a setting.

Other situational variables include the time you have to prepare for the interview, deadlines, an individual interview or a press conference, presence of invited or uninvited audiences, outside influences on either or both parties, and whether the interview will be broadcast live or recorded. You might prefer comfortable seats facing one

another with no physical barriers between parties, but interviewees may insist on seating arrangements in which they are in power positions such as behind a large desk or at the head of a table while you are seated in a powerless position in front of the desk or down the table.

Structure Your Interview

Now you are ready to structure the interview. Review your notes from your research that are particularly important to this interview and interviewee and prepare an **interview guide**. Your guide may be an elaborate outline, major aspects of an issue, or key words. The traditional journalistic interview guide consisting of six key words may become your primary questions for a moderately scheduled interview.

- *Who* was involved?
- *What* happened?
- *When* did it happen?
- *Where* did it happen?
- *How* did it happen?
- *Why* did it happen?

Create structural sequences and schedules that are flexible.

Length, depth, and significance of the interview determine the nature and detail of your guide. Review the structural sequences in Chapter 4. A chronological sequence enables you to progress through stories and events that occur in time sequences. A logical sequence such as cause-to-effect and problem-to-solution is appropriate for interviews on issues and crises. A space sequence works well when interviewing about geographical areas, cities, college campuses, and production facilities. If your interview will be brief, a guide may be sufficient preparation. If it will be more in-depth, create a **moderate schedule** that transforms topics and subtopics into primary and secondary questions.

A moderate schedule is ideal for most informational interviews.

Make your questions **open-ended** so the interviewee can elaborate on answers and you can listen, observe, and think of possible probing questions. A moderate schedule eliminates the necessity of phrasing each question carefully and precisely in the heat of the interview while providing the flexibility to modify, delete, or add questions as need or opportunity arises. You may discover aspects of an issue, insights, or surprises during an interview that warrant modifications or detours from your prepared schedule. Your schedule enables you to pick up where you left off without fear of getting off track. Thomas Berner recommends that if a question or area of inquiry comes to mind during an interview, jot it down in the margin of your schedule and come back to it when appropriate.¹² The freedom to adapt and improvise make a moderate schedule ideal for the informational interview.

Know the ground rules and adhere to them.

Ground rules agreed to or assumed in advance of the interview by both parties affect questions and answers and ultimately the success of the interview. Each party expects the other to be honest, to stick to the stated purpose of the interview, and to allow reasonable time to ask and answer questions. If you have prepared a schedule in advance, it is not uncommon for an interviewee to request a copy of your questions. As

Too many off-the-record requests may disqualify an interviewee.

a general rule, do not do it. If you give your questions to interviewees in advance, they may insist on modifying some questions and eliminating others. Whenever you agree to ask only approved questions or those on your schedule, you are prevented from adapting questions or delving into areas you were unaware of during your preparation. At the very least, providing questions in advance will affect the spontaneity of the interview. Establish rules in advance that pertain to which areas may be off-limits, what information may and may not be attributed to the interviewee, and which questions may be answered “off the record.” As a rule, do not accept “retroactive off the record” requests after an interviewee has answered a question or heard the answer read back or replayed. Excessive “off the record” demands may make a potential interview unacceptable.

The Interview Opening

A carefully crafted opening is essential for motivating the interviewee.

Plan the opening of the interview with care because the level of trust and motivation begins during the first few minutes of the interview. Sarah Stuteville observes that a successful interview may depend “on a total stranger’s cooperation and participation.”¹³ If the interviewee does not know you, identify yourself, your position, and your organization. Review the opening techniques discussed in Chapter 4 to determine which one or which combination is most appropriate for this interviewee and interview. Does your relationship with the interviewee and the situation warrant using a person’s first name or a less formal name such as Tom for Thomas or Peggy for Margaret? Starting an interview with “small talk” is traditional in interviewing, so prepare the small talk you might engage in without seeming trite, mechanical, or forced. Realize that busy interviewees may see small talk as a waste of time. Use humor cautiously. Be sure compliments are sincere. Prepare possible “icebreaker” questions that are easy to answer and get the interviewee actively involved in the interview. Plan how you will explain *what* you wish to learn, *why* you need this information, and *how* you will *use* it.

Conducting the Interview

The goal of the informational interview is to get in-depth and insightful information that only an interviewee can offer. It is essential, then, to get beyond superficial and safe Level 1 interactions to riskier and deeper Level 2 and Level 3 interactions. You must **motivate** an interviewee to disclose beliefs, attitudes, and feelings as well as unknown facts.

Motivating Interviewees

Motivation starts in the first minutes of the interview, so be careful of everything you say and do not say, do and do not do, ask and do not ask. The interviewee will size you up by the way you look, act, and sound. Exhibit respect for the interviewee and show that you appreciate the person’s time and willingness to be of assistance. Orient the interviewee as to the purpose and nature of the interview. Strive to make this a professional, purposeful conversation with all that implies. Ken Metzler recommends replacing the name interview with *conversation*, *talk*, *discussion*, or *chat* to call it what it is or should be.

Know what motivates each interviewee.

Interviewees are likely to communicate beyond Level 1 if you follow the golden rule: *do unto others as you would have them do unto you*. This rule applies to the most difficult of interview situations. A report about interrogation interviews with insurgents in Iraq and Afghanistan noted that “the successful interrogators all had one thing in common in the way they approached their subjects. They were nice to them.”¹⁴ Parties communicate freely and accurately if they trust you to react with understanding and tact, maintain confidences, use the information fairly, and report what they say accurately and completely.

From the opening until the interview ends, show sincere interest in and enthusiasm for the interviewee, the topic, and answers. Do not reveal how you feel about answers and issues; remain neutral. Control the interview without interrupting. Look for natural pauses to probe or to ask new primary questions. Ask questions rather than make statements. Listen not only with your ears but also with your eyes, face, nods, and attentive posture. Metzler writes, “It’s not the questions you ask that make for a successful interview but the attention you pay to the answers you receive.”

Asking Questions

Although questions are tools of the trade, interviewers tend to ask too many questions, and this limits their opportunities to listen, observe, and think. All of us have witnessed or been victims of arrogant interviewers who assume they “are *entitled* to an answer.” Such arrogance, not limited by any means to media personalities, led Raymond and Moen to declare, “You aren’t, after all, paying for the service. You will earn an answer, if you earn it, by asking a substantial, interesting, and thought-provoking question—one that implicitly contributes to the experience of the community rather than merely passively demanding knowledge from others.”¹⁵

Listening is as important as asking.

Ask **open questions** that encourage interviewees to provide thorough answers that allow you to listen appropriately (for comprehension, empathy, evaluation, resolution) and observe the interviewee’s mannerisms, appearance, and nonverbal communication. Listening and observing may determine the accuracy and relevance of answers and the interviewee’s feelings. A raised eyebrow or a slight hesitancy of a respondent from another culture, for instance, may signal that you used a slang phrase, colloquialism, or oxymoron with which this person is unfamiliar.

Be an active listener, not a passive sponge.

Be patient and persistent. Do not interrupt a respondent unless the person is off target, evading a question, or threatens to continue answering forever. Ask a full range of probing questions. Metzler writes that it’s seldom the first question that gets to the heart of the matter, it’s the seventh, or maybe 16th question you didn’t know you were going to ask but have chosen to ask because of your careful, thoughtful listening.” **Silent** and **nudging probes** encourage interviewees to continue or to say something important about which you did not plan to ask. **Informational probes** detect cues in answers and get additional information or explanations. **Restatement probes** obtain direct answers. **Reflective** and **mirror questions** verify and clarify answers and check for accuracy and understanding. **Clearinghouse probes** make sure you have obtained everything of importance for your story or report. You cannot plan for every piece of information or insight an interviewee might have. Some journalists claim that “even if you go into an interview armed with a list of questions, the

most important probably will be ones you ask in response to an answer.” If an interviewee says something surprising or reveals a secret, follow this lead to see where it takes you. Then you can go back to your schedule and continue as planned until the next lead comes along. Be flexible and understanding when delving into sensitive or personal areas, and be prepared to back off if an interviewee becomes emotionally upset or angry.

Persistent probing is essential in informational interviews, but you must know when to stop. An interviewee may become agitated, confused, or silent if you probe too far. This exchange occurred between an attorney and a physician:¹⁶

Know when
enough is
enough.

Attorney: Doctor, before you performed the autopsy, did you check for a pulse?

Physician: No.

Attorney: Did you check for blood pressure?

Physician: No.

Attorney: Did you check for breathing?

Physician: No.

Attorney: So, then it is possible that the patient was alive when you began the autopsy?

Physician: No.

Attorney: How can you be so sure, Doctor?

Physician: Because his brain was sitting on my desk in a jar.

Attorney: But could the patient have still been alive nevertheless?

Physician: It is possible that he could be alive practicing law somewhere.

Be persistent, even relentless, but know when enough probing is enough.

Phrase each question carefully, particularly unplanned probing questions created on the spot. Review the common question pitfalls discussed in Chapter 3 so you can catch yourself before stumbling into one. Unintentional bipolar, yes (no), tell me everything, open-to-closed, guessing, and curious question pitfalls are particularly common in informational interviews. Make each question brief and to the point, and then give the interviewee your full attention.

All rules are
made to be
broken, but
you must know
when and how.

Sometimes you must break the rules to get information you need. It may be necessary to ask an obvious question even when you know the answer, such as “I see you were in Iran last spring.” Seemingly obvious questions can relax respondents by getting them to talk about things that are easy to talk about, showing interest in topics important to them, and revealing that you have done your homework. A leading question such as “You surely don’t believe that?” may provoke a respondent into a revealing interchange. Be cautious when asking leading questions of children. Children are susceptible to such questions because they “are very attuned to taking cues from adults and tailoring their answers based on the way questions are worded.”¹⁷ Ask a double-barreled question at a press conference to get two or three answers because it may be the only question you get to ask. A bipolar question will produce a yes or no for the record.

**Know what
you are doing
and why.**

Phrase questions carefully to avoid confusion. The following interaction between a patient and a physician illustrates the dangers of jargon and sound-alike words:

Physician: Have you ever had a history of cardiac arrest in your family?

Patient: We never had no trouble with the police.

Some interviewees answer questions about which they know nothing, rather than admit ignorance. Others are experts on everything and nothing. Listen to call-in programs that attract people who make incredibly uninformed or misinformed claims, accusations, and observations. An interviewee may play funny games, such as this exchange that took place during an election campaign in New Hampshire:

Reporter: How are you going to vote on Tuesday?

Resident: How am I going to vote? Oh, the usual way. I'm going to take the form they hand me and put x's in the appropriate boxes (laughing).

Reporter: (pause) Who are you going to vote for on Tuesday?

**Think before
asking.**

Listen to answers to avoid embarrassing yourself. This exchange was between an attorney and a witness:

Attorney: Now, Mrs. Johnson, how was your first marriage terminated?

Witness: By death.

Attorney: And by whose death was it terminated?

Think before asking questions. Ken Metzler recommends avoiding the “how do you feel about that” question because “It’s the most trite, overused question in American journalism and sources begin to hate it after time.” Interviewees often respond with brief answers such as “Okay,” “Not bad,” or “As good as might be expected” that tell you nothing. It’s a vague answer to a routine question. Metzler suggests substituting “What were you thinking when . . . ?” for the “feel” question.



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Note-Taking and Recording

Experts disagree on the extent of note-taking and the use of electronic recorders because each can be intrusive and unreliable. Use the means best suited to you, the interviewee, the situation, and the report you will prepare. Note-taking or recording makes it possible to recall figures, dates, names, times, details, and quotations accurately.

■ *Effective note-taking entails maintaining eye contact as much as possible.*

Note-Taking

Weigh carefully the pros and cons of note-taking prior to the interview.

Note-taking increases your attention to what is being said and how, and this shows respondents you are interested in what they are saying and are concerned about accuracy. William Zinsser writes that this direct involvement enables the interviewee to see you working and doing your job.¹⁸ When you take notes according to the structure of the interview, you have your notes clearly organized when the interview ends and you can easily locate information you need when writing your report or story.

Note-taking has disadvantages. When respondents speak rapidly, you may be unable to record exactly what was said. It is difficult to concentrate on questions and answers and to maintain eye contact while writing notes, so you may fail to hear or probe into an answer because you are busy writing rather than listening. The interviewee may become anxious or curious about what you are writing, be reluctant to talk while you are writing or feel a break in communication while you are focusing on your pad. During an in-depth interview with a newspaper publisher, one of our students discovered that whenever she began to write, the interviewee would stop answering until she stopped writing, apparently to let her catch up. Before long, he arranged his chair so he could see what she was writing.

Follow these guidelines when taking notes during interviews.

Note-taking should not threaten the interviewee.

- Ask permission to take notes and explain why note-taking is beneficial to each party.
- Show your notes occasionally to the interviewee to reduce curiosity and anxiety, check for accuracy, and enable the interviewee to fill in gaps and volunteer information.
- Maintain eye contact by making note-taking as inconspicuous as possible.
- Use abbreviations or a personal shorthand like when sending text messages.
- Write down only important information, key words, and the gist of some quotes.
- Take notes selectively throughout the interview to avoid signaling that the interviewee just dropped a “bombshell” quote or causing the interviewee to become cautious.
- If an interviewee is answering too rapidly, ask the person tactfully to slow down, or to repeat an answer. Ask a stalling question such as “Tell me more about that” to give you time to get caught up.
- Immediately following the interview, fill in gaps, check for accuracy and objectivity, complete abbreviations, and translate your handwriting.
- Review your notes carefully to identify the points, information, and quotations that are best for your report.

Maintain communication while taking notes.

Recording allows interviewers to listen and probe more effectively.

Recording

A recorder provides a complete and accurate record of *how*, *when*, and *what* an interviewee says. It enables you to relax, concentrate on what is being said and implied, and then create effective probing questions. You can hear or watch what was said and how it was said hours or days afterward.

A recorder may add an intrusive element to the interview.

Unfortunately, recorders can malfunction or prove tricky to use. Batteries can die. Our students have used recorders during lengthy interviews for class projects only to discover disks or memory sticks were blank when they tried to review them later. Some parties view recorders as intruders in interviewing situations and fear the permanent, undeniable records they produce. It takes time to transcribe and review lengthy recordings to locate facts, reactions, and ideal quotes.

Follow these guidelines when recording interviews.

Ask permission before using a recorder.

- Reduce interviewee fears and objections by explaining why the recorder is advantageous to the interviewee, why you want or are required to use a recorder, how the recording will be used, and offering to turn off the recorder when desired.
- Reduce mechanical difficulties by testing the recorder prior to the interview.
- Be familiar with the recorder and practice with it in a simulated interview setting.
- Research appropriate state laws before using a hidden recorder or recording interviews over the telephone. The law generally allows one party to record a second party (no third parties) without permission, but 12 states prohibit the recording of conversations without the consent of both parties, including California, Connecticut, Florida, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Montana, Nevada, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, and Washington. Twenty-four states have laws that pertain to the use of hidden cameras. An excellent source on legal aspects of interviewing is a guide published by the *Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press* (<http://www.rcip.org>).
- Ask permission before recording an interview to avoid possible lawsuits and to establish goodwill.
- Set ground rules with the interviewee ahead of time such as wearing a microphone, having a recorder nearby, looking at the lens of a camera instead of the light, limiting background noise and interruptions, and speaking loud enough for the recorder.

Managing Unique Situations

Three situations affect role relationships and necessitate changes in the ways each party usually prepares for and participates in interviews. These are the press conference, the broadcast interview, and the videoconference interview.

The Press Conference

The press conference is unique because several interviewers are involved simultaneously and the *interviewee* determines purpose, subject matter, time, place, length, and ground rules for the interview. It may be called with little warning and offer minimal indication about what will be addressed. The interviewee may start with a prepared statement or presentation and then answer questions. Ground rules may include topics or issues that are off limits to questioning, and whether answers may be quoted or the interviewee cited by name.

If you have little notice of a press conference, try to determine from your records and experiences and contacts with other sources which issue or topic is likely to be

The interviewee controls the press conference.

addressed and the interviewee's position. If possible, prepare questions in advance knowing that some may be irrelevant, declared off limits, or asked by other interviewers who are recognized before you. Assess your relationship with the interviewee. If the person likes and trusts you, you may be chosen to ask the first question or be one of a few who are recognized during the question period. If your relationship is negative, the interviewee may refuse to recognize you, give a superficial or hostile response to your question, or say "No comment" and turn quickly to another interviewer.

Be on time and make yourself visible by sitting as near the interviewee as possible and in the center so you are likely to be noticed during the question period. Note what is said and not said in the statement and answers to questions. Your purpose and that of the interviewee may not only be different but also at odds. The interviewee may want to use the situation and interview for self-promotion, promotion of a new product, public relations, free advertising, or to place a positive spin on an issue or action. Your job is to get to the truth of the matter and to cut through the "smoke and mirrors" presented in statements and vague generalities, allegations, and unsupported claims in answers. The interviewee *needs you*, so this gives you some control of the situation.

Outside forces influence broadcast interviews.

Do not be intimidated by the situation or the status of the interviewee. Journalist Tony Rogers writes that "It's your job to ask tough questions of the most powerful people in our society."¹⁹ Once the question period begins, it is likely to be a free-for-all with raised hands, interviewers jumping to their feet, and shouted questions. When recognized, ask your most important question first because it may be the only question you get to ask. Because you will probably be unable to probe into answers, ask a double-barreled question to get two answers in one. You may not get to your prepared questions. Listen carefully to answers to other interviewers' questions for valuable information and a follow-up you might ask. Aim at clarifying and getting new information from these answers. Protocol may enable the interviewee or a staff member to end the press conference without

warning, perhaps to avoid or escape unwanted exchanges and issues.



■ The broadcast interview presents unique problems for both parties.

The Broadcast Interview

The broadcast interview poses unique challenges to both parties. It may take place in a field, along a street, in a studio, or in your home. The places are endless, and interviewee and interviewer may be miles and time zones apart. The interview may be on a real or figurative stage in which both parties must engage in "performing" for outside forces such as live audiences, viewers, and listeners that may constitute "a three-way interaction."²⁰ This virtual third party may lead the interviewer or interviewee

to adapt questions and answers to it. The interviewer needs to attain answers and reactions as well as sound and pictures that play well on the air. The interview may be live, and anything may happen. There are no “do-overs” in live broadcasting, and interactions may be in full view verbally and nonverbally of those who have tuned in.

Being familiar with the physical setting can eliminate many surprises.

Enhance your efficiency and performance and reduce nervousness by practicing in pre-recorded situations that emulate the real thing. Do a thorough debriefing to determine what you did well and where you need more work. Know who you will interview, when, and where and by becoming acquainted with the program format and targeted audience. Be thoroughly familiar with the physical setting, including seating for interviewer and interviewee, technicians and other support staff, and audio and video equipment. When possible, test out the equipment. Pay close attention to the briefing concerning time limits, opening and closing signals, microphone use, and camera locations.

Assist the interviewee in making the interview a successful interaction. Brief the person (or persons) in advance. Explain the basics such as wearing a microphone, having a recorder nearby, looking at you rather than the camera or staff, speaking loud enough to be heard, and if more than one interviewee is present, the importance of one person speaking at a time. Caution the interviewee about content or responses that may produce negative reactions from listeners and viewers.

The “staging” of the broadcast interview is critical to its success. The interviewer or director determines the framing of shots—whether the interviewer or interviewee will face the camera left or right, eyelines (interviewee’s eye level with the interviewer’s), whether shots will be mid-shot or medium close-ups, and whether to select a sequence of shots. Other decisions involve lighting, props, background (not dark clothing on a dark backdrop, not an overly busy background), and limiting noise such as shuffling of papers, heating and cooling systems, bell towers, nearby interactions, and foot traffic. These decisions make the broadcast interview more complex than a simple face-to-face interview.

Know and play your role in the interview.

As you conduct a broadcast interview, make it seem that the interviewee is conversing only with you by maintaining eye contact and taking limited and necessary notes. Put the interviewee at ease from the start with some informal conversation before broadcast begins. Open with easy questions, preferably open-ended ones. Fred Fedler notes that “the live interview may last no more than seconds or a few minutes and allows little time to ask challenging questions.”²¹ Ask questions and do not make statements; your job is to get information, not give it. Know your questions well enough to ask from memory or a few small cards to make the interview look and sound spontaneous and professional. Avoid “dead air space” for any length of time but tolerate silence that gives the interviewee time to think and answer. Do not jump in too quickly with another question.

Be persistent in getting at the information you need, but there is a big difference between tenacity and incivility. Sparks recommends that interviewers should be aggressive with charm. Some interviewees and their advocates will accuse you of bias and rudeness.²² Make the interview worthwhile by showing respect and making your questions relevant and neutral. Pay close attention to the interviewee, and take a break if you notice signs of fatigue, excessive nervousness, increasing emotions, confusion, or anger.

Spontaneous questions generate spontaneous answers.

Some utterances and actions cannot be broadcast or may be embarrassing, such as profanities, obscene gestures, poor grammar, too many “uhs,” “you knows,” “know what I means,” and excessive “blood and gore.” Some newspaper reporters, when being crowded out by cameras and microphones, have shouted obscenities to shut down their electronic counterparts and get closer to the action. A state legislator told one of the authors that he would purposely insert profanities into answers to prevent reporters from using them on the air.

The Videoconference Interview

Videoconference interviews are becoming quite common and share many similarities with face-to-face interviews. There are obvious differences, however, so let us focus on what you need to know and do when taking part in videoconference interviews.

Rule number one when you are planning for a videoconference interview is to eliminate or minimize distractions. Choose a setting that is uncluttered and void of large patterns, designs, or colors such as red. Control the movement of others in the background. Turn off your cell phone. Dress appropriately for the situation while avoiding plaids, stripes, and white shirts or jackets. Clothing may range from professional business attire to casual. Select jewelry that does not make noise or catch light.

As the interview commences, avoid noises such as taping on the desk, moving papers, or playing with a ball point pen or other objects. These small noises may be loud and distracting when transmitted electronically. Hesitate slightly before asking or answering questions to handle the transmission delay in receiving audio and video. Look straight into the monitor or camera so you appear to maintain eye contact with the other party. Focus all of your attention on the other party. Avoid excessive or repetitive body motions or stiffness so you are and appear to be relaxed and enjoying the conversation. Speak naturally for a conversational interaction. The microphone will pick up your voice so you need not raise it. Let your voice and face show energy and enthusiasm. Remember to smile. The other party will focus on your face because it is most visible on the screen.

Managing Difficult Interviewees

Because informational interviewers often probe into emotions, attitudes, reactions, and causes of actions or inactions, you must be prepared to handle difficult interviewees in difficult situations. Journalist Wendell Cochran warns, “If we aren’t proficient at asking the right questions at the right time, we’ll miss on accuracy, fall short on context, and stumble on fairness.”²³

Emotional Interviewees

Silence is often better than talk with emotional interviewees.

Respondents may burst into tears during interviews, and the problem is not helped if an interviewer blurts out, “I know just how you feel.” Tactful and sincere reactions such as the following may help.

- It’s okay to cry.
- Take your time.
- Do you need a few minutes?

Remain silent until a person regains composure and is ready to continue. If you have a close relationship with an interviewee, you may hold the person’s hand or place an arm across the shoulders as comforting gestures.

Treat others as you would like to be treated.

Be sensitive to people who have experienced tragedies by not invading their privacy. How you broach a sensitive topic at a sensitive time is a serious ethical issue. Reporters are notorious for asking thoughtless questions such as, “How do you feel about your child’s death?” or “Is the family devastated by this tragedy?” John and Denise Bittner suggest that you ask only direct and necessary questions. “Remember, people in crisis situations are under a great deal of stress,” they write. “A prolonged interview won’t provide additional information; it will only upset people.”²⁴

Managing Hostile Interviewees

When encountering a hostile interviewee, try to discover the reason for the hostility. A person may be angry, depressed, or frightened because of circumstances beyond his or her control or responsibility, and you are a convenient outlet. Or a person may be hostile toward you because of who and what you are or the organization you represent. A nondirective approach may reveal the cause.

You appear to be very angry this morning.

You seem upset.

Would you like to talk about it?

Large male interviewers may appear threatening to interviewees.

There are many ways you can avoid or reduce hostility. Do not invade the other’s space, make unwarranted demands, or present a threatening physical presence or manner. Use neutral and open-ended questions. Substitute better-sounding words for antagonizing ones. Remain silent to permit the interviewee to offer full explanations or to blow off steam. Go to another topic if the current one is producing a hostile reaction.

Phillip Ault and Edwin Emery offer this simple rule: “Treat the average person with respect, and he [she] will do the same.”²⁵

Reticent Interviewees

Be prepared for the “silent types.”

A person may be **unable** to talk because of a personality trait that has nothing to do with the interview, and you cannot alter this predisposition. Often, however, a person is **unwilling** to talk or reveal much when doing so because of your position (supervisor, authority, investigator) or your reputation, bad experiences with similar interviews, risk to self-image or reputation, or a setting in which others can hear what is taking place.

When interviewing reticent persons, use conversation starters such as asking about pictures, awards, or arrangement of furnishings in the room. Begin with easy-to-answer questions on nonthreatening topics. Become less formal. If open questions do not generate in-depth answers, use closed questions (an inverted question sequence) until the party is ready to talk. Use silent and nudging probes. Realize that no tactic can get some reticent people to talk openly and freely; they simply do not talk much.

Talkative Interviewees

Unlike reticent interviewees, talkative interviewees may talk for long periods of time without seeming to take a breath. They give unending answers to open questions and lengthy answers to closed questions. Try to avoid awkward interruptions by using non-verbal signals such as leaning forward, nodding your head, stop note-taking, or glancing

Controlling talkative persons may be more difficult than getting reticent ones to open up.

Be tactful and sensitive in using nonverbal signals.

at your watch. Phone interviews pose problems because you have few nonverbal signals to halt answers. The best you may be able to do is use only targeted, closed questions with less verbal maneuverability and look for natural openings or slight pauses to insert a question such as:

That's very interesting, now I was wondering . . .

Speaking of fall break, let me ask you . . .

I'm glad you mentioned that because . . .

Evasive Interviewees

Discover why a person may be evasive.

Interviewees often attempt to evade answering questions that probe into feelings or embarrassing acts, make them take stands, or incriminate them in some way. Evasive strategies include humor, real or fake hostility, ambiguous words, rambling answers that avoid the point of questions, and quibbling over key words. An interviewee may reply to a question with the statement, "It depends on what you mean by. . . ." A common tactic is to counter a question with a question, or revolve a question onto the interviewer:

Well, how would *you* answer that?

What do *you* think we should do?

Tell me about *your* private life.

Be patient and persistent.

Interviewees answer questions not asked but ones they want to answer. Be persistent in questioning by

- Repeating or rephrasing questions.
- Laughing and continuing with your questions.
- Going to other questions and coming back to this one later.
- Resorting to leading or loaded questions that evoke meaningful responses.

If you believe an interviewee is being dishonest, listen carefully to determine if answers square with the facts from your research and previous interviews. Observe nonverbal cues but be aware that clever respondents know how to *appear* honest, including excellent eye contact. Pat Stith writes that when an interviewee "says 'to be honest' or 'to be perfectly candid' the hair ought to stand up on the back of your neck. Almost always these phrases are followed by fibs."²⁶

Two experienced FBI agents, Joe Navarro and John R. Schafer, recommend that interviewers look for "clusters of behavior, which cumulatively reinforce deceptive behaviors unique to the person being interviewed."²⁷ Nonverbal behaviors include fidgeting feet, increased eye contact, rapidly blinking eyes, leaning away, irregular breathing, folding arms or interlocking legs to use less space, and lack of gesturing or finger pointing. Verbal cues include what Navarro and Schafer call "text bridges" such as "I don't remember," "The next thing I knew," and "After that." Stalling tactics may include asking an interviewer to repeat a question or using phrases such as "It depends on what you mean by," "Where did you hear that," and

“Could you be more specific?” As an interviewer, strike a balance between being gullible and suspicious.

Confused Interviewees

Be understanding, helpful, and adaptive to confused interviewees.

Respondents may become confused because of tension a situation generates, unfamiliarity with a topic or issue, the wording of your question, or how you react nonverbally. Try to manage confused interviewees without embarrassing or angering them. Restate or rephrase a question tactfully or return to it later when the interviewee is more relaxed. Unfamiliar words or technical jargon may be the culprit such as this interaction between an attorney and a witness.²⁸

Attorney: Is your appearance here this morning pursuant to a deposition notice which I sent to your attorney?

Witness: No, this is how I dress when I go to work.

Be careful of your nonverbal reactions. Broadcast journalists who get strange responses rarely exhibit a smile or shock when that happens. They go on to the next question or topic as if nothing embarrassing has happened.

Dissimilar Interviewees

Gender and cultural characteristics are generalities and may not apply to a particular interviewee.

Our society is becoming ever more diverse, so it is likely that you will interview persons who are highly dissimilar to you in age, gender, race, ethnic group, experiences, and political, religious, and social beliefs and attitudes. Journalist Wendell Cochran asks us, “How do you deal fairly with someone whose views are anathema to you?”²⁹ Both interviewers and interviewees may stereotype one another. When one of the authors was interviewing funeral directors for a book on grief counseling, it became apparent that several assumed he must be an atheist because he was a college professor.

It is tempting for us to stereotype hyphenated ethnic groups such as Irish-Americans, African-Americans, Arab-Americans, and Hispanic-Americans and expect them to interact and respond in particular ways during interviews. At the same time, some ethnic groups have developed ways of interacting with others. Research indicates that African-Americans prefer indirect questions, consider extensive probing to be intrusive, and prefer more frequent and equal turn taking. Mexican-American respondents rely more on emotion, intuition, and feeling than midwestern European-Americans. Persons of rural backgrounds value personal know-how, skills, practicality, simplicity, and self-sufficiency more than those of urban backgrounds. Adapt your questions and structure to different interviewees and be aware of gender and cultural differences that may motivate interviewees and explain the answers you receive.

While avoiding stereotyping according to gender and age, be aware of important characteristics that might affect an interview. Contrary to common assumptions, men rather than women talk more during and monopolize interactions but also provide minimal answers (yeah, nope, fine, okay). They tend to make direct statements (less beating around the bush), answer questions with declarations, and get to the point sooner. On the other hand, women tend to answer questions with questions and be less direct. Elderly interviewees may be less trusting not because of age but because of experiences

and perceived insecurity. The elderly who are retired, live alone, or have few social interactions may be communication starved and very talkative during interviews.

Closing the Interview

Close the interview when you have the information you need or your allotted time runs out. If the interviewee has agreed to a 15-minute interview, complete the interview within this time or prepare to close the interview. The **interviewee** may grant additional minutes when you signal your time is up or you obviously need only a few more minutes. If the interviewee appears reluctant to expand the time, close the interview positively and arrange for another appointment.

Begin a closing with a clearinghouse question— such as “Is there anything else you would like to add?” or “What have I not asked that you think is important?” The most thoroughly prepared interview may miss something important that did not occur to you before or during the interview. Express appreciation for the interviewee’s assistance, and make the closing a dialogue. **The interviewee must be an active party from opening through closing.**

Remember, the interview is not over until both parties are out of sight and sound of one another. An interviewee may relax and be less on guard when the interview appears to be coming to an end and reveal important information, insights, and feelings, some of which may alter your understandings and impressions established during the body of the interview. Journalist Pat Stith writes that “some of the best stuff you’re going to get will come in the last few minutes, when you’re wrapping up the interview, packing your stuff, and getting ready to leave.”³⁰ Observe and listen.

Preparing the Report or Story

Make it a habit to check all sources.

The final stage is to prepare the **report** or **story**. Review the information and observations obtained through your interviews to see if you have obtained the information necessary to satisfy your purpose. This means recalling interchanges, reading notes, and listening or viewing recordings. Sift through words, statements, facts, opinions, and impressions to locate what is most important to include in a report or story. Check answers with other sources if there is reason to suspect an interviewee gave inaccurate information.

A critical decision is what to include in your report or story. If the interview or press conference covers several topics or raises a number of issues, decide if your information warrants several stories or one lengthy one that covers everything. Time and space in your report are key determiners. What is truly important for others to know? Include important announcements, revelations, allegations, denials, and positions as well as significant quotations, stories, sound bites, and changes in labels: from accidental death to murder, explosion to terrorism, etc. Once you know what you have obtained from the interview stage, editing begins. If the report is a verbatim interview for publication or dissemination, determine if grammatical errors, mispronounced words, expletives, slang, and vocalized pauses such as “uh” and “you know” should remain. What about repetitious statements, long and rambling explanations, and simple, unintentional errors? Readers and listeners may enjoy the account with all of the warts showing, but

both interview parties may be embarrassed and lose credibility and the relationship damaged beyond repair.

Be honest, accurate, and fair in reporting interview results.

Make sure questions and answers are reported in context, and preface them so readers and listeners have a clear understanding of each. Include proper qualifiers, and do not overstate or understate unfairly an interviewee's opinions, attitudes, intentions, and commitments. Arrange information in order of importance. Include quotations to enliven and support your story or report. Follow all ground rules and exclude "off the record" information, be careful of making assumptions, and check carefully all sources and reports.

The Interviewee in the Interview

Since all of us are interviewees at least as often as we are interviewers, let us turn our attention to becoming effective respondents in informational interviews.

Do Your Homework

Know the interviewer as well as the interviewer knows you.

Thoroughly brief yourself on topics that may come up during the interview, including recent events, current issues, pending decisions, and relevant laws. What is your connection to these? Check your organization's policies, positions, and involvements and understand your authority to speak for your organization. Should you be an interviewee in this situation?

Become familiar with the interviewer, including age, gender, ethnic group, education and training, special interests, and experiences. What are the interviewer's attitudes toward you, your organization, your profession, and the topic: friendly or hostile, trusting or suspicious, interested or disinterested. Some interviewers have little to no knowledge or expertise on a topic while others have engineering, management, economics, law, or science degrees or have developed a high level of expertise on topics such as energy, stem cell research, or foreign policy. What is the interviewer's reputation for fairness and honesty in questioning techniques. Observe the interviewer in action by watching the person reporting the news, reading reports of interviews, and reviewing story angles the person likes to take.

Appreciate the impact of upward and downward communication in interviews.

When an interview takes place without warning, be sure the opening reveals the identity of the interviewer, the interviewer's organization, length of the interview, information desired, and how the information is to be used. A thorough opening, including small talk, orients you and gives you time to think and prepare answers strategically.

Understand the Relationship

Understand the relationship prior to the interview.

Do a thorough analysis of your relationship with the interviewer. What is your relational history? How similar are you? How willing and eager are each of you to take part? How much control will you have over the interview? Does each of you perceive the other to be trustworthy, reliable, and safe? Be aware of the problems that may result from upward and downward communication because of status differences between you and the interviewer. For example, where does each of you fit into the hierarchy of an organization?

Know the Situation

Assess the many situational variables that will impact the interview.

Be informed about the interview situation. If it is a broadcast interview, become familiar with the media format and how you might help by providing good visuals. Diana Pisciotta, an expert in strategic communication, warns that “An appearance on CNBC or an interview on NPR can help to make or break your company’s reputation.”³¹ She suggests that if the interview is not “live,” you should pretend it is because your interview might be picked up by the Internet or other media outlets. There is no substitute for practice, rehearsal, and role playing to prepare you for the broadcast interview. Dress for the camera; appear to be excited and engaged; be animated because body language enhances your voice, credibility, expertise, and authority; keep your eyes on the interviewer rather than the camera.

Consider establishing ground rules such as time, place, length, which topics are off limits or off the record. Be realistic in demands. If you demand that all important topics be off limits, there will be no interview. Occasionally you may request to see questions in advance to prepare well-thought-out answers with accurate and substantial data.

Anticipate Questions

Be as prepared to answer as the interviewer is prepared to ask.

Anticipate questions and think through possible responses. What might be the most important information to divulge or conceal? How should you qualify answers? What evidence can you provide for assertions and claims? How might you reply to questions you cannot answer because of lack of information, need for secrecy, protection of sources, legal consequences, or organizational policies and constraints?

In this age of litigation and media involvement in every issue, increasing numbers of interviewees are undergoing training in how to handle questions. Prosecutors, attorneys, and aides prepare witnesses and clients (including presidents of the United States and CEOs) to answer questions in court, congressional hearings, board meetings, and press conferences. Seek help if you are facing a difficult encounter with a trained and experienced interviewer.

Listen to Questions

Listen carefully to each question, and follow these guidelines for responding effectively.

Listen and Think before Answering

Fully engage the brain before opening the mouth.

At scenes of accidents, crimes, or controversies, persons make statements they soon regret. African-Americans and Hispanic-Americans are often accused of crimes they did not commit because interviewees claimed to see a black or Hispanic man in the area where a crime took place. *Listen* carefully to what is being asked. Listen for words you do not know or may misinterpret. Two pieces of advice are worth taking: Keep it simple (particularly in broadcast interviews that operate under tight deadlines and think in terms of 2–3 minute segments and 7-second sound bites) and if you don’t know an answer, do not try to make something up.

Be Patient

Do not assume you know a question before it is completed. React only after fully hearing and understanding each question. Do not interrupt the interviewer.

Focus Attention on the Question of the Moment

Do not continue to replay a previous answer that is history or anticipate a future question because you will fail to hear the current question.

Concentrate on the Interviewer and the Question

Watch for nonverbal signals that complement the verbal and reveal the interviewer's feelings, attitudes, and beliefs. Focus eyes and ears on the interviewer. This is particularly important in broadcast interviews that involve several persons, studios, cameras, monitors, and microphones and field interviews that involve spectators, noise, traffic, and distracting objects.

Do Not Dismiss a Question Too Quickly as Irrelevant

The interviewer may have a very good reason for asking a question, and it may be one in a series leading up to a highly important question. An interviewer may be using an inverted funnel sequence, and you will get an opportunity to respond at length later.

Answer Strategically

A good answer is concise, precise, carefully organized, clearly worded, logical, well supported, and to the point. There are many strategies for responding to questions.

Becoming hostile reduces you to the level of the interviewer.

- Avoid defensiveness or hostility.
 - Give answers, not speeches.
 - Give reasons and explanations rather than excuses.
 - Be polite and tactful in words and manner.
 - Use tasteful, appropriate humor.
 - Do not reply in kind to a hostile question.
- Share control of the interview.
 - Insist on adequate time to answer questions.
 - Do not allow the interviewer to “put words in your mouth.”
 - Challenge the content of questions that contain unsupported assertions or inaccurate data or quotations.
 - If a question is multiple-choice, be sure the choices are fair and include all reasonable options.
 - Ask interviewers to rephrase or repeat long, complicated, or unclear questions.
 - Answer a question with a question.
 - Search reflective and mirror questions for accuracy and completeness.
- Explain what you are doing and why.
 - Preface a lengthy answer by explaining why it must be so.
 - Preface an answer by explaining why a question is tough or tricky.
 - Provide a substantial explanation why you must refuse to answer a question or simply say “No comment.”

- Rephrase a question: “If what you’re asking is . . .” or “You seem to be implying that . . .”
- Take advantage of question pitfalls.
 - Reply to the portion of a double-barreled question you remember and can answer most effectively.
 - Answer a bipolar question with a simple yes or no, when it suits you.
 - Reply to the open or closed portion of an open-to-closed switch question that is to your advantage.
- Avoid common question traps.
 - If a question is leading, such as “Don’t you agree that . . .,” do not be led to the suggested answer.
 - If a question is loaded, such as “Are you still cheating on your exams?,” be aware that either a yes or a no will make you guilty.
 - If an apparent bipolar question offers two disagreeable choices, such as “Did you go into medicine for the prestige or for the money,” answer with a third option.
 - Watch for the yes-no pitfall, such as “Do you want to die?” and answer or refuse to answer politely.
- Support your answers.
 - Use stories and examples to illustrate points.
 - Use analogies and metaphors to explain unknown or complicated things, procedures, and concepts.
 - Organize long answers like mini-speeches with an introduction, body, and conclusion.
- Open your answers positively. The authors of *Journalistic Interviews: Theories of the Interview* offer these examples of interviewee responses:³²

Negative

You failed to notice
You neglected to mention
You overlooked the fact
You missed the point

Positive

May I point out
We can also consider x, y, z
One additional fact to consider
From another perspective

Summary

You are involved in informational interviews nearly every day, sometimes as interviewers and sometimes as interviewees. Be prepared for either role. Length and formality vary, but the purpose and method are the same: to get needed information as accurately and completely as possible in the shortest amount of time. The means are careful question-
ing, listening, observing, and probing. The interviewer must remain flexible and adapt to

each interviewee, situation, and response. This chapter has presented guidelines for structured informational interviews that call for thorough preparation and flexibility. The nature of each stage depends upon the situation and the relationship between the interviewer and interviewee.

Interviewees should be active participants in informational interviews. When given advance notice, interviewees should prepare thoroughly. They should share control with the interviewer and not submit meekly to whatever is asked or demanded. And they should know the principles and strategies of effective answers. Good listening is essential.

Key Terms and Concepts

Broadcast interview	Hostile interviewees	Reticent interviewees
Confused interviewees	Icebreaker questions	Status difference
Dishonesty	Key informants	Strategic answers
Dissimilar interviewees	Metaphorical questions	Talkative interviewees
Emotional interviewees	Off the record	Videoconference
Evasive interviewees	Press conference	
False assumptions	Research	

Probing Role-Playing Cases

Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans Seeking Disability

The Department of Veterans Affairs recently discovered that a staggering 45 percent of military veterans returning from duty in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan were seeking compensation for service-related injuries. In addition, they are claiming as many as 11 to 14 ailments compared to fewer than four on average for World War II and Korea. You are a broadcast journalist interested in developing a series of reports on invisible veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and have made appointments with four physicians at a veteran’s hospital to learn more about the nature and severity of these ailments, why the number is so high for these two most recent wars, the causes of these ailments, and ways these ailments can be reduced for future combat veterans.

A Career in the Commercial Space Industry

You entered a university studying aeronautical and astronautical engineering the year the space shuttles were retired and NASA shuttered many of its space launch facilities in Florida. During your sophomore year, the first commercial rocket sent a commercial vehicle to the international space station to take needed supplies and return with worn-out and no longer needed equipment. In addition, all astronauts sent to and returned from the station now ride on Russian vehicles. You are going to interview two professors and two Ph.D. students in your major about future careers in the space program. The interviews will take place in the interviewees’ offices at the university.

Political Campaign Directors

You are majoring in political science and have an interest in entering politics in the future, first at the local level. You want to discover what it is like running for political office at three levels: local (mayor or city council), regional (state or national representative), and state (governor, U.S. Senate). Specific concerns are funding, party support, getting nominated, conducting a campaign, working with the ever-present media, and the use of the Internet and social media. You have made arrangements through key informants to interview three persons who have managed local, regional, and state political campaigns.

Surviving Summer before Air Conditioning

Every year in July and August, you hear weather reports about how hot it was in the Midwest during the summers of 1936 and 1937. Most high temperature records were set in these two years before there was air conditioning. You've heard your grandparents born in these years talk about how many infants died shortly after birth and how the hospitals tried to cope with temperatures in the 100s. For an oral history project in a library science class, you have decided to interview four persons who experienced these conditions as teenagers or young adults to discover the problems they encountered, how they managed to work and sleep, and what they did to try to stay as cool as possible. The interviews will take place in a lounge area of a retirement facility.

Student Activities

1. Select a 20- to 30-minute interview from C-SPAN. Study it carefully to see if you can detect an interview guide of planned major points and sub-points. How were these points turned into questions during the interview? How effectively did the interviewer employ probing questions when needed? How well did the interviewer avoid common question pitfalls? Which techniques did the interviewer use in the opening, and which did the interviewer use in the closing? How did the interviewer involve the interviewee in the opening and closing?
2. Interview a newspaper journalist and a broadcast journalist about their interviewing experiences and techniques. How does the nature of the medium affect interviewers and interviewees? How does the medium affect interview structure, questioning techniques, and note-taking? What advice do they give about note-taking and recording interviews? How do the end products differ? What constraints does each medium place on interviewers?
3. Record a televised press conference in which one person is answering questions from several interviewers. How is this situation similar to and different from one-on-one interviews? What stated or implied rules governed this interview? What skills are required of interviewers and interviewee? How did the interviewee recognize interviewers? What answering strategies did the interviewee use? What questioning strategies did interviewers use?

4. A growing number of interviewers are turning to the Internet to conduct probing interviews. Develop a moderately scheduled 20-minute interview on a topic that will require fairly lengthy answers and then conduct one face-to-face interview and one employing Skype. Identify the advantages and disadvantages of each with respect to relationship building, communication interactions, depth of answers, self-disclosure, probing questions, spontaneity, and ability or inability to observe and hear the interviewee's answers.

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“Surveys reach out and touch everyone.”

Survey interviews are neither flexible nor adaptable.

The frequency of surveys in our society has escalated to epic proportions with the introduction of the Internet. Research indicates that adults are asked to take part in surveys seven billion times each year.¹ As the number of surveys has increased, so has the unwillingness to participate. **The objectives of this chapter** are to provide guidelines for preparing, conducting, and evaluating survey results and to make survey interviews worthwhile for both parties.

In Chapter 5, we discussed the *informational interview* in which **flexibility** and **adaptability** are essential characteristics. This chapter focuses on the *survey interview* in which **reliability** (assurance that the same types of information are collected in repeated interviews) and **replicability** (the duplication of interviews from respondent to respondent) are essential characteristics and interviewers operate from meticulously planned and highly structured interviews.

Purpose and Research

Survey interviews have multiple purposes.

The essential first step in preparing a survey interview is to determine a **precise purpose** that indicates the information you **need** to discover and how you will **use** this information. If you want to explore issues, ideas, behaviors, perspectives, and motivations in depth, you may want to conduct a **qualitative survey** in which you will present your findings in narrative form in which words are critical. If you want to determine frequencies of behaviors, degrees of feelings, consensus of opinions or attitudes, and make predictions or strategic decisions, you may want to conduct a **quantitative survey** in which you will present findings in numbers and percentages.

Longitudinal studies reveal trends and changes over time.

Time is often a critical factor in determining your purpose. For instance, if you must conduct a survey and prepare results literally overnight, your survey must be brief and highly focused. If you have weeks or months, your survey may be lengthy, range over several issues, and be conducted face-to-face rather than electronically. A **cross-sectional survey** takes a slice of feelings, attitudes, and thoughts during a narrow time span such as a day or so after an event, political debate, or disaster. A **longitudinal survey** determines trends or changes in feelings, attitudes, or thoughts over time such as months or years.

Don't assume adequate knowledge of a topic.

Once you have delineated a precise and clear purpose, become an expert on the topic or issue. Investigate its past, present, and future and proposed or attempted solutions. Review previous surveys, coverage on the Internet and in newspapers, published

ON THE WEB

Select a current international issue and do background research through the Internet. Use at least three different search engines, such as the United Nations (<http://www.un.org>), International Forum on Globalism (<http://www.ifg.org/>), global engineering (<http://news.foodonline.com/pehanich>

[/fppo11598.html](http://fppo11598.html)). What types of information did you discover? What information is unavailable on the Internet? What does the search suggest for a survey on this issue: subtopics, areas of conflict, differing views of experts, public opinion, history of the issue, current developments?

Don't waste time learning what you already know.

research, books, archives, and interviews. Talk to people who have been involved directly or indirectly or who have studied the topic or issue. Become familiar with important terminology and technical concepts. Your research will determine areas you want to explore, the complexities of the topic or issue, and inaccuracies in responses to your questions.

Structuring the Interview

After you have delineated a precise purpose and completed your research, develop a highly structured interview.

Interview Guide and Schedule

An interview guide is essential for survey interviews because it dictates the topics and subtopics you will cover and primary and probing questions to be asked. Review carefully the suggestions for creating interview guides in Chapter 4.

A detailed guide is easily transformed into a scheduled format.

Begin your **interview guide** by listing major areas. For example, if you are going to survey residents on a proposed soccer stadium on the site of a former high school near the center of town, major topics might include need, use of the facility, cost, funding, taxes, location, traffic, parking, and noise. If you are going to conduct a **qualitative survey**, develop a highly scheduled interview that includes open-ended questions, planned probes, and the possibility of unplanned probes that depend upon interviewee responses. The flexibility in questioning enables you to adapt and probe. The traditional interview guide (who, what, when, where, how, and why) is adaptable to qualitative surveys but requires a more detailed guide and schedule to ensure complete coverage of a topic or issue.

Standardization is essential for surveys.

If you are conducting a **quantitative survey**, your questions must elicit answers that are easy to record, tabulate, and analyze. The flexibility and adaptability of the qualitative survey may lead to difficulties in coding and tabulation of results.

The Opening

Since the number of surveys has proliferated in recent years and many so-called surveys are not surveys at all but clever sales, political messages, or frauds, "there has been a markedly negative shift in attitudes toward public opinion researchers and polls

across several dimensions” since the mid-1990s.² Craft your opening with care to avoid knee-jerk reactions from potential respondents. Although “each interview is unique, like a small work of art . . . with its own ebb and flow . . . , a mini-drama that involves real lives in real time,”³ each respondent must go through as identical an interview as possible. A typical opening includes a greeting, name of the interviewer, the organization conducting the survey, subject matter of the interview, purpose, amount of time the survey will take, and assurance of confidentiality. Encourage interviewers to state the opening verbatim without reading it or sounding stilted. You may allow skilled interviewers to create their own openings as long as each opening includes all of the elements you have stipulated. The following is a standardized opening for a survey and includes a qualifier question.

Good afternoon. I’m _____. The Department of Natural Resources has hired my firm to conduct a survey of residents of North Carolina who have purchased a trout fishing license during the past five years to determine how it can promote trout fishing while maintaining the adult population of trout on our streams and safeguarding the rights of landowners. This survey will take only ten minutes and your answers will be strictly confidential. (GO TO THE FIRST QUESTION.)

1. How frequently do you go trout fishing in North Carolina streams? *(If the answer is less than one time a year, place an x by answer 1.1 and terminate the interview. If the answer is 3 or more times a year, go to Q.2.)*
 - 1.1 _____ less than one time a year
 - 1.2 _____ 1–2 times a year
 - 1.3 _____ 3–4 times a year
 - 1.4 _____ 5–6 times a year
 - 1.5 _____ 7 or more times a year

There are no icebreaker questions or small talk in surveys.

This opening identifies the interviewer and organization and states a general purpose and length of the interview. The interviewee is not asked to respond. The interviewer moves smoothly and quickly from orientation to the first question without giving the respondent an opportunity to refuse to take part. The first question determines the interviewee’s qualifications. Respondents must trout fish on North Carolina’s streams at least one time a year. The schedule provides instructions for the interviewer to follow and has precoded the question for ease of tabulating results.

An opening may not identify the group that is paying for it (a political candidate, a pharmaceutical company, special interest group, for instance) or the specific purpose (to determine which strategies to employ during a political, advertising, or lobbying campaign) because such information might influence how interviewees respond. When a newspaper such as the *New York Times* or the *Washington Post*, a cable or television network such as CBS or CNN, or a well-known polling group such as Harris or Gallup conducts a survey, the organization’s name is used to enhance the prestige of the poll and the interviewer and motivate respondents to cooperate. Interviewers may have to show identification badges or letters that introduce them and establish their legitimacy as survey takers.

Simple incentives reduce rejections.

The quality of survey results depends on response rates, so creators of surveys have increasingly focused on incentives ranging from simple assurances to prepaid monetary offers as high as \$40 per interview. Incentives come during the opening minutes of the interview to motivate a contact to take part. The higher the financial incentive the greater the likelihood of participation; even token incentives may improve response rates.⁴ Nonmonetary incentives include emphasizing how interviewees might benefit personally from the study, stressing the civic obligation to help others and to be active citizens, and assuring privacy and confidentiality. Some survey researchers are concerned that emphasis on incentives may persuade some persons to take part to their detriment.⁵

The Closing

The closing should be brief and express appreciation for the time and assistance with the survey. For example:

That's all the questions I have. Thank you very much for your help.

If the survey organizer wants a respondent's telephone number to verify that a valid interview took place, the closing might be:

That's all the questions I have. May I have your telephone number so my supervisor can check to see if this interview was conducted in the prescribed manner? (gets the number) Thank you very much for your help.

If you can provide respondents with results of a survey, a common practice in research interviews, the closing might be:

That's all the questions I have. Thank you for your help, and if you'll give me your e-mail address, I'll be sure that you receive a copy of the results of this study. (gets the address) Thanks again for your help.

Interviewees prefer anonymity.

If interviewees are anxious, suspicious, or very reluctant to give their phone numbers or e-mail addresses, consider backing off such requests if you have the authority to do so or discuss the issue with your survey supervisor. Try to avoid compromising the rapport and goodwill you created during interviews.

Respondents may be curious about a survey or interested in the topic and want to discuss it. This can be a good relationship builder and motivator for taking part in future surveys, but do so only if time permits, the interviewee will have no opportunity to talk to future interviewees, and the survey organization has no objections.

Survey Questions

Interviewers cannot make on-the-spot adjustments.

Craft each question carefully because you cannot rephrase, explain, or expand on questions during interviews without risking your ability to replicate interviews, an essential element of surveys. In quantitative surveys, all question phrasing and strategic decisions are made in the planning stage; none on the spot. In qualitative surveys, all primary questions and most probing questions are planned ahead of time.

Every word in every question may influence results.

Phrasing Questions

All interviewees must hear the same questions asked in the same phrasing and manner. The slightest change in wording, vocal emphasis on a word, or facial expression may generate a different answer. This is critical in survey interviews because you must strive for replicability to achieve reliability. For example, in a religious survey, interviewers asked one set of respondents, “Is it okay to smoke while praying?” Over 90 percent responded “No.” When they asked another set of respondents, “Is it okay to pray while smoking?” over 90 percent replied “Yes.” Although these questions appear to be the same, respondents interpreted them differently. The first sounded sacrilegious, lighting up while praying. The second sounded like a good idea, maybe even necessary. Recall the discussion of *why questions* in Chapter 3 that illustrated how emphasis may change the focus and meaning of questions.

A single word may alter significantly how people respond to a question, and alter the results of a survey. Researchers asked the following question to one group of respondents:

“Do you think the United States should allow public speeches against democracy?”

The results were “should allow” 21 percent and “should not allow” 62 percent. Then these researchers substituted a single word and asked respondents:

“Do you think the United States should forbid public speeches against democracy?”

The results were “should not forbid” 39 percent and “should forbid” 46 percent.⁶ Respondents viewed the word “forbid” as stronger and more dangerous than “not allow”—perhaps un-American—even though the effect of the governmental policy would be the same.

Researchers have compared attempts to measure attitudes and beliefs in survey interviews that employed ambiguous questions such as “Some people think that” and “Other people think that” with interviews that asked direct questions. Validity was higher when using direct questions that presented response options and that ambiguously phrased questions took longer to ask and answer.⁷ Make each question clear, relevant, appropriate to the respondent’s level of knowledge, neither too complex nor too simple, neutral, and socially and psychologically accessible. This is not a simple task when respondents may differ widely in culture, age, income level, education, intelligence, occupation, geographical area, and experiences. The increasing diversity of populations may result in your target population representing widely diverse continents, cultures, and nations. Be careful when using formal names or acronyms for persons or organizations with which your interviewees may not be familiar. Persons of different cultures may be fluent in English but be confounded by abbreviations, colloquialisms, aphorisms, jargon, euphemisms, and slang. Avoid ambiguous words and phrases such as a lot, often, much, and large school.

Adapt phrasing to all members of a target population.

Be wary of negatively phrased questions.

Avoid phrasing questions negatively because they can be misleading and confusing. For instance, Jack Edwards and Marie Thomas note that “a negative answer to a negatively worded statement may not be equivalent to the positive answer to a positively worded statement.”⁸ Even the explanation sounds confusing. They give this example: “Disagreeing with the statement ‘My work is not meaningful’ does not necessarily mean that the

same individual would have agreed with the statement ‘My work is meaningful.’” Forcing a respondent to disagree with a negative statement can be confusing. Think of the difficulties you have had with negatively phrased multiple-choice questions in examinations. Respondents may fail to hear the word “not” or qualifiers in a question.

Sample Question Development

Your questions will evolve as you develop your survey schedule. Here is how a question concerning texting while driving might evolve.

How do you feel about the government-imposed law against texting while driving?

Take a close look at this seemingly neutral question. “Government-imposed” may bias results because it will sound tyrannical or unconstitutional to some respondents. The ambiguity of the word “feel” may result in a wide range of answers, some positive such as “I feel safer with this law” or “I’m generally for it” and some negative such as “It’s another effort by big government to violate my constitutional rights” and “Angry.” It invites lengthy answers for or against that will create a coding nightmare.

Try a second version that closes up the question and eliminates “government-imposed” that may invite highly charged negative reactions.

Are you for, against, or have no feelings about the law against texting while driving?”

- _____ for
- _____ against
- _____ no feelings

This version eliminates the potential bias of the first while resolving potential recording problems, but it may be too closed. Interviewees may not be simply for or against the law or believe there should be exceptions or qualifications. Intensity of feelings is not accounted for.

Develop a third version such as the following:

2. Do you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree with the state law against texting while driving?

2.1 _____ strongly agree

2.2 _____ agree

2.3 _____ disagree

2.4 _____ strongly disagree

2.5 _____ undecided (*Do not provide unless requested.*)

2.6 _____ Why? _____

(Ask only of respondents choosing strongly agree or strongly disagree.)

This version assesses intensity of feelings, is easy to record and code, leaves undecided as an unstated option, provides instructions for interviewers, and includes a built-in secondary “Why” question to discover reasons for strong approval or strong disapproval. Those with moderate responses tend not to have ready explanations for agreeing or disagreeing, approving or disapproving, liking or disliking. They just have that general feeling.

Keep recording of answers in mind when phrasing questions.

Build in secondary questions for reasons, knowledge, level, and qualifiers.

Work with each question until it is worded to obtain the information needed. Careful phrasing avoids confusion and inaccurate results. Later we will address the pretesting of surveys to detect potential problems with questions.

Probing Questions

Probing questions are less frequent and usually planned in survey interviews. For instance, if a respondent gives an unclear answer, you might ask, “What do you mean by that?” “How do you mean that?” or “What I hear you saying is . . . ; is this what you meant to say?” If a respondent provides a very brief answer or appears reluctant to elaborate, use a silent probe, a nudging probe such as “Uh-huh,” or an informational probe such as, “Tell me more about. . . .” If you are unsure a respondent has told you everything of relevance to a question, use a clearinghouse probe such as, “Anything else?” Remember to record probing questions and answers carefully, clearly, and accurately for later tabulation and analysis.

Your goal is to perform nearly identical survey interviews over and over. On-the-spot probing may result in interviewer bias if you or other interviewers phrase questions verbally or nonverbally in ways that suggest the answers preferred or lead respondents to provide different answers. If some interviewers ask probing questions and others do not, the amount and type of information attained will differ significantly from one interview to the next. The result is unreliable data or data that is impossible to tabulate and analyze with confidence.

Question Strategies

Five question strategies enable interviewers to assess knowledge level, honesty, and consistency; reduce undecided answers; prevent order bias; and incorporate probing questions.

Filter Strategy

Interviewer: Are you familiar with the legislature’s proposed increase in state funding for highways?

Interviewee: Yes I am.

Interviewer: What is the proposal as you understand it?

Don’t take “yes” as the final answer.

If an interviewee says no, you go to the next question. If the interviewee says yes, you ask the interviewee to reveal the extent and accuracy of knowledge. The follow-up question may reveal confusion or misinformation. Interviewees may say yes to bipolar questions when they have no idea what the interviewer is talking about to avoid appearing uninformed.

Repeat Strategy

The **repeat strategy** enables you to determine if an interviewee is consistent in responses on a topic, particularly a controversial one. You may ask the same question several minutes apart and compare answers for consistency or disguise the question by rephrasing it slightly.

6. Do you limit the time your children can play electronic games at home?
 6.1 ____ Yes
 6.2 ____ No
14. Do you control the time your children can play electronic games at home?
 14.1 ____ Yes
 14.2 ____ No

Another example of a repeat strategy is to go from a moderately closed to a highly closed question.

Repeat questions must be essentially the same to determine consistency in answers.

11. How often during a week do you watch a network evening news program?

20. I am going to read a list of how frequently you watch a network evening news program. Stop me when I read the frequency that reflects your viewing habits.
 20.1 ____ less than once a week
 20.2 ____ 1–2 times a week
 20.3 ____ 3–4 times a week
 20.4 ____ 5–6 times a week
 20.5 ____ 7 times a week

Do not make the repetition too obvious or similar and be sure the rewording does not change the intent of the initial question.

Leaning Question Strategy

Respondents may be reluctant to take stands or reveal intentions. Employ a *leaning* question, not to be confused with a *leading* question, to reduce the number of “undecided” and “don’t know” answers. The following is a typical **leaning question strategy**.

- 9a. Do you plan to vote for or against the gay rights bill being debated in the General Assembly? (*If undecided, ask Q.9b.*)
 ____ for
 ____ against
 ____ undecided
- 9b. Which way are you leaning today?
 ____ for
 ____ against
 ____ undecided

Leaning questions urge respondents to take a stand or make a decision.

The “undecided” option remains in question 9b because an interviewee may be truly undecided. A variation of the leaning question is, “Well, if you had to vote today, how would you vote?” “Undecided” and “don’t know” options may invite large percentages of these answers, but some sources recommend that you always include “don’t know” or “not applicable” answer options in questions, unless all interviewees will have a definite answer, to reduce interviewee frustration and provide the most honest and accurate answers.⁹

Shuffle Strategy

The order of answer options may affect interviewee responses. Research indicates that last choices in questions tend to get negative or superficial evaluations because interviewees get tired or bored. Interviewees may select an option because it is the first mentioned or the last heard. The **shuffle strategy** varies the order of answer options from one interview to the next to prevent **order bias**. The method of rotation is explained when training interviewers. Notice the built-in instructions in the following example:

Now, I'm going to read you a list of the five leading fast food chains by sales volume in the United States. I want you to tell me if you have a highly favorable, favorable, neutral, unfavorable, or highly unfavorable attitude toward each. *(Rotate the order of the fast food chains from interview to interview. Encircle answers received.)*

Order bias is both fact and myth.

	Highly Favorable	Favorable	Neutral	Unfavorable	Highly Unfavorable
McDonalds	5	4	3	2	1
Subway	5	4	3	2	1
Burger King	5	4	3	2	1
Wendy's	5	4	3	2	1
Taco Bell	5	4	3	2	1

Potential order bias has resulted in strange events in political, persuasive, and advertising surveys. A political candidate in Indiana changed his name legally so it would begin with A. This placed him at the top of the ballot on election day, the belief being that voters select the top names in lists of candidates. He lost, but his and similar actions have led states to shuffle names on ballots.

Chain or Contingency Strategy

The **chain or contingency strategy** enables the survey interviewer to include pre-planned probing questions in highly scheduled and highly standardized formats. You can probe into answers while maintaining control and replicating interviews from one respondent to the next. Notice the built-in instructions and precoding for ease of recording answers and tabulating data.

All probing questions in surveys are included in the schedule.

1a.

During the past month, have you received any free samples of breakfast cereal?
(PLACE AN X BY THE ANSWER RECEIVED.)
Yes _____ 1—ASK Q. 1b.
No _____ 2—ASK Q. 2a.

1b.

Which breakfast cereal did you receive?
Cheerios _____ 1
Frosted Flakes _____ 2

- Special K ____ 3
- Great Grains ____ 4
- Shredded Wheat ____ 5

1c. (ASK ONLY IF GREAT GRAINS IS NOT MENTIONED IN Q. 1b; OTHERWISE SKIP TO Q. 1d.)

Did you receive a free sample of Great Grains?

- Yes ____ 1—ASK Q. 1d.
- No ____ 2—SKIP to Q. 2a.

1d. Did you use the free sample of Great Grains?

- Yes ____ 1—SKIP to Q. 2a.
- No ____ 2—ASK Q. 1e.

1e. Why didn't you use the free sample of Great Grains?

Question Scales

Likert scales provide a range of feelings, attitudes, or opinions.

A variety of scale questions enables you to delve more deeply into topics and feelings than bipolar questions and to record and tabulate data more easily.

Interval Scales

Interval scales provide distances between measures. For example, **evaluative interval scales** (often called **Likert scales**) ask respondents to make judgments about persons, places, things, or ideas. The scale may range from five to nine answer options (five is most common) with opposite poles such as “strongly like . . . strongly dislike,” “strongly agree . . . strongly disagree,” or “very important . . . not important at all.” Here is an evaluative interval scale:

Do you strongly agree, agree, have no opinion, disagree, or strongly disagree with the university’s plans to diversify the student body, faculty, and administration by 2018?

- 5 Strongly agree ____
- 4 Agree ____
- 3 Neutral ____
- 2 Disagree ____
- 1 Strongly disagree ____

Provide aids for interviewee recall of answer options.

You may provide respondents with cards (color-coded to tell them apart) for complex questions or ones with several choices or options. A card eliminates the faulty-recall problem respondents experience. They need not recall from memory all of the options for evaluating, rating, or ranking people, places, products, or proposals. Here is an example:

Please use the phrases on this card to tell me how the television coverage of recent terrorist acts in different locations in Europe, Africa, and Asia has affected your interest in studying abroad.

- 5 Increases my interest a lot _____
- 4 Increases my interest a little _____
- 3 Will not affect my interest _____
- 2 Decreases my interest a little _____
- 1 Decreases my interest a lot _____

Frequency scales deal with number of times.

Frequency interval scales ask respondents to select a number that most accurately reflects how often they do something or use something. For example:

How frequently do you eat seafood?

- More than once a week _____
- Once each week _____
- Every other week _____
- Once or twice a month _____
- Less than once a month _____
- Rarely _____

Numerical scales deal with ranges.

Numerical interval scales ask respondents to select a range or level that accurately reflects their age, income, educational level, or rank in an organization. For example:

I am going to read several age groupings. Please stop me when I read the one that applies to you.

- 18–24 _____
- 25–34 _____
- 35–49 _____
- 50–64 _____
- 65 and over _____

Nominal Scales

Nominal scales deal with naming and selecting.

Nominal scales provide mutually exclusive variables and ask respondents to name the most appropriate variable. These are self-reports and do *not* ask respondents to rate or rank choices or to pick a choice along an evaluative, numerical, or frequency continuum. Choices may be in any order. For example:

Do you consider yourself to be a:

- Democrat _____
- Republican _____
- Libertarian _____
- Independent _____
- Other _____

When you last ate dinner in a restaurant, did your entree consist of:

Beef

Pork

Lamb

Poultry

Fish

Other

_____ (PLEASE WRITE NAME.)

In nominal questions, the options are mutually exclusive and include those from which most respondents are most likely to choose. “Other” is included because a respondent may have an uncommon or unexpected choice.

Ordinal Scales

Ordinal scales ask for ratings or rankings.

Ordinal questions ask respondents to rate or rank the options in their *implied* or *stated* relationship to one another. They do not name the most applicable option as in interval and nominal scales.

The following is a **rating ordinal scale**:

As you have traveled around the country during the past five years, I'm sure that you have stayed in a variety of hotels and motels. Please rate each of the following *applicable* hotels and motels as excellent, above average, average, below average, or poor.

Holiday Inn Express	Ex.	Abv. Av.	Av.	Bel. Av.	Poor	N/A
Hilton Garden Inn	Ex.	Abv. Av.	Av.	Bel. Av.	Poor	N/A
Hampton Inn	Ex.	Abv. Av.	Av.	Bel. Av.	Poor	N/A
Drury Inn	Ex.	Abv. Av.	Av.	Bel. Av.	Poor	N/A
Red Roof Inn	Ex.	Abv. Av.	Av.	Bel. Av.	Poor	N/A
La Quinta Inn	Ex.	Abv. Av.	Av.	Bel. Av.	Poor	N/A

This rating scale generates six responses, including not applicable for an unused hotel or motel. The following is a **ranking ordinal scale**:

On this card are the names of 5 national news programs. Rank order them in terms of accuracy and dependability with 1 being highest and 5 being lowest.

	Rank
ABC WorldNews	_____
CBS Evening News	_____
CNN Newsroom	_____
Fox Report	_____
NBC Nightly News	_____

The following ordinal question asks respondents to select from among options and rank them in order.

On this card are several reasons for constructing an extension of I-70 around the city. Pick the three you think are most important and rank them in order of importance to you.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Safety | <input type="checkbox"/> Reduce traffic congestion within the city |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Convenience | <input type="checkbox"/> Reduce rush hour travel time |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial development | <input type="checkbox"/> Residential development |

Bogardus Social Distance Scale

Bogardus scales measure effect of relational distances.

The **Bogardus Social Distance Scale** determines how people feel about social relationships and distances from them. You want to know if a person's attitude or feeling changes as an issue comes closer to home. This scale usually moves progressively from remote to close relationships and distances to detect changes as proximity narrows. For example, you might use the following Bogardus Social Distance Scale to determine how interviewees feel about admitting refugees from Syria and Iraq into the United States.

1. Do you favor settling refugees into the United States from Syria and Iraq? ☐ Yes ☐ No
2. Do you favor settling refugees into the Midwest from Syria and Iraq? ☐ Yes ☐ No
3. Do you favor settling refugees into your state from Syria and Iraq? ☐ Yes ☐ No
4. Do you favor settling refugees into your county from Syria and Iraq? ☐ Yes ☐ No
5. Do you favor settling refugees into your city from Syria and Iraq? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Respondents may be safely distant from the attitude or feeling they are expressing about a product, issue, action, or person. The Bogardus Social Distance Scale brings an issue ever closer to home so it is no longer something impersonal or one that affects others "over there."

Minimize guessing in surveys.

Survey designers employ a variety of scale questions to obtain results beyond Level 1 disclosures and reduce the percentage of respondents who try to "out psyche" interviewers by trying to pick "normal" answers in nominal and ordinal questions and safe middle options in interval scales. To avoid embarrassment, a respondent might pick an option that stands out such as the second in a list that includes 10 percent, 15 percent, 20 percent, and 30 percent. Respondents who first agree that a certain activity would make most people uneasy are less likely then to admit ever engaging in that activity and may attempt to change the subject.

Anticipate confusion in scale questions.

Phrase scale questions carefully to lessen game playing, guessing, and confusion. Listen and observe reactions during pretesting interviews to detect patterns of responses, levels of interviewee comprehension, and hesitancy in responding. Long scales, complicated rating or ranking procedures, and lengthy explanations may confuse respondents, perhaps without either party realizing it at the time.

Question Sequences

Question sequences complement question strategies.

The tunnel sequence is useful when no strategic lineup of questions is needed. Gallup's quintamensonal design sequence, or a variation of it, is appropriate when exploring intensity of attitudes and opinions. Funnel, inverted funnel, hourglass, and diamond sequences include open-ended questions, so answers may be difficult to record, code, and tabulate. They are appropriate for qualitative surveys because the wealth of information interviewers obtain from open questions is worth the problems involved. You may choose a funnel sequence by starting with general questions and then move to more specific questions.

Selecting Interviewees

Interviewees are the sources of your data. The best schedule of questions is of little help if you talk to the wrong people at the wrong time or in the wrong place.

Defining the Population

The first step in selecting interviewees is to define the **population** you wish to study. The population may be small and similar such as members of faculty or large and diverse such as all employees of an auto plant. You may select a subset of a large population such as all employees over age 50. The identified population should include all persons who are able and qualified to respond to your questions and about whom you want to draw conclusions.

If a target population is small (members of a fitness club), you may interview all of them. Most surveys, however, deal with populations that far exceed time, financial, and personal limitations—the 35,000 undergraduate students at a university or residents over the age of 18 in a city of 250,000. Dozens of interviewers could not reach, let alone interview, all of these people, so you interview a **sample** of them and extend findings to all of them.



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■ The first step in selecting interviewees is to define the population or target group you wish to study.

Sampling Principles

The fundamental principle is that a sample must accurately represent the population under study. Old-time watermelon sellers practiced this principle when they carefully cut a triangular plug from a watermelon. This plug was intended to represent the entire watermelon.

Each potential respondent from a defined population must have an equal chance of being interviewed. You determine the probability that each person might be selected by deciding upon an acceptable **margin of error**. The precision of a survey

is the “degree of similarity between sample results and the results from a 100 percent count obtained in an identical manner.”¹⁰ Most surveys attain a 95 percent **level of confidence**, the mathematical probability that 95 out of 100 interviewees would give results within 5 percentage points (margin of error) either way of the figures you would have obtained if you had interviewed the entire targeted population. Survey results reported in the media routinely state a survey margin of error of 4 percent. This means that if 15 percent of respondents approve of the way Congress is doing its job, the real figure might be as low as 11 percent or as high as 19 percent.

A sample is a miniature version of the whole.

A tolerable margin of error depends on the use of survey results. If you want to predict the outcome of an election or the effects of a new medical treatment, you must strive for a small margin of error, 3 percent or less. If you are conducting a survey to determine how employees feel about a new health care plan, a higher margin of error is acceptable, 4 or 5 percent.

Determine **sample size** by the size of the population and the acceptable margin of error. Some survey organizations produce accurate national surveys with a margin of error in the 3 percent range from a sample of 1500. Standard formulas reveal that as a population increases in size, the percentage of the population necessary for a sample declines rapidly. In other words, you must interview a larger percentage of 5000 people than of 50,000 people to attain equally accurate results. Formulas also reveal that you must increase greatly the size of a sample to reduce the margin of error from 5 percent to 4 percent to 3 percent. The small reduction in the margin of error may not be worth the added cost of conducting significantly more interviews.

A sample is the actual number of persons interviewed.

CheckMarket and Creative Research Systems offer sample size calculators that enable you to determine sample size. For instance, if your preferred margin of error is 5 percent at a confidence level of 95 percent, you would need to conduct the following number of interviews within different sample sizes to reach this level.¹¹

Population Size	Sample Size
100	80
500	217
1,000	278
5,000	357
10,000	370
50,000	381
100,000	383

Sampling Techniques

Size of sample is important, but how you select the sample is of utmost importance to the validity of a survey. There are two general types of sampling, **probability** and **non-probability**. In probability sampling, you know that each member of your population has a certain chance of being interviewed. In non-probability sampling, you do not. There are five common methods of probability sampling, the most accurate method of sampling.

Random Sampling

Random sampling is like “drawing names from a hat.”

Random sampling is the simplest method of selecting a representative sampling. For example, if you have a complete roster of all persons in a population, you place all names in a container, mix them thoroughly, and draw out one name at a time until you have a sample.

Table of Random Numbers

In skip interval you select every n th name from a list.

A more complicated random sampling method is to assign a number to each potential respondent and create or purchase a **table of random numbers**. With eyes closed, place a finger on a number and read a combination up, down, across to left or right, or diagonally. Select this number as part of the sample or decide to read the last digit of the number touched (46) and the first digit of the numeral to the right (29) and thus contact respondent number 62. Repeat this process until you have the sample you need.

Skip Interval or Random Digit

In a **skip interval** or **random digit sampling**, you may choose every 10th number in a telephone book, every fifth name in a roster of clients, or every other person who walks into a supermarket. The Random Digital Dialing system now in wide use for conducting surveys randomly generates telephone numbers in target area-code and prefix areas, gives every telephone number in the area an equal chance of being called, and ensures anonymity because no interviewee names are used.¹² This common sampling technique may have built-in flaws. For instance, a growing percentage of the population has unlisted phone numbers or relies on cell phones. On the other hand, a growing number of households have more than one telephone number, and this increases the probability that a particular household may be contacted more than once. A voter, customer, or membership roster might be outdated. Time of day, day of the week, and location may determine the types of persons available for interviews.

Stratified Random Sample

A stratified sample most closely represents the whole.

If a population has clearly definable groups (males and females; ages; education levels; income levels; and diverse cultural groups), employ a **stratified random sampling method**. This method enables you to include a minimum number of respondents from each group, typically the percentage of the group in the target population. For instance, if a targeted population consists of 30 percent first-year students, 25 percent sophomores, 20 percent juniors, 20 percent seniors, and 5 percent graduate students, your sample would represent these percentages.

Sample Point

A sample point is usually a geographical area.

A sample point represents a geographical area (a square block or mile, for instance) that contains specific types of persons (students, grain farmers, or retired persons, for instance). Instructions may tell interviewers to skip corner houses (corner houses are often more expensive) and then try every other house on the outside of the four-block area until they have obtained two interviews with males and two with females. The U.S. Department of Agriculture uses aerial photographs of farm areas and crops to determine which farmers to interview to determine the amounts of various crops planted

and possible yields of these crops each year. The **sample point** or **block sample** gives the survey designer control over selection of interviewees without resorting to lists of names, random digits, or telephone numbers.

There are two common methods of non-probability sampling, the least accurate forms of sampling. Survey interviewers employ them because they are convenient and inexpensive.

Self-Selection

Self-selection is the least representative of sampling methods.

The most inaccurate sampling method is **self-selection**. You see this voluntary method used nearly every day in radio and television talk shows, newscasts, and on the Internet. Who is most likely to call ABC, Rush Limbaugh, or a television station? You guessed it—those who are very angry or most opposed to/most in favor of an action. Moderates rarely call or write. It is easy to predict how self-reporting surveys on gun control, health care reform, and immigration will turn out.

Convenience

Convenience sampling is popular because respondents are numerous and easy to reach. Interviewers may stop students exiting a classroom building, shoppers walking through a shopping mall, or people strolling down the street. The only criterion for selection is convenience for the interviewer. Randomness and representation of diverse elements of a target population are not considered.

Selecting and Training Interviewers

Creating a survey instrument and developing a careful sample of interviewees are critical, but so is selecting interviewers and training them to conduct the interviews properly.

Number Needed

You can rarely do it all by yourself.

If you plan to conduct brief interviews with a small target population, a single interviewer may be sufficient. You will need several interviewers if your interviews are lengthy, the sample is large, time allotted for completing the survey is short, and interviewees are scattered over a large geographical area. Large and difficult interviewing assignments result in serious interviewer fatigue and decline in motivation that may reduce the quality of interviews and the data received.

Qualifications

Interviewers must follow the rules.

A highly scheduled, standardized interview does not require interviewers to be experts on a topic or skilled in phrasing questions and probing into answers. It does require a person who can learn and follow guidelines, read the questions verbatim and effectively, and record answers quickly and accurately. If you are using a highly scheduled interview format that requires skillful probing into answers, interviewers must be able to think on their feet, adapt to different interviewees, handle unanticipated interviewee objections and concerns, and react effectively and calmly to strange answers. Professionally trained interviewers are more efficient and produce more accurate results.

One study revealed that “experienced interviewers obtain higher rates of acquiescent reports than do inexperienced interviewers, even after accounting for potential differences in interviewer and respondent characteristics.”¹³

Interviewer
credibility
is critical in
surveys.

Personal Characteristics

Interviewers who are older, have a nonthreatening demeanor, and have an optimistic outlook get better response rates and cooperation, regardless of their experiences. Age generates credibility and self-confidence, and optimism motivates interviewees to cooperate. However personality and attitude of the interviewer may be the most important elements in shaping interviewee attitudes toward surveys.

Interviewee Skepticism

Interviewees
are increasingly
wary of
surveys.

Nearly one-third of respondents believe that answering survey questions will neither benefit them nor influence decisions, that there are too many surveys, that surveys are too long, and that interviewers ask too many personal questions. Some 36 percent of respondents in one study said they had been asked to take part in “false surveys,” sales or political campaign interviews disguised as informational surveys. The authors of a report on how the Gallup Organization conducts public opinion polls note that “The public’s questions indicate a healthy dose of skepticism about polling. Their questions, however, are usually accompanied by a strong and sincere desire to find out what’s going on under Gallup’s hood.”¹⁴ Clearly, survey interviewers must be aware of relational dimensions such as warmth, involvement, dominance, and trust and make every effort to establish a positive relationship with each respondent.

Similarity of Interviewer and Interviewee

Similarity, but
not a mirror
image, may be
important.

Similarity is an important relational dimension in survey interviews. Dress like interviewees because if interviewers *look like me*, I am more likely to cooperate and answer appropriately. An in-group relationship with the interviewee (black to black, senior citizen to senior citizen, Hispanic-American to Hispanic-American) may avoid cultural and communication barriers and enhance trust because the interviewer is perceived to be safe, capable of understanding, and sympathetic. Interviewers may need to speak to interviewees in their own language, including dialects or regional differences.

Training Interviewers

Poor execution
can undo
thorough
preparation.

Provide carefully written instructions to all interviewers regardless of their experience because each survey has unique features and purposes. Face-to-face training sessions that include simulated interviews are highly recommended. The following are typical instructions.

Preparing for the Interview

Guard against
interviewer bias.

Study the question schedule and answer options thoroughly so you can ask rather than read questions and record answers quickly and accurately. Dress appropriately, and be neat and well groomed. Do not wear buttons or insignia that identify you with a particular group or position on the issue that might bias responses. Choose an appropriate time of week and day.

Conducting the Interview

Be friendly, businesslike, and interested in the topic. Speak clearly, at a good pace, and loudly enough to be heard easily. Maintain eye contact and don't be afraid to smile. Ask all questions clearly, without hesitation, and neutrally. Adopt an informal speaking manner that avoids the appearance of reading or reciting openings, questions, and closings.

Opening the Interview

Motivate the interviewee from the moment the interview commences. State your name, identify your organization, and present your credentials if appropriate. Explain the purpose, length, nature, and importance of the study; then move to your first question without appearing to pressure the interviewee to take part.

Asking Questions

No question can be altered in any way.

Ask all questions, including answer options, exactly as worded. You may repeat a question but not rephrase it or define words. Do not change the order of questions or answer options unless instructed to do so. If you are doing a qualitative study, probe carefully into answers to obtain insightful and thorough answers free of ambiguities and vague references.

Receiving and Recording Answers

Maintain a pleasant "poker face" throughout.

Give respondents adequate time to reply, and then record answers as prescribed in your training and on the schedule. Write or print answers carefully. Remain neutral at all times, reacting neither positively nor negatively to responses.

Closing the Interview

When you have obtained the answer to the last question, thank the interviewee for cooperating and excuse yourself without being abrupt. Be polite and sensitive, making it clear that the interviewee has been most helpful. Do not discuss the survey with the interviewee.

Conducting Survey Interviews

With preparation completed, it's time to **pretest the interview** with a portion of the targeted audience to detect potential problems with questions and answer options.

Pretesting the Interview

Lack of pretesting invites disaster.

The best plans on paper may not work during real interviews. Try out the opening, questions, recording answers, and closing.

Leave nothing to chance. For instance, in a political poll conducted by one of our classes, students deleted the question "What do you like or dislike about your major?" because it took too much time, generated little useful data, and posed a coding nightmare because of diverse replies. When interviewees were handed a list of political candidates during another project and asked, "What do you like or dislike about . . . ?" many became embarrassed or gave vague answers because they did not know some

of the candidates. This question was replaced with a Likert scale from “strongly like” to “strongly dislike,” including a “don’t know” option, and interviewers probed into reasons for liking or disliking only for candidates ranked in the extreme positions on the scale. Respondents tended to be informed about candidates they strongly liked or strongly disliked. In a survey of mudslinging during political campaigns, one of the authors discovered that scale questions tended to confuse elderly respondents, so he added special explanations to complex questions.

Leave
nothing
unquestioned.

Ask these questions when conducting pretests. Did interviewees understand what you needed and why? Did the wording of any question pose problems for some interviewees? Did interviewees react negatively or refuse to answer certain questions? Did each question attain the information desired? Did recording of answers pose any problems?

Once you have studied the pretest results and made alterations in procedures, questions, and answer options, you are ready to conduct the full survey.

Interviewing Face-to-Face

Interviewing face-to-face has a number of advantages over other means of conducting surveys.¹⁵ It tends to obtain a good response rate because of the personal presence of the interviewer and the naturalness of the interaction. It may be important for interviewees to be able to feel, touch, experience, and taste products. The interviewer can establish credibility through physical appearance, dress, eye contact, voice, and credentials. Face-to-face interviews enable interviewers to identify interviewees who are part of the target population (particularly those who tend to be “marginalized” in our society) and interview them in specific locations and at specific times. The interviewer can control the interview by keeping the interviewee focused on track until the completion of the interview. Respondents are more willing to take part in lengthy interviews, and this enables interviewers to ask more questions and focus on in-depth attitudes and information. Face-to-face interviews may reveal respondent attitudes and reactions detectable only through nonverbal cues such as facial expressions, eye contact, gestures, and posture.

Disadvantages of the face-to-face interview include expense, time consumption, and the need for large numbers of thoroughly trained interviewers. Data are recorded in writing and they may be time-consuming to record. It may be impossible to conduct face-to-face interviews in the time allotted to conduct and report the survey or to conduct interviews over a wide geographical area.

Interviewing by Telephone

Telephone
interviews
may be
inexpensive
in money
but costly
in results.

Because face-to-face survey interviews are expensive and time-consuming, and societal changes have made it difficult to predict when respondents might be available, the telephone survey interview—particularly with the advent of Random-Digit Dialing technology—has become dominant.

The telephone survey interview has become dominant because of several advantages. It is less expensive, can be conducted quickly over a wide geographical area, and provides faster results when speed is critical.¹⁶ There may be less interviewer bias because of the greater uniformity in manner and delivery and no effect from dress,

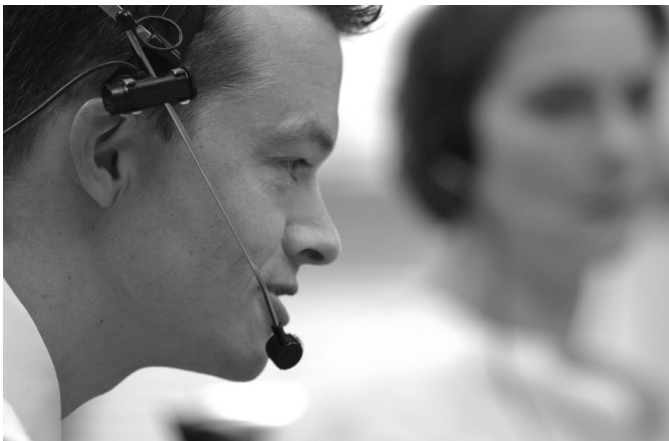
appearance, mannerisms, facial expressions, and eye contact. Interviewers do not face the potential dangers of venturing into dangerous neighborhoods or residences, particularly at night. Interviewees provide fewer socially acceptable answers because they may feel safer by maintaining anonymity when providing controversial answers or personal information.

The telephone survey interview has disadvantages. Respondents are reluctant to stay on the telephone for longer than 10 to 15 minutes, and this means the interview schedule must be shorter with fewer open-ended questions or probing questions that may consume several minutes each. People are using call identifiers to filter out unwanted calls, particularly ones from unknown numbers. As fewer persons have landlines in their homes, perhaps only one in ten, and are relying on cell phones, it is becoming increasingly difficult to contact them. When a person answers the phone, the interviewer may have difficulty determining if this person is part of the target population. While the telephone provides anonymity, people are increasingly reluctant in the age of “identity theft” to divulge personal information or to answer sensitive questions from persons they cannot see and whose credentials are invisible.

Here are guidelines for conducting interviews over the telephone.

Opening the Telephone Interview

Most refusals in telephone surveys occur prior to the first substantive question: one-third in the opening seconds, one-third during the orientation, and one-third at the point of listing household members. Speaking skills (pitch, vocal variety, loudness, rate, and distinct enunciation), particularly during the opening, are more important than content. One study concluded, “Respondents react to cues communicated by the interviewer’s voice and may grant or refuse an interview on that basis.”¹⁷ Telephone interviewers must establish trust through vocal and verbal analogs to the personal appearance, credentials, and survey materials that enhance trust in face-to-face interviews.



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- A growing number of interviewers are turning to the telephone for easier and less expensive means of conducting surveys and polls.

How to Use the Telephone

The literature on survey interviewing contains important advice for would-be telephone interviewers. These guidelines are equally relevant to face-to-face interviews.

- Do not give a person a reason or opportunity to hang up. Develop an informal but professional style that is courteous (not demanding) and friendly (not defensive). Get the interviewee involved as quickly as possible in answering questions because active involvement motivates people to take part and cooperate.

Do nothing but ask and listen during telephone interviews.

- *Listen carefully and actively.* Give undivided attention to what the interviewee is saying by not drinking, eating, sorting papers, or playing with objects on your desk. Do not communicate nonverbally with others in the room, and say nothing you do not want the interviewee to hear even if you believe you have the mouthpiece covered. Explain any pauses or long silences of more than a few seconds or signal you are listening with cues such as “Uh huh,” “Yes,” “Okay.”
- *Use your voice effectively.* Talk directly into the mouthpiece. Speak loudly, slowly, clearly, and distinctly because the interviewee relies solely on your voice. State each answer option distinctly with vocal emphasis on important words and pause between each option to aid in comprehension and recall.
- *Use a computer-assisted telephone interview system* that enables you to dial random numbers quickly and to compile results within minutes of completing interviews.

Interviewing through the Internet

Survey interviews are increasingly taking place through the Internet—e-mail, Web pages, and computer direct. They are substantially less expensive and faster than either face-to-face or telephone interviews. A survey posted on a popular Web site may generate thousands of responses within hours. Internet surveys can target large populations over great distances. A major problem of survey interviews—interviewees giving socially acceptable answers—is lessened because of the anonymity and perceived safety of the Internet interview. A significant concern in face-to-face and telephone interviews, interviewer bias, is not a problem in Internet surveys. Respondents give more honest answers to sensitive topics. Unlike paper-and-pencil surveys, and some face-to-face and telephone surveys, interviewees tend to provide more detail in answers to open-ended questions, perhaps because it is easy and quick to type lengthy answers on a keyboard and they can reply when it suits them.

On the other hand, the critical nonverbal communication that aids face-to-face and telephone interviews is lost when using the Internet. Response rates may suffer because it is more difficult to establish the credibility of the survey or to distinguish the survey interview from a slick telemarketer sales interview. While the Internet gives respondents time to think through answers, it may lose the spontaneity of interactions in face-to-face and telephone interviews; they are essentially electronic bulletin boards. However, “real-time chat” software can ensure spontaneity. It’s nearly impossible to probe into answers or employ question strategies such as shuffle, leaning, and repeat. Evidence indicates that completion rates are lower for lengthy surveys because respondents grow tired and log off.

It is difficult to target populations in wide-ranging, Internet surveys because you may not know who in a family, corporation, school, or state replied to your survey. Your sample, and thus your results, may be highly questionable. Those who feel most strongly about an issue, usually with negative attitudes, may overwhelm the results in self-selected Internet surveys. This has led researchers Chris Mann and Fiona Stewart to warn, “There is no doubt that the unrepresentativeness of current Internet access remains the greatest problem for data collection on-line.”¹⁸

Coding, Tabulation, and Analysis

After all interviews are completed, the final phase of the survey begins with coding, tabulation, and analysis of the information received.

Coding and Tabulation

Begin the final phase of the survey by **coding** all answers that were not precoded, usually for open-ended questions. For instance, if question 20 is “You say you oppose a ban on clips that hold more than ten cartridges as a way to limit the mass shootings that have become frequent in work places, schools, and shopping areas. Why do you oppose this option?” will elicit a wide variety of answers. If question 20 is coded #20, each answer can be coded 20 plus, 1, 2, 3, 4, etc., such as the following:

- 20-1 It would violate my 2nd Amendment rights.
- 20-2 It would place larger clips only in the hands of criminals and terrorists.
- 20-3 It would prevent me from protecting my family.
- 20-4 It would not stop people with severe mental problems from killing people.
- 20-5 It would give too much power to the government to control the people.
- 20-6 It would lead ultimately to seizing all guns from American citizens.
- 20-7 It has not worked in our cities with strict gun control laws.

Record answers to open-ended questions with great care.

Answers to open-ended questions may require analysis and structuring before developing a coding system. For example, in a study of voter perception of mudslinging in political campaigns, the interviewer asked, “What three or four words would you use to describe a politician who uses mudslinging as a tactic?” Answers included more than 100 different words, but analysis revealed that most words tended to fit into five categories: untrustworthy, incompetent, unlikable, insecure, and immature. A sixth category, “other,” received words that did not fit into the five categories. All words were placed into one of these six categories and coded from one to six.

Analysis

Analysis is making sense of your data.

After all answers are coded and the results tabulated, begin the **analysis** phase. This task can be overwhelming. One of the authors surveyed 354 clergy from 32 Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish groups to assess their interview training during college and seminary and since entering the ministry. The 48 questions in the survey times 354 respondents provided 16,992 bits of information.

How can the survey interviewer handle massive amounts of information generated in most surveys? Charles Redding offered several helpful suggestions.¹⁹

- *Be selective.* Ask “What findings are likely to be most useful?” and “What will I do with this information once I get it?” If you have no idea, do not ask for it.
- *Capitalize on the potential of data.* Subject data to comparative breakdowns to discover differences between demographic subgroups.
- *Dig for the gold.* What is the really important stuff hidden within raw data and simple tabulations? For instance, in polls of registered voter attitudes,

interviewers often discover that female respondents favor a candidate far less than male respondents and that Americans who have recently become citizens are likely to have very different views toward immigration than third or fourth generation Americans.

- *Look for what is missing.* What you do not find may be more important than what you do find. What information did you not obtain?

Know the limitations of your survey.

During analysis of data, ask these questions. What conclusions can you draw and with what certainty? For which segment of a target population can you generalize? What are the constraints imposed by the sample, schedule of questions, the interviewing process, and the interviewers? Why did people respond in specific ways to specific questions? What unexpected events or changes have occurred since the completion of the survey that might make this survey dated or suspect? What should be done with the “undecided” and “don’t know” answers or blanks on survey forms?

Be careful in using survey results.

You might subject data to a statistical analysis designed to test reliability and significance of data. Babbie and other research methodologists (see resources) provide detailed guidelines for conducting sophisticated statistical analyses.

When the analysis of data is complete, determine if the purpose and objectives of your survey are achieved. If so, what are the best means of reporting the results?

The Respondent in Survey Interviews

The ever-growing number of surveys conducted throughout the world each day ensures your involvement in these highly structured interviews. They are rarely compulsory, so you are free to “just say no,” but when you do, you may forfeit an opportunity to influence important decisions that affect you, your family, your field of work, and your community. Do not walk away, close the door, hang up the phone, or hit the delete button too hastily, but approach all survey requests cautiously and with a healthy skepticism.

The Opening

Understand what a survey is all about before participating.

Become thoroughly oriented before starting to answer questions. Observe, listen, and question. Discover the interviewer’s identity, the name of the organization sponsoring the survey, the purpose of the survey, why and how you were selected, the length of the survey, the confidentiality of your answers, and how the information you give will be used. If the interviewer does not provide important information, ask for it. When one of the authors was visiting his daughter and her family in Vancouver, Washington, more than 2000 miles from home, a market researcher approached him in a shopping mall. The researcher explained who she was, what she was doing, and why she was doing it. She did not state that he had to be a local resident. When asked if it made any difference that he was visiting from the Midwest, the interviewer said she wanted only those who regularly visited the mall. The interview ended.

The opening minutes enable you to determine if the interview is a survey or a slick persuasive interview under the guise of a survey. Is it a nonpartisan political survey being conducted by a nationally known and reputable polling organization or part of a political campaign for a specific candidate or party? When one of the authors

responded to the doorbell at his home, a college-age person announced that she was conducting a survey of families with children as a part of summer internship. A few questions revealed that she was selling child-oriented magazines for a summer job, not an internship sponsored by her college as implied in her opening.

The Question Phase

Listen perceptively.

Listen carefully to each question and answer options in interval, nominal, and ordinal questions. If a question or option is difficult to recall, ask the interviewer to repeat the question slowly. If a question is unclear, explain why and ask for clarification. Do not try to guess what a question is going to be from the interviewer's first words. You might guess wrong and become confused, give a stupid answer, or needlessly force the interviewer to restate a perfectly clear question.

Think before answering.

Think through each answer, then respond clearly and precisely. Give the answer that best represents your beliefs, attitudes, or actions. Do not permit interviewer bias to lead you toward an answer you think the interviewer wants to hear or how other respondents have answered.

You can refuse to answer poorly constructed or leading questions or give data that seem irrelevant or an invasion of privacy. For instance, an interviewer recently asked one of the authors, "Do you favor boutique solutions to our energy needs such as wind farms or environmentally friendly nuclear power plants that can supply electricity to major industries and cities?" The word "boutique" revealed the bias and agenda of the interviewer. Demand tactful, sensitive, and polite treatment from interviewers. Insist on adequate time to answer questions. If you have agreed to a 10-minute interview and the interview is still going strong at the 10-minute mark, remind the interviewer of the agreement and proceed to close the interview unless only a few more seconds are required. Survey interviews can be fun, interesting, and informative if both parties treat one another fairly.

Summary

The survey interview is the most meticulously planned and executed of interviews. Planning begins with determining a clearly defined purpose and conducting research. The purpose of the survey interview is to establish a solid base of fact from which to draw conclusions, make interpretations, and determine future courses of action. Only then does the survey creator structure the interview and develop questions with appropriate strategies, scales, sequences, coding, and recording methods. Selecting interviewees involves delineating a target population to survey and choosing a sample of this population that represents the whole. The creator of the survey chooses sampling methods, determines the size of the sample, and plans for an acceptable margin of error. Each choice has advantages and disadvantages because there is no one correct way to handle all surveys.

Survey respondents must determine the nature of the survey and its purposes before deciding whether to take part. If the decision is to participate, respondents have a responsibility to listen carefully to each question and answer it accurately. Be sure you understand each question and its answer options. Demand enough time to think

through answers. Feel free to refuse to answer obviously leading or poorly phrased questions that require biased answers or choosing among options that do not include how you feel and what you prefer.

Key Terms and Concepts

Bogardus Social Distance Scale	Longitudinal survey	Random sampling
Chain or contingency strategy	Margin of error	Ranking ordinal scale
Convenience sample	Marginalized respondent	Rating ordinal scale
Cross-sectional survey	Nominal scale	Reliability
Evaluative interval scale	Non-probability sampling	Repeat strategy
Face-to-face interview	Numerical interval scale	Replicability
Filter strategy	Order bias	Sample point
Frequency interval scale	Ordinal scale	Sampling principles
Internet interview	Personal interview	Self-selection
Interval scale	Population	Shuffle strategy
Leading question strategy	Probability sampling	Skip interval scale
Level of confidence	Qualitative survey	Stratified random sample
Likert scale	Quantitative survey	Table of random numbers
	Precision journalism	
	Random digital dialing	

Survey Role-Playing Cases

Drinking on Campus

Drinking on college campuses is a growing concern nationwide with increasing numbers of assaults, accidental deaths, and shootings, particularly at off-campus housing and drinking establishments. The interviewer is chairing the Student Affairs Committee that has taken on the task of creating a survey of a cross section of faculty and students to discover their experiences with drinking issues on campus, their fears and concerns for student safety and that of others, and suggestions for making the campus safer in perception and reality.

Health Care Reform

In spite of the Supreme Court’s upholding of the constitutionality of The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (derisively called Obamacare by its opponents), conflict over how to reform the health care system to control cost while sustaining quality continues unabated as it has for decades. A group of medical, governmental, and religious leaders has banded together to assess the problems, concerns, and attitudes of a cross section of adults (anyone 18 years or older) to guide their discussions and proposals for further health care reforms.

Need for a 24–7 Child Care Facility

You and four friends with experiences in local child care feel that there is a need for a facility that would provide 24–7 child care in your community. All local facilities open at 6:00 a.m. and close at 6 p.m., but a growing number of parents, including single parents, are working 4:00 p.m. to midnight and midnight to 8:00 a.m. shifts and need day care during these evening and nighttime periods. The five of you are considering building and staffing a 24–7 day care facility but need to assess the number of clients and children you might serve to make it financially feasible. You are both creating a survey instrument and trying to determine your target population.

A Fitness Center

You graduated from college 10 years ago with a degree in physical therapy and have since worked at a number of rehabilitation and fitness centers on the West Coast. Although these positions have been rewarding and provided a great variety of experiences as both a therapist and a business administrator, you would like to get back to western Kentucky where your family lives and to settle down in a mid-sized city. You have decided to conduct surveys of residents in Bowling Green, Paducah, and Henderson to determine the feasibility and nature of creating your own rehabilitation and fitness center that would cater to the 40 and above population.

Student Activities

1. Serve as a volunteer interviewer for a survey being conducted on your campus or community. What instructions and training did you receive? How were interviewees determined? What problems did you encounter in locating suitable and cooperative interviewees? What problems did you have with the survey schedule? What is the most important thing you have learned from this experience? What advice would you give the organization you volunteered to serve?
2. Try a simple interviewer bias experiment. Conduct 10 short opinion interviews on a current issue, using an identical question schedule for all interviews. During five of them, wear a conspicuous T-shirt, button, or badge that identifies membership in or support of an organization that supports one side of the issue: a Republican elephant, or Democratic donkey, a crucifix or a Star of David, an organization's logo or a product slogan. Compare results to see if and how your identification with an organization on one side of the issue affected answers to identical questions.
3. Obtain a number of market survey schedules used in face-to-face, telephone, and Internet surveys. Compare and contrast these schedules. How are the openings similar and different? How are schedules and sequences similar and different? How are question strategies and question scales similar and different? How are closings similar and different? What surprises did you discover in your comparisons?

4. Interview a person who has worked for one or more survey agencies that create and conduct surveys for a variety of clients such as politicians, universities, and manufacturers. Cover such topics as determining the purpose, conducting research, selecting the target population, determining the sampling method, arriving at an acceptable margin of error, creating and pretesting the interview schedule, selecting and training interviewers, and deciding upon the method: face-to-face interviews, telephone interviews, Internet interviews.

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Recruiting is expensive and complex.

Recruiting outstanding employees for your organization is critical to its future. As Tom Peter's writes, today "talent rules," so you must be obsessed with attracting and retaining new talent.¹ Successful recruiting to identify this talent determines the difference between success and failure of every organization. This task is never easy, quick, or inexpensive. Recruiting is an elaborate courtship process that entails multiple contacts between each recruit and members of your staff and may be fraught with interpersonal problems between complex human beings, each susceptible to bias and distortion. In spite of its problems, however, the interview will remain an essential component of the selection process because recruiters want to observe behaviors and probe into skills, attitudes, and abilities that reveal whether an applicant is an ideal **fit for this position with this organization.**²

A common, mistaken belief is that Human Resources (HR) personnel recruit new employees for organizations. In truth, HR personnel play minor roles in the recruiting process because it is far too important and complex to assign to a single element of any organization. You may have already taken part in recruiting activities while in college, and you definitely will after you graduate. Many of our students have returned to campus within a year of graduation to aid in recruiting talent for their organizations. They can identify readily with their alma mater and its students.

The objectives of this chapter are to introduce you to the fundamental principles of successful employee recruiting. These include locating high-quality applicants, preparing for the recruiting process, obtaining and reviewing information on applicants, structuring interviews, conducting interviews, and evaluating interviews. Learning and applying these principles will make you a valuable asset to your organization while enhancing the quality of your future colleagues.

Where to Find Talented Applicants

When commencing your search for new talent, consider your social and professional contacts, check your file of persons who have come to your attention in the field through its meetings and publications, visit college career centers, and attend fairs wherever they occur. A growing number of organizations are hiring from their **internship programs** because they have had extensive opportunity to observe and assess interns while they are on the job with opportunities to exhibit needed talents.

Merely publishing an opening is not sufficient.

When you take part in **career** or **job fairs**, be sure you set up attractive booths exhibiting promotional materials such as brochures, book bags, and pens to get your name and positions before a large number of potential employees. Select staff with excellent interpersonal skills who enjoy meeting young people and are trained to conduct on-the-spot interviews. Have application forms and sign-up sheets readily at hand, but be honest if you are not currently hiring at the moment. Make follow-up contacts with attendees who appear to be good fits for your organization.

Web sites have not replaced personal contacts.

Your organization might decide to hire a **staffing firm** (sometimes called placement agencies, employment agencies, or head hunters) to locate quality applicants and perhaps to conduct initial screening interviews. Select such firms carefully to determine their success rates and suitability for your organization and the position(s) you wish to fill. The American Staffing Association offers important guidelines for making the best choice, including shopping around, type of staffing help you need, impressions of your initial interactions with the firm, how the staffing firm selects its employees (screening, testing, and training), and how well the firm understands your organization and your needs.³

Kiosks designed to attract applicants are now common sights in retail stores. This enables them to establish and update their applicant databases whenever stores are open, some 24 hours a day, and to sort through applications to locate qualified applicants. If kiosks are inappropriate for your organization, there are numerous **resume databases** that provide the same services. Some of these are fee-based and some are free. Select the one that is most suitable for your organization and career field.

There are hundreds of Internet and electronic sources available to locate quality applicants. These include Web sites of colleges and universities, religious organizations, senior citizen clubs, political parties, and special interest groups. Here are a few key sources:

- CareerBuilder.com
- Kennedy's *The Directory of Executive and Professional Recruiters*
- Monster Jobs
- Monster.com
- Wall Street Journal Careers

Organizations are striving to diversify their workforces, particularly among ethnic groups. Joyce Gioia suggests advertising in ethnic media (such as alternate language newspapers, magazines, Web sites, radio, and television) and in movie theaters that attract a highly diverse clientele. Think globally, Gioia writes, because recruiting employees from diverse ethnic groups “holds opportunities for companies beyond their wildest dreams.”⁴

Your **organization's Web site** is critical in every search you conduct because applicants will check it to see if your organization is attractive and a good fit for them. They may decide not to pursue a position you have open because they judge your site to be poorly done. Be sure your Web site is easy to read, interesting, updated frequently, professional, and sophisticated.

Preparing the Recruiting Effort

Careful planning and preparation is critical in the recruiting effort. Learn key information about each applicant prior to the interview, review EEO laws to avoid potential legal pitfalls, and know how to prepare for, take part in, and evaluate interviews.

Reviewing EEO Laws

Review carefully federal **equal employment opportunity** (EEO) laws and executive orders as well as those in the states in which you conduct recruiting efforts. Some state laws are more stringent than federal laws. You can trace such laws back to the Civil Rights Act of 1866. Review these laws thoroughly so you understand their relevance to the employment interview.⁵

Unintentional violations are still violations.

- The Equal Pay Act of 1963 requires equal pay for men and women performing work that involves similar skill, effort, responsibility, and working conditions.
- The Civil Rights Act of 1964, particularly Title VII, prohibits the selection of employees based on race, color, gender, religion, or national origin, and requires employers to discover discriminatory practices and eliminate them.
- The Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967 prohibits employers of 25 or more persons from discriminating against persons because of age.
- The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Sections 501 and 505) orders federal contractors to hire persons with disabilities, including alcoholism, asthma, rheumatoid arthritis, and epilepsy.



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- The pregnancy discrimination act of 1978 prohibits discrimination of women because of pregnancy alone and protects job security during maternity leaves.
- The Civil Rights Act of 1991 (often referred to as the 1992 Civil Rights Act) caps compensation and punitive damages for employers, provides for jury trial, and created a commission to investigate the “glass ceiling” for minorities and women and reward organizations that advance opportunities for minorities and women.

■ Review EEO laws carefully.

- The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (effective July 25, 1992), Title I and Title V, prohibits discrimination against persons with physical and mental impairments that substantially limit or restrict the condition, manner, or duration under which they can perform one or more life activities and requires reasonable accommodation by employers.

After you have reviewed these EEO laws, keep in mind that federal laws supersede state laws unless the state laws are more restrictive. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) and the courts are not concerned with **intent** but with **effect**. Keep up with the most recent court and congressional changes and interpretations that occur annually and changing events. It did not take long after the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan began and it became common military practice to call up thousands of reservists for our students to report that recruiters were asking them about the type of military discharge they had received while on active duty. Confusion reigned with many recruiters claiming they needed to know if a veteran had received an “honorable discharge” without insightful knowledge of either types of discharges, reasons for them, or circumstances. The best advice legally and ethically is “Don’t ask.” Three recent concerns have arisen in the law: domestic partners, same-sex marriage, and transgender applicants.

Numerous EEO laws would seem to complicate the employee recruiting/selecting process, but complying with them is simple. Everything you do, say, or ask during the selection process must pertain to **bona fide occupational qualifications (BFOQs)**, requirements essential for performing a particular job. BFOQs *include* work experiences, training, education, skills, conviction records, physical attributes, and personality traits that have a direct bearing on one’s ability to perform a job effectively. BFOQs *exclude* gender, age, race, religion, marital status, sexual orientation, physical appearance, disabilities, citizenship, place of birth, ethnic group, veteran status, military records, military discharge status, and arrest records that have no bearing on one’s ability to perform a job effectively.

Exceptions to laws and orders are made when an employer can demonstrate that one or more normally unlawful traits are essential for a position. For example, appearance may be a BFOQ for a modeling position, religion for a pastoral position, age for performing certain tasks (serving alcohol, operating dangerous equipment), physical abilities such as eyesight and manual dexterity for pilots, physical strength for construction workers, the legal right to be employed in the United States, and English language skills for an English teacher.

A few guidelines will help you avoid most EEO violations and lawsuits. First, meet the **test of job relatedness** by establishing legally defensible selection criteria. Second, be sure *all questions* are related to these selection criteria. Third, standardize the interview by asking the *same questions* to all applicants for a position. If you ask specific questions only of applicants who are female, disabled, older, or minority, you are undoubtedly asking unlawful questions. Fourth, be cautious when probing into answers because a significant number of EEO violations occur in these created-on-the-spot questions. Fifth, be cautious of innocent chit-chat during the informal parts of interviews, usually the opening and closing or the minutes following the formal interview. This is when you are most likely to ask or comment about family, marital status, ethnic background, and nonprofessional memberships. Sixth, focus questions on what an applicant *can do* rather than on what an applicant *cannot do*. Seventh, if an applicant begins to volunteer unlawful information, tactfully steer the person back to

BFOQs are the keys to nondiscriminatory hiring.

EEO violations are easy to avoid.

Focus on the positive, not the negative.

job-related areas. Your organization is liable if unlawful information is maintained or used even if you did not ask for it.

Listening to or keeping unlawful information creates liability for your organization.

Exercise #1—Testing Your Knowledge of EEO Laws

Test your knowledge of EEO laws and selection interviews by rating each question below as *lawful* (can be asked), *depends* (may be asked under certain circumstances), or *unlawful* (cannot be asked). Explain why it is lawful, unlawful, or depends.

	Lawful	Unlawful	Depends
1. Do you go by Margaret or Peggy?			
2. I noticed that you walk with a cane.			
3. Are you a U.S. citizen?			
4. I see you served with Special Forces in Syria. Did you get hurt while in combat?			
5. How fluent are you in Chinese?			
6. How did you lose your right eye?			
7. Are you planning to get married?			
8. Which religious holidays do you observe?			
9. Weinberg . . . is that Jewish?			
10. Have you ever been arrested?			
11. What software programs have you used?			
12. Do you drink?			
13. What professional organizations do you belong to?			
14. Would you have a problem with relocating?			
15. (Asked of a veteran) Have you ever seen a psychiatrist?			

Keep these rules in mind when recruiting.

- Advertise each position where all qualified applicants have a reasonable opportunity to learn about the opening.
- Do not write or take notes on the application form. Doodling on an application form may appear to be a discriminatory code.
- Three recent concerns have arisen in the law: domestic partners, same-sex marriage, and hearing as a disability. An appropriate response is, “We hire persons based on what they know and how well they can do the job, not on personal preferences or disabilities.” Organizations should be prepared to enhance volumes on phones and computers.
- EEO laws generally pertain to all employers of 15 or more people.

Developing an Applicant Profile

The profile must be a composite of BFOQs.

The profile is the ideal by which all applicants are measured.

With EEO laws in mind, conduct a thorough analysis to develop a **competency-based applicant profile** for each position for which you are recruiting. This profile of the ideal employee typically includes specific skills, abilities, education, training, experiences, knowledge levels, personal characteristics, and interpersonal relationships that enable a person to fulfill a position with a high degree of excellence. The intent is to measure all applicants against this profile to ensure that recruiting efforts meet EEO laws, are as objective as possible, encourage all interviewers to cover the same topics and traits, and eliminate (or at least minimize) the **birds of a feather syndrome** in which recruiters favor applicants who are most like themselves—traditionally this has favored white, male applicants.

Many organizations are employing a **behavior-based** selection technique to ensure that each interviewer asks questions that match each applicant with the applicant profile. Behavior-based interviewing rests on two interrelated principles: past behavior in specific job-related situations is the best predictor of future behavior and past performance is the best predictor of future performance. Interviewers ask interviewees to describe situations in which they have exhibited specific skills and abilities. A National Institutes of Health publication states that the behavior-based interview technique “seeks to uncover how a potential employee actually did behave in a given situation; not on how he or she might behave in the future.”⁶ The behavior-based technique begins with a needs and position analysis to determine which behaviors are essential for performing a particular position. Behaviors might include:

- | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| develops and implements | conducts |
| monitors and facilitates | establishes |
| applies | builds |
| stays current | understands and utilizes |
| advises and consults | recommends |

Other organizations have modified this approach into a **trait-based** or **talent-based** system in which specific traits or talents rather than behaviors are identified in a position analysis. For instance, traits might include:

- | | | |
|-----------------|---------------|--------------------|
| achievement | dependability | oral communication |
| ambition | initiative | people-oriented |
| assertiveness | listening | responsibility |
| competitiveness | motivation | responsiveness |

Can nondominant group applicants match your profile?

Check each profile behavior or trait carefully. Is each essential for job performance? Is leadership necessary for an entry-level position? Can you measure the behavior or trait? Are you expecting recruiters to act as psychologists? Will some targeted behaviors or traits adversely affect your organization’s diversity efforts and discriminate unintentionally? For example, traits such as competitiveness, aggressiveness, direct eye contact, forcefulness, and oral communication skills may run counter to the upbringing

and culture of many nondominant groups.⁷ Traits and behaviors being sought must be position-related—BFOQs—and clearly defined so that all interviewers are looking for the same ones.

After developing an applicant profile, write a clear description that “encapsulates requirements for a given position.” Karen O’Keefe writes, “Ultimately, the job description is the inspiration for any subsequent interview so defining the position up front will make finding the right person for the job much easier.”⁸ Being underprepared is the biggest mistake you can make.

Assessing Today’s Applicants

Times and people are changing.

You must understand the targets of your search because you are trying to attract as well as select outstanding talent for your organization.

What Do Millennial Applicants Seek in a Position and Career?

The millennial generation will soon be the largest segment of the working population, and they have very different interests and expectations from those of the recent past. Their top interests do not include money but do include flexible schedules and work locations, a collaborative work environment and culture, mentoring, career development opportunities and tuition assistance for graduate work that will enable them to continue learning and growing personally and professionally, and opportunities to make a difference not only within the organization but in the world. They are more comfortable with and used to diversity in society and the workplace, and national and geographical boundaries are of less concern because many have traveled, studied, or worked abroad. They are more interested in the reputation of an organization than its brand name. Millennial applicants do not expect to remain with one organization or one career for long periods of time.⁹

Applicants are increasingly information-driven.

What Do Millennial Applicants Expect in an Interviewer?

Millennial applicants want and seek extensive information about each position and organization prior to the interview. During the interview, they place strong emphasis on the communication that takes place and their attraction to the interviewer’s behavior. They assume the interviewer’s behavior strongly indicates what they might expect from the organization. They want the interviewer to be friendly, attentive, sensitive, sincere, warm, honest, enthusiastic, and genuinely interested in them. Applicants prefer interviewers to be young and relatively new employees rather than veterans of the organization because they do not want sales pitches but opportunities to connect with interviewers and their interests, desires, and motivations. Applicants of nondominant groups (women, minority races and ethnic groups, and those from lower economic classes) prefer interviewers to be more like them, but they may become confused and angry if they feel scrutinized by “one of their own.”¹⁰

The recruiter is the organization in the applicant’s eyes.

Millennials want interviewers to ask them clearly relevant and open questions that give them opportunities for self-expression and to elaborate on answers. They want detailed information about the position and organization that is unavailable in other sources. They are turned off by pressure tactics, interruptions, canned presentations,

strict adherence to schedules of questions, interviewers who read questions, and those who spend too much time talking about themselves and their careers instead of focusing on them.

Obtaining and Reviewing Information on Applicants

Gather as much information as possible about each applicant through application forms, resumes, letters of recommendation, objective tests, and social networking Web sites. Review this information carefully because this is your first opportunity to determine how well this person fits the position you have open and your organization's unique culture. This review reveals areas to probe during the interview, perhaps comparing oral and written answers to similar questions. Fredric Jablin and Vernon Miller discovered that employers who review applicant credentials thoroughly ask more questions, a wider variety of questions, and probe more into answers to determine the fit.¹¹

Application Forms

When creating application forms, be sure all information you are requesting are BFOQs. Keep both EEO laws and the applicant profile clearly in mind. Provide adequate space for applicants to answer questions thoroughly. Ask a few open questions similar to ones you will ask in an interview. When you receive a completed application form, look for what is and is not reported on the form.

Modify application forms to fit the applicant profile.

Cover Letters

Read each cover letter carefully because it is often the applicants first opportunity to create a favorable impression. Did the applicant expend the effort to find the name and address of the appropriate person in your organization or rely on the easier "To whom it may concern" salutation? How has the applicant adapted the letter to a **specific position with your organization**? Which stated career goals, qualifications, and experiences are relevant to this position? This is your initial opportunity to ask "How well does this applicant **fit** this position?" Is the letter written professionally free of spelling, grammar, and punctuation errors? Susan Heathfield, a human resources specialist, admits that she may be "an old fuddy-duddy," but claims that such errors "are indicative of what you can expect from the candidate as an employee. Looking for careless, sloppy, or unconcerned? I doubt it. Your evidence is sitting before you on your desk or on your computer screen."¹²

Resumes

When an applicant's resume arrives at your organization, have a person not involved in the selection process delete any information that may violate EEO laws. If you keep this information, even though you did not ask for it, you can be held liable for possible discrimination. Then have each person involved in the recruiting effort review the resume **prior to the interview**. Reading it for the first time during the interview shows lack of preparation and interest and is a major turnoff for quality applicants.

As you review a resume, start with the career objective if one is included. How well does this objective match the applicant profile? Next, how well do the applicant's

Some applicants do not match their resumes.



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■ *Review the applicant's credentials prior to the interview so you can devote full attention to the applicant during the interview.*

Consider a scanner if you attract hundreds of applicants.

If you are hiring several new staff or your postings will receive a large volume of resumes, consider applicant tracking software programs that will scan resumes quickly and efficiently and identify applicants best suited to your opening and organization. They can also store a large volume of resumes if you need to scan the pool again.¹⁴ Scanning software sorts applicants based on key words, skills, interests, and experiences. You need to load these carefully to minimize losing excellent applicants. For instance, if candidates use the word personnel or purchasing instead of human resources or procurement management, they will be eliminated from the pool. The same is true if they use abbreviations that do not match those in the system, headers the system doesn't recognize, spaces between the letters of their names for graphical purposes that cannot be accurately parsed out, and font sizes and typefaces the software finds less readable. It is wise to identify guidelines in your advertisements and recruiting literature to prepare scannable resumes so all candidates are on a level playing field.

Letters of Recommendation and References

Applicants choose references that will write favorable letters or respond favorably when contacted by potential employers. Read letters skeptically because they seldom say

education, training, and experiences complement the career objective (stated in the cover letter or resume) and fit the profile? Does the applicant appear to be over qualified or under qualified for this position? Are there gaps in dates and details concerning education, employment, and relevant experiences? Does the applicant reveal lack of attention to details and accuracy such as missing words, grammatical errors, typos, misspellings, punctuation errors, and wrong dates?

With competition for top positions in most fields growing stronger, applicants are tempted to "fudge" or "fake" a little here and a little there on resumes and cover letters. Recent statistics indicate that more than half of applicants lie on resumes and as many as 70 percent would lie to get a job they want.¹³ On the one hand, they are willing to enhance, inflate, stretch, mask, or exaggerate their education (including degrees they do not have), experiences, skills, job titles, employment dates, salaries and responsibilities on previous jobs, achievements, military decorations, and medals. On the other hand, they may omit or conceal information they perceive to be detrimental to their chances of landing a position. Do your homework. Be skeptical of claims that appear too good to be true, and be suspicious of information that is missing.

Fears of lawsuits are hampering reference checks.

anything negative about an applicant. The most important point of the letter is often not what they say but who is willing to write it. Calling references allows you to ask open questions and to probe into answers for important insights. Unfortunately, many former employers will give you little more than dates when an applicant worked for them, and colleges may offer only dates when a person attended their institutions. Your organization may require you to get permission from applicants before contacting references or letter writers.

Standardized Tests

All tests must be carefully pretested.

Standardized tests have become an integral part of the selection process and may be particularly effective in combination with behavior-based interviews widely used today.¹⁵ Before choosing any test for use in your hiring process, be sure it is job-related or tailored, validated on a cross-section of the population, and nondiscriminatory. If a test appears to screen out one group more than another, do not use it. The EEOC has investigated complaints that some tests “have an adverse impact on black and Latino applicants,” require “a proficiency in English that could discriminate against candidates who are not native speakers,” and violate the Americans with Disabilities Act by requiring pre-employment medical examinations or detecting conditions such as depression and paranoia.¹⁶ There are four common types of tests used in recruiting: aptitude, personality, basic skills, and honesty/integrity.

Aptitude tests identify the abilities of a potential employee and attempt to predict how well and quickly a person is likely to learn tasks required in the position you wish to fill. General aptitude tests are sometimes called IQ or Intelligence tests. One criticism of aptitude tests is that they do not measure the all-important and elusive variable called “common sense.”

Few tests assess common sense.

Personality tests assess people skills along with personality traits and personality types. Perhaps the best known personality test, the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), was created in 1943 and has been perfected by research and by assessing millions of applicants over the years. This test and ones such as the Wilson Analogy Test and the Miller Analogies Test also identify the reasoning and critical thinking skills of applicants.

Basic skills appear to be declining when they are more important than ever.

Basic skills tests measure mathematics, measurement, reading, and spelling skills. These skills are essential when individuals or teams are required to write up problems with machines or groups. Some tests pose problems and require applicants to write five to seven sentences describing the problem. Test monitors use a common formula to check spelling, sentence structure, verb tense, clarity, and readability.

Honesty tests may appear intrusive, but they are here to stay.

Honesty tests are designed to assess the ethics, honesty, integrity, trustworthiness, and dependability of applicants. They are popular because of serious problems all types of organizations encounter with dishonest employees. Be cautious when using such tests. Studies of the American Psychological Association suggest they may identify persons with a *high propensity* for stealing but not those in the *moderate to low* ranges. Others suggest they may rule out large percentages of perfectly honest applicants while eliminating a small number of undesirable applicants.¹⁷ Be sure any test you use has been thoroughly validated on a cross-section of the American population to avoid bias, has a high level of reliability from applicant to applicant, and that it is a valid tool for the position you are trying to fill.

Probing deeply into answers is essential in assessing honesty.

Focus on real or hypothetical work situations.

Probe into social media with caution.

Integrity interviews are face-to-face interactions with the primary purpose of assessing the honesty of potential employees. Truthful applicants tend to acknowledge the probability of employee theft, reply without hesitation, reject the idea of leniency for dishonesty, and expect favorable test results. Interviewers have reported a phenomenon called *outguessing* in which applicants cheerfully admit to unethical activities because they believe they are normal and “everyone does it.” They employ two formats most frequently. The first consists of highly structured interviews that focus on ethics and integrity by delving into previous work experience directly related to the position available. Work-related questions result in applicants having positive feelings toward the integrity interview and the organization. The second is used if previous work experience is unavailable. The interviewer poses situational questions using specific dimensions of ethical and honest behavior. Donna Pawlowski and John Hollwitz have developed a structured situational interview “based on the assumption that intentions predict behaviors.”¹⁸ Interviewers ask interviewees to respond to hypothetical scenarios and employ a 5-point scale with an agreed upon definition of the dimension. Other dimensions are relationship manipulation, interpersonal deception (lying), security violation (giving out trade secrets), and sexual harassment (telling dirty jokes or displaying nude pictures).

Social Media

A large percentage of applicants use blogs and Web sites such as MySpace and Facebook that reveal a great deal of information that has nothing to do with their qualifications for a position with your organization, but it may tell you a great deal about how well they would fit into your organizational culture, including their motivations, work habits, attitudes, and future plans. It is easy to access this information, and some employers routinely ask applicants for their social networking passwords. Be careful. Congress has tried unsuccessfully to pass legislation that would make it illegal for employers to ask for passwords. Some states are now considering their own legislation. Tread lightly. Snooping into Web sites is likely to reveal personal characteristics such as age, race, gender, disabilities, religion, marital status, and sexual orientation that violate EEO laws. Brian Libby suggests that “you ask in advance if the candidate has any online presence they’d like you to check out.”¹⁹

ON THE WEB

Integrity interviews are becoming more common during the selection process as employers attempt to assess the integrity of potential employees in an age when honesty often seems the exception rather than the norm. Many employers and researchers are raising serious questions about the accuracy and value of honesty tests in the employment selection setting. Search

the Internet for discussions of the uses and concerns raised by written and oral honesty tests. These sources should get you started on your search: Infoseek (<http://www.infoseek.com>), PsycInfo (<http://www.psycinfo.com>), The Monster Board (<http://www.monster.com/>), CareerBuilder (<http://www.careerbuilder.com/>), and PsychLit (<http://www.psychlit.com/>).

Conducting the Interview

Having obtained and reviewed extensive information on applicants, you are ready for the interview.

The Atmosphere and Setting

Establish an environment that is conducive to sharing information as well as feelings, attitudes, and motivations. Conduct the recruiting interview in a comfortable, quiet, and private location that eliminates or minimizes noise and interruptions. Choose a seating arrangement that maximizes interpersonal communication. Close doors, and turn off phones, computers, and beepers. If your location does not allow for such privacy, make the best of what you have. The authors have interviewed applicants in hallways, stairways, hotel lobbies, restaurants, bars, and ballrooms during open houses, and park benches at outdoor job fairs.

The atmosphere may make or break an interview.

Treat each interview as your top priority because the lifeblood of your organization depends on these interviews and they are major events in the lives of applicants. Patricia Buhler writes, “The interview is a two-way street. While the interviewer is screening applicants for fit with the organization and position, the applicant is ‘interviewing’ the company for fit as well. The interview, then, should also be viewed as a public relations tool.” She warns that “Bad publicity travels quickly.”²⁰ Applicants do not distinguish you from your organization. Quality applicants are more likely to accept offers if they perceive you to be a good representative of your organization. Be open and honest. This is what you demand of applicants. Give a realistic picture of the position and organization. Practice a **conscious transparency** in which you share information with applicants, explain the purpose of questions, and promote dialogue through a supportive climate.

The Interview Parties

The recruiting interview has traditionally involved two persons, the recruiter and the applicant. A variation of this is the **chain format** in which one recruiter may converse with an applicant for 15 or 20 minutes, perhaps developing a general impression of the applicant’s background, and then passes the applicant along to a second recruiter who probes into specific job skills. A third recruiter may then take over and assess the applicant’s technical knowledge. The chain format is common in “plant” or “on site” and determinate interviews that follow the screening process. A series of interviews may take more than a day, including lunch and dinner with additional members of the organization.

A growing number of organizations use **panels** to interview each applicant. Panel members may represent different areas of the organization or divide an applicant’s credentials with one member asking about education, another asking about work experiences, another about job-related skills, and another about community involvement. A major advantage of the panel is that each member hears the same questions and answers and may bring a variety of expertise and cultural diversity to the table. It reduces the common problem of single interviewers interpreting differently or claiming to have received different answers in their one-on-one contacts.

Employers are experimenting with a variety of formats.

A **seminar** format in which one or more recruiters interview several applicants at the same time, is less common than other interview formats, but it has a number of advantages. It takes less time than single interviews, enables an organization to see several applicants replying and reacting to the same questions at the same time, and may provide valuable insights into how applicants might work with one another as a team. If conducted with skill, applicants will not see the interview as a competition but as an opportunity to build upon others' comments while revealing their qualifications and experiences. If you are looking for leaders this may be the format you want to use.

Involve the applicant in the opening.

Opening the Interview

The opening sets the tone for the interview and creates the all-important first impression of you and your organization.

Building Rapport

Establishing rapport starts with greeting the applicant by name in a warm, friendly manner and with a firm but not crushing handshake. Introduce yourself and your position with the organization, but do not ask the applicant to address you by your first name. Few applicants will feel comfortable doing so at this stage of your relationship. Engage in small talk while avoiding trite questions or comments about the weather or the applicant's travel to the interview. Do not prolong small talk because this may heighten the applicant's anxiety and suspense.

Do not delay the inevitable.

Meaningful rapport building is particularly important in cross-cultural interviews that are becoming ever more common in our global community. Build a relationship "that is based on trust, understanding, and acceptance" from the first moments of the interview, and bear in mind "that speaking the same language does not mean sharing the same culture."²¹

Orientation

Explain how the interview will proceed. It may start with you asking questions, then giving information about the position and organization, and finally encouraging the applicant to ask questions. Make the orientation brief but with enough detail so the applicant will know what to expect and when. You might tell how long the interview will last and the times you will devote to each part. Inform the applicant if you are willing to answer questions at any time during the interview. If this interaction is the first of a series of interviews during an on-site visit or plant trip, provide the applicant with an agenda that explains the who, what, when, and where of the process.

Share control with the applicant.

The Opening Question

Make your **first question** open-ended, easy-to-answer, and on a specific topic with which the applicant is familiar such as education, experiences, or a recent internship. It gets the applicant talking and relaxed and the recruiter listening and observing. Avoid the too common question, "Tell about yourself," that offers no guidelines for answering. Where does the applicant start (grade school, high school, college)? What would you like to hear about (hobbies, experiences, community involvement)? How long do

Begin with an open question, but not too open.

Do not set up the applicant for an early failure.

you want the applicant to talk (a minute, a few minutes, several minutes)? Do not purposely or accidentally ask a question that may put the applicant on the spot and result in a poor answer. The temptation is to place too much weight on this answer and develop a prematurely negative impression of the applicant.

The Body of the Interview

Highly structured interviews are more reliable but less flexible and adaptable.

A growing percentage of organizations are using **structured interviews** in which all primary questions are prepared ahead of time and posed to each applicant. They are more reliable than the old “seat of the pants” or “off the top of the head” formats because carefully designed questions that **fit** a particular job opening and organizational culture avoid stereotyping applicants, biases of recruiters, and questions that violate EEO laws. Recruiters talk less in structured interviews so applicants tend to reveal more in answers and recruiters can concentrate on answers and asking insightful probing questions. Seemingly well-qualified applicants who do not match the organization’s culture and are hired tend to perform poorly and to have a high turnover rate. We recommend a moderately structured interview that gives each party the flexibility necessary for meaningful interactions and a maximum of self-disclosure in a real-life setting.

Behavior-based methods focus on job-related skills.

Some organizations are employing **behavior-based**, highly structured interviews in which all primary and probing questions are prepared ahead of time and asked of each applicant without variation. Interviewers rate each applicant’s responses on behaviorally defined dimensions such as a five-point scale according to the degree to which they exhibit or give information about one or more behaviors: 5 = strongly present and 1 = minimally present.

Rating	Behavior	Question
_____	Initiative	Give me an example of when you have resolved conflicts between employees.
_____	Energy	How many times have you done this?
_____	General intelligence	What was the outcome?
_____	Decisiveness	How did you feel about the results you got?
_____	Adaptability	When faced with intransigence, what did you do?

Build in insightful secondary questions.

In this example, the interviewer listens to the applicant’s answer to the primary question and then proceeds to each pre-planned probing question unless the applicant addresses some of these in an initial answer. While this highly structured approach provides standardization from interview to interview and may avoid stereotypes and EEO violations, it lacks the spontaneity desired in interpersonal interactions in which applicants may volunteer job-related information or demonstrate skills in realistic settings. The interviewer has little freedom to adapt to specific applicants or to ask probing questions not on the prepared list. The result may be fewer important insights into the applicant as a person and potential colleague.

Get the applicant talking as quickly as possible.

Asking Questions

Keep your questions open-ended.

Questions and answers from both parties dominate employment interviews and are critical to the success or failure of every interview. Use open-ended, neutral, and job-related questions to encourage applicants to talk while you listen insightfully, observe, and formulate effective probing questions. Rely on funnel sequences that start with open questions to get interviewees talking, relaxed, and disclosing maximum information.

Be on guard for pitfalls in primary and probing questions.

Common Question Pitfalls

You must create or rephrase questions during interviews when you detect unexpected areas to explore, unusual behaviors, or implied meanings that are unclear. Unfortunately, this spontaneity makes you susceptible to committing common question pitfalls. In addition to question pitfalls discussed in Chapters 3 and 5 (unintentional bipolar, open-to-closed, double barreled, unintentional leading, guessing, yes (no), curious, too high or too low, tell me everything, don't ask, don't tell), there are three particularly relevant to the recruiting interview.

Evaluative responses will lead to safe, superficial answers.

1. *The evaluative response:* The interviewer expresses judgmental feelings about an answer that may bias or skew the next response.

Boy, I'll bet you regret that decision.

That wasn't a good reason to quit a job, was it?

That was a mistake, wasn't it?

2. *The EEO violation:* The interviewer asks an unlawful question.

How often do you attend church?

How does your prosthetic leg hamper you in driving long distances?

What will you do if your husband gets transferred?

Do not ask for information you already have.

3. *The resume or application form question:* The interviewer asks a question that is already answered on the resume or application form.

Where did you get your degree in criminology?

Have you studied abroad?

What internships have you had?

Traditional Questions

The following **traditional recruiter questions** avoid pitfalls and gather important job-related information.

- **Interest in the organization**

Why would you like to work for us?

What have you read about our organization?

What do you know about our products and services?

- **Work-related (general)**

Tell me about the position that has given you the most satisfaction.

How have your previous work experiences prepared you for this position?

What did you do that was innovative in your last position?

- **Work-related (specific)**

Describe a typical strategy you would use to motivate people.

What criteria do you use when assigning work to others?

How do you follow up on work assigned to subordinates?

- **Teams and teamwork**

How do you feel when your compensation is based in part on team results?

What does the word *teamwork* mean to you?

How would you feel about working on cross-functional teams?

- **Education and training**

Tell me about the computer programs you have used.

How has your education prepared you for this position?

If you had your education to do over, what would you do differently?

- **Career paths and goals**

If you join us, what would you like to be doing five years from now?

How do you feel about the way your career has gone so far?

What are you doing to prepare yourself for advancement?

- **Performance**

What do you believe are the most important performance criteria for a project engineer?

All of us have pluses and minuses in our performance. What are some of your pluses (minuses)?

How do you make difficult decisions?

- **Salary and benefits**

What are your salary expectations?

Which fringe benefits are most important to you?

How does our salary range compare to your last position?

- **Career field**

What do you think is the greatest challenge facing your field?

What do you think will be the next major breakthrough in your field?

How do you feel about environmental regulations in your field?

The trend is toward on-the-job questions.

On-the-Job Questions

Recruiters have been developing questions that assess more directly and effectively how applicants might deal with work-related situations. These **on-the-job** question strategies also help to counter impression management tactics applicants are employing such as self-promotion (designed “to evoke attributions of competence”) and ingratiation (designed “to evoke interpersonal liking and attraction”). Both of these tactics have proven to be “positively related to interviewer evaluations.”²²

Behavior-based questions ask applicants about past experiences in which they have had to deal with situations closely related to the position they are seeking.²³

Tell me about an idea of yours that was implemented primarily through your efforts.

How did you manage a past situation when the rules were changed at the last minute?

Tell me about your most difficult relationship with a team member. How did you handle it?

Describe a time when you experienced a setback in a class, in a sport, or on the job. How did you handle it?

Tell me about a situation in which you had to deal with an irate customer or client.

Give me an example of how you sold an unpopular idea to fellow workers.

Behavior-based and critical incident questions assess how applicants would handle real work situations.

In critical incident questions, recruiters select actual incidents that are occurring or have occurred on the job within their organizations and ask applicants how they would have handled such incidents. For instance:

We are experiencing a growing problem of waste in our milling operation. How would you handle this if we hired you?

Last year there was a lot of strife among our sales staff. If you had been with us, what would you have done?

Like many firms, we are experiencing a decline in sales of our traditional products. What would you suggest we do about it?

We have traditionally faced difficulties in recruiting a diverse staff because most of our plants are located in small cities in rural areas of the mid-west. How would you suggest we improve our recruiting efforts? . . .

Hypothetical questions are most useful when they portray situations applicants have not directly encountered and, therefore, have not prepared answers in advance. Recruiters create highly realistic situations and ask applicants how they would manage each.

Suppose you are suspicious that some workers are doctoring their time cards. What would you do?

If your company suddenly announced the closing of your facility by January 1, what would you do?

If a female employee came to you claiming sexual harassment, how would you handle it?

A case approach is the most realistic on-the-job question format.

In a case approach, an applicant enters into a carefully crafted job-related situation that may take from minutes to hours to resolve. This situation may involve the use of personnel, a working relationship, a production or management problem, a safety issue, or recurring customer complaints. Some employers create elaborate simulations that may require role playing and involve several people, including more than one applicant.

All on-the-job questions are based on the belief that the best way to determine how an applicant may perform a job with your organization is to observe the applicant addressing or performing realistic job-related tasks. Many applicants who can talk about

Probing questions produce insights.

theories, principles, and practices may be unable to apply them in real-life situations. Be careful of applicants who can tell good stories in realistic and likeable manners. Dig beneath the surface of what may be a carefully planned and rehearsed fictional narrative. For example, when recruiters asked MBAs to relate a time when they faced a challenging situation, six provided identical answers about serving on a fund-raising committee. Unfortunately, none of the six had ever served on a fund-raising committee. They provided answers they thought recruiters wanted to hear.²⁴ **Remember, there are always two applicants in every interview, the real and the make-believe.** Much of what you are observing and hearing may be a meticulously crafted façade. Whether asking traditional or on-the-job questions, rely on probing questions to determine what is genuine and what is make-believe, and to unearth specifics, knowledge, expertise, feelings, motivations, attitudes, and preferences.

Probe for honest answers.

Remember an additional factor when asking on-the-job questions. Experienced applicants have a wealth of examples from which to draw, while soon-to-be college graduates and those with little experience have few. Try to provide a level playing field when you are interested in a variety of levels of experience.

Avoid becoming a cheerleader, as many of our student interviewers tend to do, by saying “Great!” “Very good” or “Awesome!” after every answer. Applicants will come to expect the praise and become concerned if it stops. Maintain a pleasant, supportive poker face that never reveals whether you believe an answer is very good, negative, or outrageous.

Giving Information

Information is the primary interest of applicants.

Providing information during the interview is a major determinant of applicant satisfaction. Before you begin to give information, however, ask two important transition questions: “*What do you know about this position?*” and “*What do you know about our organization?*” Answers to these questions reveal, first, how much homework the applicant has done and the applicant’s level of interest and work ethic. Second, they tell you what the applicant already knows about the position and organization so you can begin where the person’s knowledge leaves off. This prevents you from giving information the applicant already has.

Minimize “you” in the interview.

Give information to facilitate the **matching process** between the organization and the applicant. Information about your organization’s reputation, organizational culture, the position, typical work day, and advancement opportunities are important factors in acceptance of job offers. You may compare your organization to your competitors’, but do not be negative.

Rule #1: Keep your ears open and your mouth shut.

Sell the advantages of your position and organization. Avoid exaggerating, intentionally hiding negative aspects of the position or organization, or inflating applicant expectations. These practices result in high rates of employee dissatisfaction and turnover. Avoid gossip. Do not talk too much about yourself. While you want to inform applicants thoroughly, your information giving must not dominate the interview. You will learn more about the applicant by listening than by talking. Review the guidelines for information giving in Chapter 12 and follow these suggestions.

- Practice good communication skills because applicants may judge the “authenticity” of information by how it is communicated verbally and nonverbally.

- Encourage applicants to ask questions about information you are giving so you know it is being communicated accurately and effectively.
- Do not overload applicants with information.
- Organize your information systematically.

Closing the Interview

The closing must sustain the positive tone of the interview.

When you are conducting **screening interviews** at job fairs, conferences, campus career centers, or on site, you are on a fishing expedition to determine the quality of applicants and which interviewees stand above all others. This will help you to determine whether you need to continue seeking quality applicants. Your closing of a screening interview may be similar to the following.

Michelle, I've enjoyed talking with you this afternoon (pause to let the applicant talk). We are visiting several campuses along the Atlantic coast to interview for positions at several Darby Electronics facilities. Within the next few weeks, we will invite a number of candidates to our home offices in Baltimore. We will inform you of our decisions within the next ten days. Do you have any final questions for me? (pause to let the applicant talk). If you need to contact me or have any questions, my phone numbers and e-mail address is on this card. Have a good week.

Do not discourage or encourage applicants needlessly.

When you are conducting a **determinate interview** as a follow-up to the screening process, do not indicate this decision during the interview. Be honest and candid with applicants by not signaling the impression, perhaps erroneously, that each is high on your list.

Watch what you do, say, and ask following the formal closing as you walk the applicant to the door, elevator, or parking area or escort the applicant to meet another member of your organization. These informal times may also lead to EEO violations by chatting about families, outside interests, and activities. Avoid anything that may adversely affect the relationship you have developed so carefully during the interview.

Follow up on all prospects. You or a representative of your organization should phrase and sign all letters to give them a personal touch. If you have decided to reject an applicant, do not string the person along needlessly or give the person false hope. Let the applicant down gently, but do not try to give explanations for your decision that only raise questions and invite counter-arguments. Strive to maintain positive feelings toward your organization by communicating that you gave each applicant a fair and equal chance of being selected. Sometime in the future you may want to recruit this person again.

Evaluating the Interview

Take minimal notes during the interview to maintain the conversational nature of the interaction. Review your notes and thoughts as soon as possible after the interview closes. Try to build in time between each interview for review while the interview is still fresh in your mind. If you have a written interview schedule of primary and probing questions, leave space between questions so you can write your reactions under each.

Figure 7.1 Interview Evaluation Report

Candidate Evaluation Report

Interviewer _____

Date _____

Candidate _____

Position _____

Rating Scale: 5 = Exceptional, 4 = Above Average, 3 = Average, 2 = Below Average, 1 = Unsatisfactory

Education/Training	5	4	3	2	1
Comments:					
Work Experiences	5	4	3	2	1
Comments:					
Interpersonal Skills	5	4	3	2	1
Comments:					
Technical Skills	5	4	3	2	1
Comments:					
Motivation/Initiative	5	4	3	2	1
Comments:					
Working with Others/Teams	5	4	3	2	1
Comments:					
Knowledge of the Company	5	4	3	2	1
Comments:					
Interest in the Company	5	4	3	2	1
Comments:					

Record your impressions and reactions immediately.

Some organizations develop review/evaluation forms that list major questions or criteria for each position and may include a rating scale. These sheets enable you to record your thoughts and impressions quickly so you can move to the next interview or task on your to-do list. These pre-planned forms help to ensure that different interviewers will rate and perhaps rank each applicant consistent with bona fide occupational qualifications for each position. See Figure 7.1 for a sample rating form.

The following are open-ended questions you might address in your postinterview evaluation:

- What are the applicant’s strengths for this position?
- What are the applicant’s weaknesses for this position?
- How does this applicant compare with other applicants for this position?
- What makes this applicant a good or poor fit for this position?
- What makes this applicant a good or poor fit with our organization?

Assess the performance of both interview parties.

Use the evaluation stage to assess your interviewing skills and performance. How successful were you at creating an informal and relaxed atmosphere that encouraged the applicant to speak openly and freely? How effectively did you listen and observe and then probe insightfully into answers? How well did you provide information on the position and organization not readily available to the applicant in other sources? Did you reserve adequate time for the applicant to ask questions, and how effectively did you respond to these questions? How successful were you at closing the interview positively and leaving a good impression of the process and organization?

Summary

The recruiting interview can be an effective means of selecting employees, but it takes thorough preparation that includes knowledge of state and federal EEO laws, an applicant profile, review of information on applicants, and development of a carefully structured interview. Preparation must be followed by a professional interview that includes an effective opening, skillful questioning, probing into answers, thorough information giving, honest and detailed answers to questions, and an effective closing. Practice communication skills that include language selection, nonverbal communication (silence, voice, eye contact, facial expressions, posture, and gestures), listening, and empathy.

When the interview is concluded, conduct evaluations of the applicant and yourself. The first focuses on the applicant’s suitability and fit and the second on your effectiveness as recruiter and evaluator.

Key Terms and Concepts

Basic skills tests	Career fairs	Honesty tests
Behavior-based selection	Chain format	Integrity interviews
Birds of a feather syndrome	Competency-based applicant profile	Interview evaluation
Board interview	Conscious transparency	Job fairs
Bona fide occupational qualification (BFOQ)	Cover letters	Matching process
	Critical incident questions	Scanning software
	EEO laws	Talent-based selection
		Trait-based selection

Recruiting Role-Playing Cases

Aircraft Maintenance Supervisor

You are one of three chief aircraft maintenance supervisors for a major airline conducting screening interviews at a career fair in Chicago. You are seeking to fill two aircraft maintenance supervisor positions for your national maintenance facility in Denver. Your specific targets are recent graduates of maintenance programs in schools of technology at major universities and military personnel with experience in maintaining aircraft like or similar to those

used by your airline. Hands-on experience with aircraft and previous supervisory experience are essential.

A Sales Position

Your home improvement firm is seeking salespersons to call on homeowners who have expressed an interest in purchasing new doors, windows, or siding when responding to cold calls from a calling center. The positions require experience in sales, good interpersonal skills, and knowledge of building materials and remodeling methods and problems. Although your firm handles two well-known manufacturers of doors, windows, and siding, candidates must have the ability to become thoroughly familiar with several manufacturers to respond adequately to customers' questions and concerns. A bachelor's degree or two-year degree in building construction technology is preferred, but highly experienced candidates will be considered.

A Sportscaster

You are the new owner-manager of radio station WPRZ in a city of 75,000 people. The station has changed owners a number of times during the past 15 years, and a new format has come with each new owner: classic rock, syndicated talk shows, a mixture of everything, and most recently country and western. You want to maintain the current format (country and western) because you feel that it fits the community best, but you also want to hire a sportscaster who would focus on local college and high school teams and begin some live broadcasting for football and basketball games. You want to hire a first-rate, on-air sportscaster who can establish good relations with the community, the college, and the schools in the city and county. You face two problems: you have limited funds for salary and benefits and many applicants will see your city and station as "out in the sticks."

Student Activities

1. Many recruiters believe that incentive is critical to a good hire. Contact your campus career center and ask permission to pose two questions to a dozen recruiters: What questions do you ask that pertain to incentive? How do you assess incentive from applicant credentials, applicant answers, and applicant questions?
2. Contact a number of recruiters from different career fields and ask them to discuss the pluses and minuses of hiring recent college graduates. Probe for specifics and illustrations (without names). What changes have they seen in recent college graduates during the past 10 years?
3. Contact a number of recruiters to see how many employ a behavior-, trait-, or talent-based approach to recruiting new employees. If they do not use or have abandoned one of these approaches, what are their reasons for doing so? What differences can you detect among the three approaches? How do recruiters using one or more of these approaches detect dishonest answers?
4. Do a Web-based search of sources on EEO laws and regulations and the recommendations these sources make to recruiters to ask lawful questions and to applicants for

recognizing and replying to unlawful questions. What changes have affected employment interviews during the past five years? What are the most controversial and often violated EEO laws and regulations? Which state laws tend to be more stringent than federal laws?

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The position you are seeking is out there, but competition is stiff and employers are picky. There are no simple formulas, magic acts, or shortcuts to locate and land your dream job, only hard work. Approach each search systematically and analytically.

The objectives of this chapter are to take you through a series of stages in the search process. Start by analyzing yourself and proceed to doing research, conducting the search, preparing credentials, creating a favorable first impression, answering questions, asking questions, closing the interview, evaluating the interview, and dealing with rejection. Begin with a systematic self-analysis.

Analyzing Yourself

You cannot
sell you if you
don't know
you.

The only way you can decide which career, position, and organization is the best **fit** for you is to **know yourself**. Recruiters want to discover who **you** are, what **you** have done and are interested in doing, and if **you** are a good **fit** for a specific position and their organizational needs, plans, and culture. In essence, you are taking part in a **sales interview**, and the **product** is **you**.

Questions to Guide Your Self-Analysis

Analyzing yourself may be painful, but you need to probe deeply and honestly into your strengths and weaknesses, successes and failures, likes and dislikes. Your future depends on it. Replying to the following checklist of questions and traits is an essential first step in your career search.¹

- What are my *personality* traits?
 - ☐ Motivated
 - ☐ Open-minded
 - ☐ Adaptive
 - ☐ Flexible
 - ☐ Willing to take risks
 - ☐ Assertive
 - ☐ Able to work under pressure
 - ☐ Open to criticism
- How *trustworthy* am I?
 - ☐ Honest
 - ☐ Reliable
 - ☐ Tolerant
 - ☐ Sincere

Why and how
have you made
past decisions?

- What are my *professional* interests?

___ Short-range goals	___ Growth
___ Long-range goals	___ National/international recognition
___ Advancement	
- Do I have a *mature and realistic perception* of my field?

___ History	___ Developments
___ Trends	___ Areas of specialization
___ Challenges	___ Current problems
___ Future problems	___ Essential education/training
___ Essential experiences	___ Employment opportunities

When you complete your self-analysis, you will have a keener insight into who you are, what you would like to do in a career, what you are qualified to do, what sets you apart from other applicants, and what you want and need in life.

Doing Research

Research the **fields** in which you have both interests and qualifications, **positions** available, **organizations** that appear to be a good fit, and relevant **current events**. Most questions recruiters ask will focus on these four areas. Thorough research will set you apart from a great many applicants.

Research Your Field

Knowing your
field is essential
for selecting
organizations
and scheduling
interviews.

Discover everything you can about the past, present, and future of your field. Develop a mature and informed understanding of what everyday life and typical workdays are like in this field. Take advantage of internships, cooperatives, part-time positions, observational visits, shadowing members of the profession, and volunteer activities to discover what a field is all about. Published and Internet resources on every major career field from acting and advertising to visual arts and writing, are highly informative. These include:

Careers.org

CareerOne-Stop

Campus Explorer

AOL. Jobs

Peterson's Job Opportunities

Occupational Outlook Handbook

WetFeet.com

Vault.com

Research enables you to answer and ask questions insightfully.

Recruiters expect you to know why you are interested in a particular career field, to have positive attitudes toward this field, to know what you expect in a career in this field, and to be aware of career opportunities and limitations of careers in this field. They also expect you to be acquainted with organizational life.

Research the Position

How closely do you match this position?

Learn everything you can about *each* position. Check the job description word by word to see how well you *match* or *fit* the requirements specified: education and training, experiences, skills, responsibilities, travel involved, location, and starting date. You need not be perfect but you must be close enough for the recruiter to consider you seriously. If the description lists three-to-five years of experience and you have a little over one year of outstanding experience, give it a go. If you have a degree in building construction technology and the description for a construction engineering manager specifies a degree in civil engineering, check it out. On the other hand, if the description specifies a degree and experience in social work while your degree is in English and your experience is limited to editing manuscripts for a publisher, do not waste the recruiter's time or yours. If you have no intention of moving from Michigan and the position is in Boston, check it off your list. Try to imagine yourself doing this job. A thorough understanding of the position prepares you to answer questions effectively and ask meaningful questions.

Research enables you to answer key questions effectively.

Research the Organization

Learn everything you can about each organization to which you apply. A poor answer to a question such as "Tell me what you know about us" can ruin your chances of being considered further. Knowing too little about their organizations is a major turnoff for recruiters because it is easy to become informed if you are really interested. Nearly every organization has a Web site. For example, if you learned of a position at Wabash National Corporation, a leading manufacturer of semi-trailers, that sounds relevant to your career interests, a few clicks on its Web site will provide information "about us," including careers, investors, history, vision, mission, values, products, locations, news and events, and number of "associates."

Other sources provide insights not available on organizational Web pages designed to impress readers. Topics include downsizing plans, moving facilities to other locations in the United States or out of the country, potential mergers, financial status, reputation in the field, recent setbacks, and culture. Talk to current and former employees, clients, professors, friends, and relatives. Check the Internet, newspaper articles, discussions in trade journals, and your local or campus library. Resources include *American Business Disc*, *Dun's Electronic Business Directory*, *Hoovers: Your Fastest Path to Business Information*, *Standard and Poor's Corporate Records*, and *Thomas Register of American Manufacturers*.

Research the Recruiter

When possible, get to know the interviewer ahead of time.

If it is possible to identify the recruiter ahead of time, talk to friends, associates, professors, career center personnel, members of the interviewer's organization, and check social media such as LinkedIn, Twitter, and Facebook for a wealth of personal and professional information. Discover the interviewer's position, professional background, organizations to which the interviewer belongs, personality, and interviewing characteristics. An interviewer may have a dry sense of humor, come from a different culture, or be "all business." It helps to know the person you will interact with prior to the interview. If the person is all business, avoid small talk, lengthy answers, and attempts at humor.

Research Current Events

Keep abreast of what is happening in the world and in your field.

Keep up-to-date with what is going on in the world. *Time*, *BusinessWeek*, *Fortune*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and online news sources are excellent for current developments. Mature applicants are informed about what is going on around them and in the world—local, state, national, international—and have formed intelligent, rational positions on important issues.

Be informed about current trends, changes, developments, research, and mergers that are affecting the organization to which you are applying, your field, and your career path. If you are interested in a position as a high school music teacher, you need to be aware of educational "reforms" taking place in many states and state budget problems that are resulting in "downsizing" music programs. If you are interviewing in the pharmaceutical field, be aware of new products, promising research, and controversies concerning old and new drugs and cost to consumers. If you are interested in working in another country such as China or India, become aware of the country's relations with the United States, cultural differences, cost of living, and policies affecting noncitizen workers.

Research the Interview Process

Rely on no single source about employment interviews.

Discover everything you can about what takes place during employment interviews to avoid or minimize mistakes and surprises. Review Chapter 7 on the recruiting interview, talk to peers in your field who have been through the process recently and professors who are actively involved in interviewing. Keep abreast of what is taking place in your field. The Internet provides a wealth of information and insights into all aspects of the interviewing process and answers to questions such as "What's the most important thing I can do to prepare for an interview?" "How important is appearance?" "What kinds of questions do recruiters ask?" "What do recruiters look for in answers?" "What types of information do recruiters provide about their organizations and the openings they have?" "What kinds of questions should I ask?" "How are plant trip interviews different from screening interviews?" Be prepared to receive a variety of answers to your questions because recruiters, even from the same organization, have different preferences on almost every aspect of the search process. Get second and third opinions and determine what is best for you and your field.

Students have often asked us why we do not bring a recruiter to class “to show how it’s done.” Our standard answer has been that we would need to fill up the entire room with recruiters to show how **it’s** done. Be suspicious of sources that claim to have simple formulas for success or the “winning answers” to frequently asked questions. Some recruiters employ behavior-based or trait-based interviews, and some do not. Some employ highly structured or moderately structured interviews, and some do not use either. Some probe extensively into answers, and others do not. Some provide extensive information on the organization and position, and some do not. Some will give you several minutes to ask questions, and some will not. Your goal is to be ready for whatever happens in each interview.

Integrity is essential for all positions.

A consistent concern of recruiters is the **honesty** of applicants. A highly educated, trained, and skilled employee without honesty, morals, and sincerity will quickly become a liability to the organization. A recruiter may ask you to take a written and/or oral honesty test designed to determine degrees of honesty, conduct an **integrity interview**, or incorporate questions into the interview to assess honesty. Be honest in all of your preinterview materials (application form, cover letter, résumé) and in every answer during an interview. Any hint of dishonesty or evasiveness will result in rejection.

Expect the unexpected.

Your research into the interview process may produce surprising results. For example, recent studies reveal that 50 percent of “speech acts” in sample interviews were declarative statements rather than questions and answers. Most interviewers have no training in interviewing. In a study of 49 interviews, 10 interviewers did not give applicants opportunities to ask questions. Recruiters are increasingly viewing the interview as a *work sample* and look for relevant job behaviors from applicants: can you do the job, will you do the job, and how well will you *fit* into the organization? A shocking result of recent studies is that there is not a shortage of jobs in the United States but a shortage of qualified applicants.²

Conducting the Search

Start the search process by using every source available to locate positions that match your interests and qualifications.

Networking

Leave no potential source off your network tree.

Surveys report that 40 to 80 percent of job seekers land their positions by **networking**.³ So, how do you go about networking? Start by building a **networking tree**. Sources you know well, including relatives, friends, co-workers, neighbors, professors, and former employers, are the major limbs. Acquaintances from fitness centers, college, a branch of the military, church, and social or professional organizations are the smaller limbs. People you do not know personally such as friends or associates of your personal contacts, a former roommate’s spouse or parent, a physician’s neighbor, or a friend’s employer or supervisor are the branches. Social media such as LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter enable you to create and post profiles. Keep your network apprized of the status of your search, reconnect with people from your past, reach out to strangers who may be of assistance, and become visible to potential employers. You can place professional

Keep your network complete and up-to-date.

headlines such as “money consultant” or “online teacher” on LinkedIn or take part in career field chat rooms on twitter to keep up-to-date, make contacts, and broadcast your areas of expertise. Make note of each contact’s telephone numbers, mailing address, and e-mail address.

When your tree is well-developed, contact each source personally and explain your situation by focusing on your career goals and the type or types of positions you are seeking. Be specific. Telling a person you are looking for a position in marketing or construction management is of little help. If a contact in your network has no leads for you, ask for names who might know of relevant opportunities. As your search progresses, add persons to your network tree while pruning those who have not provided assistance or contacts. When you get a lead, write down the lead’s full name, position, organization, and telephone numbers under the contact’s name so you know who suggested the lead and ask if you can use the contact’s name. The *who* may be a major factor in a lead’s interest in helping you.

Use and maintain your network. Ask for advice on preparing your credentials, how best to contact sources, important information about sources, and how these sources might help. Seek input on constructing and modifying your résumés and cover letters. And inquire about how to prepare for interviews in your field. Keep in touch with your contacts. Let them know what you are doing, interviews you will have and have had, and progress you are making. Prepare them for contacts they may be getting from potential employers. Inform your network when you receive an offer, reject an offer, or accept an offer. Always send thank you notes for any assistance you receive.

Web Sites, Classified Ads, and Newsletters

Overlook no source.

Every organization has a Web site, and each is likely to include a section on careers and positions they wish to fill. Identify organizations for which you would like to work to see if you are a good fit. Check classified ads in local, regional, and national newspapers. These ads attract candidates and satisfy the EEOC test of making openings known to all who might be interested and qualified. Join professional organizations to show you are a professional and to keep abreast of what is happening in your field. Take advantage of newsletters organizations send out in print and online. Some have job listings in your field.

ON THE WEB

Select a position you will be interested in when you complete your education or training. Search at least three Internet resources to discover the availability of such positions, geographical areas in which they are located, organizations that are seeking to fill them, and the nature of the positions being offered. Check

resources such as Job Hunt (<http://www.job-hunt.org>), CareerBuilder Center (<http://www.careerbuilder.com>), MonsterTrak (<http://www.monstertrak.com>). After collecting this information, develop a list of interview questions to which you would need answers before making a decision to accept one of these positions.

Career Centers and Employment Agencies

Your campus center is a goldmine.

Colleges and universities operate centers for career opportunities that are available to its students and alumni. Use your center to determine which careers are best suited to your interests, education, and experiences and review its wealth of materials about organizations and guidelines for doing online research. Counselors can help you develop résumés appropriate for your career interests and qualifications and assist you in writing effective cover letters. Your center can provide contacts for interviews, many of which will take place on your campus to eliminate travel expenses and time. If you are an alumnus interested in changing positions or careers, trained counselors can help you determine future directions.

Employment or placement agencies, sometimes referred to as head hunters, can help you locate positions and arrange interviews. Some agencies specialize in career fields such as health care, teaching, management, communication, engineering, and government positions. When you sign up with an agency, it “becomes your advocate and ‘represents you’—a relationship that starts whenever you apply for a job through” it and by “listing and submitting your résumé.”⁴ An employment agency may perform tasks similar to those provided in college career centers.

If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.

Percentage agencies will help place you for a fee, often a percentage of your first year’s salary, payable upon assuming a position they helped you obtain. Most agencies advertize **fee-paid positions**, which means that an organization has retained them on a fee basis to locate quality applicants. You pay nothing. If you use a percentage agency, expect to pay a registration fee to process your credentials. Most agencies are ethical, but use reasoned skepticism. If they want a great deal of money in advance to process your résumé or make claims of placing nearly all of their applicants in highpaying positions, go elsewhere. Beware of agencies that want to produce expensive videotapes and other expensive credentials.

Know how to make the most of job fairs.

The Career/Job Fair

Attend career or job fairs held on your campus, local malls, or civic centers because they bring a variety of employers to one convenient location. If there are no job fairs in your area, Web sites will help you locate ones around the country, including virtual job fairs you can attend online. Fairs give you opportunities to network, meet representatives personally, and have face-to-face interviews. Some fairs are specialized according to industry (aircraft, construction, electronics), field of study (engineering, agriculture, liberal arts, medicine), government agency (FBI, Homeland Security, foreign service, transportation), or specific groups (veterans, disabled, recently laid off due to plant closings). Be prepared for professional encounters by knowing your strong points, career goals, where you would like to be in five years, what you are looking for in a position, and who you would like to talk to. Dress professionally if you expect to have interviews or in your better student attire if merely browsing. Be attractive and neat. Always have copies of your résumé(s) with you.

Scout the terrain when you arrive to see who is there and with whom you most want to interact. Are representatives setting up interviews as well as handing out information and answering questions? Gather printed materials, listen, and observe interactions



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■ Use the Internet to research positions and organizations.

as you walk about or wait your turn to talk to a representative. For which positions are you most qualified? Does an organization have positions open or is it attending for public relations purposes and future openings?

When you come face-to-face with a representative who may also be a recruiter, be aware that this person is sizing you up just as you are sizing up the organization and its representative. Appearance, friendliness, communication skills, and professionalism are top priority for both parties. Stay calm but also show enthusiasm and assertiveness. The worst question you can ask is, “What are you hiring for?” and the worst answer you can give to a counter-question such as “What are **you** looking for?” is “A job.” This may seem cute, but it is an immediate turnoff.

Knocking on Doors

No single
résumé is
suitable for
all positions.

Knocking on
doors works.

Do not hesitate to knock on doors. Organizations are always on the lookout for talent but may not have a specific position open at the moment. When a door opens, state clearly the nature of the position you are seeking and how you are uniquely qualified and capable of contributing immediately to this organization’s needs, plans, products, or services. It may be unable to offer you a position at this time, but it might keep you in mind for when it can. The person you are talking to may identify openings in your field or recommend you to a friend. This person becomes part of your network. Be persistent. Nearly every employer has a story about a person who kept coming to the office time after time until finally the employer, impressed with the person’s persistence and qualifications, created an opening to use this person’s tenacity and abilities.

Presenting Yourself to the Employer

At this stage, your search becomes proactive as you start contacting potential employers as the next step toward face-to-face or electronic interviews. This involves **personal branding** through social media, preparing résumés, developing

portfolios, and writing cover letters that are carefully aligned with the employer's needs and desires.

Branding

Your brand is uniquely you.

Since you are the product you are selling, you need to create a **brand** that emphasizes your talents, expertise, experiences, and education and sets you apart from the hundreds of other applicants who are seeking similar positions. What makes you special? Express and demonstrate your passion for your career, dwell on your strengths, and identify your long and short range goals clearly and effectively.

Recruiters do online searches.

The use of social media has become an integral part of the search process because they enable you to advertise your brand so employers can find you. Barbara Stefani, owner of Career Savers, writes that “over 90 percent of recruiters perform Internet searches on candidates before making a hiring decision, and over half of employers solidify their decision to hire based on a strong online presence.”⁵ Sources on branding encourage applicants to expand and enhance their online visibilities by creating their own Web site, having a blog, using video promotion, posting social media updates, and taking part in online conversations pertinent to their fields and career interests. Share your thoughts on trends and news by answering questions, responding to postings, and writing your own postings. Professional use of social media such as LinkedIn, twitter, facebook, and pinterest demonstrate your social media capabilities to potential employers.

Be aware, however, that employers may also be accessing all of your social media including those in which you are acting goofy, drinking excessively at parties, posing in sexually explicit manner, using profanity, and bragging about sexual exploits. Make some of your media accounts for “friends only” so they remain as private as possible. Employers are concerned about how you might fit into their organizational culture, perform maturely during interactions, and present a positive image of the organization within the community.

Résumés

Preparing the perfect résumé gets so much attention in print and on the Internet that you may believe the résumé is the *magic bullet* that will launch or further your career. The résumé's *only purpose* is to obtain an interview that may lead to more interviews and eventually to a position in your field. Notice that the *perfect résumé* is singular, but you are less likely to land a job if you produce only one version of your résumé. Experts on résumés agree that you must *customize* your résumé to meet the specific words of the job announcement and the needs of the employer.

Your résumé is your *silent sales representative* and is often the first opportunity a prospective employer has to *see* you. Most recruiters will spend only seconds scanning the résumé you send them, so it must gain and sustain a positive impression, one that will motivate them to read further. Think like the recruiter. If your résumé was sent to you, would you read further and consider inviting you for an interview?

Segments of Résumés

Make it
easy for
interviewers
to locate you.

There is no shortage of Web sites and publications that claim to offer “award-winning résumés” or “the perfect résumé.” Richard Bolles, author of the famous book entitled *What Color Is Your Parachute?*, updated annually, claims he collects such résumés and shows them to his employer friends. Inevitably they declare that each award-winning and perfect résumé would never get a job for anyone.⁶ With such diverse preferences in mind, we will offer guidelines that fit most hiring situations while emphasizing the necessity of developing **targeted résumés** for specific openings at specific organizations.

Target your
résumés.

Contact Information: Place your *full name* at the top center of the page in larger font than the remainder of the résumé and in bold print. Avoid nicknames. Provide one or two mailing addresses with ZIP codes and the e-mail address you access most often. Provide a landline telephone number and a cell phone number with area codes. Make it easy for a recruiter to reach you quickly. Do not place silly, immature material on your answering machine. If you provide a campus telephone number, place a date when it may no longer be operable. List a business telephone number only if it is appropriate for prospective employers to use.

Make your
career focus
other-directed.

Since recruiters typically spend only seconds scanning your résumé, stating your career objective (sometimes referred to as your profile, professional background, or simply as objective) is an ideal place to catch and maintain the recruiter’s attention. Employ the branding you have refined and focus your objective on what the **employer wants**, not what you want. Make it other-directed rather than self-directed. Make your objective brief with key words included in the announcements for this position.

Eliminate
puffery from
your résumé.

Avoid “puffery,” words that sound impressive and mean nothing and clichés such as “I’m a team player,” “I have great communication skills,” “I’m a problem solver,” “I am highly motivated,” and “I give 110 percent.”⁷ Puffery and clichés will send your résumé to the rejection pile. The remainder of your résumé must live up to your claims and branding in your career focus.

Your
educational
record is most
important for
your first
position.

Education and Training: If you are in the process of completing your education and training or recently did so and your work experiences are minimal or unrelated to the position, your educational record should come next. Indicate specifically how your education and training are *a fit* for the position you are seeking in this organization. List your degrees or training **in reverse chronological order** so the employer can detect quickly what you are *doing now* or recently completed. List degree, diploma, certificate or license, date of graduation or completion, school, location of the school if it shares the same name with others (such as Loyola University in Chicago, Baltimore, and New Orleans and Indiana University in Indiana and Pennsylvania) or has multiple campuses. If you are short on experiences, provide a **selective** list of courses that are **relevant** to the opening. Do not use abbreviations for courses, majors, or degrees because a recruiter may not know if Eng. refers to English or engineering. List your grade point average (GPA) if it is a B or better, and indicate the numerical system used at your college, for example: 3.35 (4.0 scale) or 3.35/4.0.

Relevant
experiences
can set you
apart from
the crowd.

Emphasize
your job-related
experiences.

Job-Related Experiences: The next résumé segment presents your experiences relevant to this position with this organization. If you are young and just completing your education and training, you may have had limited work or salaried positions in your field, but you should have relevant experiences you can showcase. These may be co-op programs through your university, internships (paid and unpaid), research or teaching assistantships, and volunteer activities. If for instance you are seeking a position in building construction, having experience in building a Habitat for Humanity home or a program to rehabilitate homes for the poor and elderly can be impressive. Recruiters tend to rate leadership roles in student organizations and volunteer community service as very important or above average in importance. Show you are a **doer** by highlighting such leadership roles in your résumé.

Recruiters look
for leaders.

Activities: The next section after experiences, lists activities and organizational memberships, including college, professional, and community activities and groups. Be selective and continually update your résumés. High school activities are excluded for college graduates, and college organizations and activities are excluded once you have an established record in your career. Employers are interested in *doers* rather than *joiners*, so a long list of organizations minus leadership roles may give a negative impression. Include honorary organizations, professional, and pre-professional organizations in your field (such as the Public Relations Student Society of America). Provide brief descriptions of any organization likely be unfamiliar to an employer.

Provide only
relevant
information.

Volunteer Experiences: If you have significant volunteer experiences that may not be directly related to a position but reveal important information about you, list them as a segment in your résumé. Employers are becoming increasingly interested in applicants who have shown interest in community involvement and are likely to become involved in their communities if hired.

Do not list references because employers know you will provide references if needed. Exclude personal information (ethnicity, age, marital status, parental status, health or disabilities, height, and weight), a photo, and political, religious, and ethnic memberships and activities that may pose EEOC problems for employers. You do not break laws if you do so, but you are providing information that is not a bona fide occupational qualification (BFOQ).

Types of Résumés

There are basically two types of résumés, chronological and functional. If you are developing a **chronological format**, the most common résumé, list your experiences (including internships, co-op arrangements, assistantships, unpaid positions, organizational activities) in *reverse* chronological order so the employer can see quickly what you have done most recently. See Figure 8.1 for a sample chronological résumé. List organization, title of your position or positions, dates, and what you did in each position. Emphasize the skills and experiences most relevant for this opening. Recruiters are most interested in applicant achievements and accomplishments. A chronological résumé is easy to write and organize, emphasizes relevant experiences and skills, and is easy for employers to scan quickly.

Figure 8.1 *Chronological résumé***Nancy A. McWilliams**

1214 Oak Drive,
Decatur, IL 62521
(217)226-3499/(317)413-2679
namcwilliams@hotmail.com

- Objective:** A position as a family case manager with a child services agency that allows me to work with families and children in need of services.
- Education:** **University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign**
(August, 2013 to present)
Bachelor of Social Work
Minor in Psychology
GPA: 3.17/4.0 overall and 3.4/4.0 in major
- Experience:** Court-Appointed Special Advocate for children (CASA)
September 2015 to present
Champaign County, Illinois
- Acted as Educational Surrogate Parent for four children.
 - Worked with DCS Family Case Managers.
 - Counseled parents on following court orders.
 - Worked with Children in Need of Services (CHINS).
 - Consulted with school and psychological counselors.
 - Wrote reports for Juvenile Court hearings.
- Volunteer at the Crisis Center for Women
June 2014 to August 2015
Urbana, Illinois
- Registered women who came to the shelter.
 - Coordinated play activities for the children.
 - Assisted in maintaining security from 8:00 p.m. to 12:00 a.m.
- Horse Therapist at Bar Q Ranch
Summers of 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014
Paris, Illinois
- Worked as horse therapist for special needs children.
 - Conducted orientation sessions to inform and relax the children.
 - Guided the children in riding activities.
- Activities:** Vice-President and President of the Bachelor of Social Work Student Association 2015 to present
- Planned activities.
 - Conducted monthly meetings.
 - Coordinated the annual fundraiser.

If you are developing a **functional format**, most appropriate for creative positions and those in which writing is important, place your experiences under headings that highlight your qualifications for the position (see Figure 8.2). Typical headings are management, sales, advertising, training, counseling, team building, organizational development, recruiting, finance, teaching, administration, supervision, project manager, and marketing. Include a variety of experiences from different positions, internships, and organizations under each heading. This is important when you have had few paying positions or ones directly related to the opening. Your outside activities indicate motivation, communication skills, ability to work with people, work ethic, ability to lead, and that you are not a narrow specialist.

Select the résumé format best suited to you.

A functional format focuses attention on relevant skills to match the ideal applicant profile. It does not repeat the same skills and experiences under different positions, so it can be tighter and shorter. Some employers do not like functional résumés because they often do not identify dates for education, training, and work experiences, so they cannot detect gaps in employment.

You are not confined to chronological and functional résumé formats. If neither seems ideal for you, consider blending the two so the end result presents a clearer and more effective picture of you to potential employers.

Guidelines for Résumés

Pay attention to content and appearance.

Regardless of the résumé type you select, follow these guidelines to make them precise, informative, and persuasive.

Dishonesty is a candidate killer.

Honesty Is the Best Policy: A conservative estimate is that one in six college students lies on résumés and application forms, but some experts on résumés claim that the percentage is as high as 50 percent.⁸ Applicants claim experiences they have not had, courses they have not taken, graduation indexes they have not achieved, and degrees they have not received. The sad fact is that the higher a person goes in an organization, the more likely the person is to lie about employment gaps, job titles, job responsibilities and achievements, claiming sole responsibility for team efforts, and making up fictitious employers.

While some applicants may have something to hide, others believe that a little “puffery,” a euphemism for lying, will get them a position and advancement. This is a **bad idea** with potentially **bad results**. “When fitted onto résumés, falsehoods can sit undetected indefinitely. Or, they can detonate at any moment, proving fatal to careers and credibility.”⁹

Select words with care.

Choose Words Carefully: Choose every word and phrase with care because many are immediate turnoffs for employers. Employers find these words and phrases to be meaningless: proven track record, responsible for, hard-working, goal-oriented, well-organized, and ambitious. They prefer action verbs such as the following that show you are a *doer*:

administered	facilitated	oversaw
advised	fashioned	performed
arbitrated	formulated	persuaded

Figure 8.2 *Functional résumé***Nancy A. McWilliams**

1214 Oak Drive,
Decatur, IL 62521
(217)226-3499/226-3499
namcwilliams@hotmail.com

- Objective:** A position as a family case manager with a child services agency that allows me to work with families and children in need of services.
- Education:** University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
(August, 2013 to present)
Bachelor of Social Work
Minor in Psychology
GPA: 3.17/4.0 overall and 3.4/4.0 in major
- Experience:**
- Consulting**
- With school systems as an Educational Surrogate Parent
 - With DCS Family Case Managers
 - With school and psychological counselors
- Counseling**
- Parents on following court orders
 - Children in Need of Services
 - Girls experiencing interpersonal conflicts
 - Horse therapist for special needs children
- Coordinating**
- Play activities for children
 - Aquatic activities for girls
 - An annual fundraiser
- Conducting**
- Monthly meetings
 - Registration at a women's shelter
 - Orientation sessions to inform and relax special needs children for horse therapy
- Writing**
- Reports for Juvenile Court Hearings
- Activities:** Vice-President and President of the Bachelor of Social Work Association

arranged	founded	planned
built	generated	recommended
budgeted	improved	reconfigured
coached	increased	researched
consulted	instructed	sold
counseled	led	solved
created	maintained	supervised
designed	managed	tested
directed	modified	trained
edited	negotiated	updated
eliminated	operated	wrote
evaluated	organized	

When inserting these action verbs into your résumé, however, you better be able to back them up with examples and facts or they become meaningless puffery.

Proofread
thoroughly.

Proofread and Then Proofread Some More: Proofread every word and phrase for correct spelling and grammar and check every comma, semicolon, colon, and period. Look for the ever-present typo that is so easy to overlook. A spelling, grammatical error, or typo may be enough for your résumé to hit the wastebasket. Do not take the chance and do not rely on spell-check to bail you out. Recruiters have lists of legendary mistakes they have encountered on résumés.¹⁰

“My last employer fried me for no reason.”

“I am looking for my big brake.”

“Studied public rations.”

“Earned a diploma from a repudiated college.”

“Bare me in mind for in-depth research projects.”

“Ruining an eight-person team.”

“I am very interested in the newspaper add for the accounting position.”

“Deetail-oriented.”

Make your
résumé easy
to review.

Take Mechanics Seriously: Pay attention to appearance and layout. Print your résumé on white, off-white, light gray, or light beige bond paper. Pay attention to how the résumé is blocked so it looks neat, attractive, organized, carefully planned, and uncrowded. Employers like white space on résumés, so indent sections carefully, double-space parts, and leave at least one-inch margins all around. Center your name at the top in bold letters so it stands out. Use different printer fonts so headings guide the reader through important information about you. Employers prefer résumés with bullets that separate and call attention to important information because this helps them scan the résumé more efficiently. If you provide two addresses, place one on each side under your name. If you provide one address, place it in the center or on the right side away from staples and paper clips.

Employers prefer a single-page résumé. However, a two-page or longer résumé is acceptable if it is necessary to provide valuable information, experiences, and insights. Do not try to adhere to the one-page rule by using a tiny font or narrow margins to fit everything onto a single page. Employers prefer a less crowded two-page résumé. If you develop a two-page résumé, print it front to back on one sheet of paper because a second page may get misplaced or ripped off when your résumé is taken from a file or briefcase. Signal with a page number or notation that there is more on the back. Repeat your name at the top on the left and a page number on the top right.

Be professional in everything you say and do in the résumé. Control your urges to use script résumé fonts or to employ several font sizes and styles. Keep color and graphics to a minimum unless you are applying for a position that places a high value on creativity such as advertising, video production, and graphic design. In the sometimes zany world of résumés, we have encountered pictures of university mascots, pets, and cute kittens in the top corners. One applicant printed his name in two inch high letters to get our attention and be remembered. He was remembered but not in the way he had hoped. An applicant to a law firm in Atlanta recently produced a résumé in a font so fancy that it was virtually impossible to read.

The Electronically Scanned Résumé

Electronically scanned résumés must be different.

Key words are critical in electronically scanned résumés.

Organizations are employing résumé scanning software to save time and money if they will receive dozens or hundreds of applications for a position. Follow these basic rules for mechanics and wording of a scanned résumé.

Mechanics are of critical importance because the scanner must be able to **read** your résumé. Use black ink and only one side of 8 ½ inch white paper. Do not staple. Margins should be at least 1.5 inches on both sides, and characters should be 75 or fewer per line. Do not use boxes or columns. Employ size 11 to 14 fonts because the scanner may not read smaller print. Most recommended typefaces are Times Roman Numeral, Arial, and Times New Roman. Avoid fancy fonts. Use little punctuation because punctuation may confuse a scanner. You may use bold face or all capital letters. Avoid bullets (solid or hollow), italics, underlining, graphics, or spaces between the letters of your name.

Key words are important because they will help in determining whether an employer will arrange an interview or discard your résumé. Include words pertinent to the job posting so the scanner is able to locate what the employer has programmed it to look for. Have a clearly identifiable objective or profile linked to the description of the position you are seeking because employers may scan objectives to sort résumés for different positions. Joyce Lain Kennedy, an authority on the electronic job search, recommends, “The more keyword marketing points you present about yourself, the more likely you are to be plucked from an electronic résumé database now, in six months, or a year from now.”¹¹ The Purdue Online Writing Lab recommends replacing action verbs with nouns that are easier to scan. For example, change manufacturing to manufacturing supervisor, design to design assistant, production to production manager, and injection molding to injection molding inspector.¹² Be sure your résumé contains up-to-date terms, labels, and names the scanner is programmed

to detect. The following are examples of correct and incorrect terms for scannable résumés:

Terms and labels are critical in scannable résumé:	Yes	No
	human resources	personnel
	administrative assistant	secretary
	sales associate	sales clerk
	information systems	data processing
	environmental services	housekeeping
	accountant	bookkeeper
	facilities engineering	maintenance
	inside sales	customer relations
	meteorologist	weatherman
	server	waiter

Organizations may ask for your résumé to be sent electronically to save time and to create electronic files. Be sure your software system will send your résumé in an attractive format. Instructors and students at some universities have reported that organizations have requested all applicant files be sent on CD-ROMs. Paper files are unacceptable. Unless told to do otherwise, include a cover letter that clearly identifies the position you are applying for and stresses how you are a good fit. Always bring a copy of your cover letter and résumé to the interview.

Online Résumés

A growing number of organizations have created online sites for posting résumés. These sites make it easy for you to apply for a wide variety of positions with organizations worldwide. Be cautious. The ease of posting your résumé online may make you easy prey for unscrupulous Web searchers pretending to be employers to take your money. Heather Galler of Carnegie-Mellon University has created a computer program called “identity Angel” that searches online job boards for the “holy trinity” of information thieves love to attain: name, address, and Social Security number. When locating sources asking for such information, it sends a warning to potential targets of thieves and frauds.¹³

Use online services with caution.

Galler offers several suggestions. Read the privacy policy carefully to determine how long your résumé will be active and how you can delete it. Be sure there is a privacy policy. If not, look elsewhere. Be aware of fake recruiters, particularly if they ask for a driver’s license or other personal information under the pretense of needing this for background checks. Ask recruiters for references and check to see if they are members of local or national recruiter’s associations. Set up an alternative e-mail address, use a cell phone, and provide a P.O. box as your address for job hunting. Do not provide additional information to check your online listing because thieves may use spyware to attain even more personal information about you.

Your portfolio shows you in action.

The Portfolio

Portfolios are essential if you are in fields such as photography, advertising, public relations, art and design, journalism, architecture, teaching, and professional writing. Your **portfolio** should be a small yet varied collection of your best work. Organize your portfolio thematically and make it visually attractive. Provide excellent copies of your work—not faded, soiled, marked-up, graded, or wrinkled samples. Employers focus on how well you write, design, photograph, edit, and create, and the well-designed and presented portfolio is the best means of exhibiting this. If you are going into broadcasting, your portfolio must include an audio or videorecording of selections that illustrate your best oral and video work. Quality, not quantity, sells.

Some colleges and universities are encouraging or requiring students to create electronic portfolios that include a wide variety of materials in an attractive, compact, and highly usable package. In addition to revealing what you have done and can do, the e-portfolio demonstrates your ability to apply new technologies.

The all-purpose form letter is rarely taken seriously.

The Cover Letter

Your cover letter may be the first contact you have with an employer, so be positive and to the point. The fundamental purposes of your cover letter are *to gain this employer's attention* and *to entice this employer* to read your résumé. The first purpose requires you to make a good impression by revealing a positive attitude, pleasant personality, motivation, and enthusiasm. The second purpose requires you to include highlights of your education, training, and experiences that show you are interested in and qualified for a specific position in the employer's organization. Never send a résumé without attaching a cover letter.

Design and target letters to specific positions and organizations.

Mechanics of the Cover Letter: Make your letter brief, usually three or four paragraphs in length, and never more than one page. See Figure 8.3. Provide margins of 1.5 inches left and right and adjust top and bottom margins to balance your letter on the page. If you have difficulty placing all information you feel is absolutely necessary to include on a single page, adjust the margins to keep the letter to one page. Use simple to read fonts of 10 to 12 points. Ask another person to read your résumé. If the person mentions the font, change it. Your letter must be neat, printed on white bond paper, and professional with no typos, grammatical errors, punctuation errors, or misspellings. One of our former journalism students applied for an editing position with the Cincinnati *Enquirer* and misspelled Cincinnati in the cover letter. The student did not get the job, but the editor did send an irate letter, along with the student's original letter, to the student's academic department head.

Show interest and enthusiasm or do not apply.

Content of the Cover Letter: Tailor each letter to the position and organization. Form letters impress no one. Address your letter to a specific person involved in the hiring process, and spell this person's name correctly. Be careful when you address the person as Mr. or Ms. For instance, first names such as Jordan, Chris, and Justice may be a man or woman. Letters addressed "To Whom It May Concern" or "Dear Sirs" don't get positive responses. Organize your letter into three paragraphs.¹⁴ In the *first* paragraph, tell the employer why you are writing, in which position you are interested, and why this position

Figure 8.3 *Cover letter*

1214 Oak Drive
Decatur, IL 62521
March 14, 2017

Ms. Denise Boardman, Director
Illinois Department of Children and family Services
401 Brown Street
Bloomington, IL 61701

Dear Ms. Boardman:

I am writing in response to the FCM position posted on your Web site last week and understand that the person selected for this position would begin work on or about June 14, 2017. I am very interested in this position because it matches my career focus, education, and experiences.

I will graduate from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in May of this year with a Bachelor of Social Work Degree. In my job as a CASA in Marian County since 2015, I have worked closely with a number of FCMs in several cases involving CHINS. This has enabled me to observe their work with parents and children and to appreciate how critical their roles are in maintaining families when possible and seeing that children are placed in safe and loving environments when the family is no longer a viable option. I believe that my experience as a CASA, a volunteer at the Crisis Center for Women, and as a horse therapist for children with special needs makes me uniquely qualified for a position as FCM in the Department of Child Services.

I look forward to meeting with you to discuss my interest and background in a position as a FCM. Enclosed is a copy of my résumé that provides additional details about my qualifications and experiences. Feel free to contact me at either of the telephone numbers listed on my résumé or by e-mail at namcwilliams@hotmail.com. I would be available for an interview at your convenience.

Sincerely,

Nancy A. McWilliams

Enclosure: résumé

with this organization appeals to you. Reveal how you discovered this opening and that you have researched both position and organization. In the *second* paragraph, explain briefly how your education, training, and experiences—your qualifications—make you an ideal fit for this position, with this organization, at this time. *Be persuasive!* You may refer to your résumé, but do not insert large portions of it in the cover letter. Let your cover letter and résumé do the jobs they are designed for. In the *third* paragraph, restate your enthusiasm for the position and ask for an interview opportunity. Indicate when and where you will be available for an interview. Mention enclosures and offer to send additional information if needed. Express appreciation for the employer's consideration.

Creating a Favorable First Impression

Creating a favorable first impression is critical to the success of every interview, and this occurs during the first few seconds or minutes. Sources agree that a good first impression is likely to result in the recruiter looking for input that supports this initial impression. If it is positive, the recruiter is likely to have a higher regard for you as the interview progresses, reveal important job information, try to sell the position and organization, and spend less time seeking information. There are many ingredients in creating this favorable impression.

Attitudes

Be interested in this interview and show it.

Be sincerely interested in taking part in the interview and show it. Enthusiasm is contagious. On the other hand, if you have little interest in the position or organization, are interviewing merely for the experience, or have not been able to find a position that you really want, you are likely to find it difficult to get “fired up.” Authentic enthusiasm is difficult to fake and, if you succeed, what have you accomplished?

Avoid self-fulfilling prophecies.

Strive to communicate positive attitudes about yourself including your qualifications, relationships, current and past employers, and future. Never badmouth a school or former employer. Be confident. If you feel you are not going to do well during an

interview, you probably will not. Be thoroughly prepared to take an active part in the interview and be fully informed about the position and organization. Be **professional** and **ethical** in everything you say and do during the interview.

Dress and Appearance

Dress and appearance are critical elements in making a favorable first impression. Your clothes and accessories should support the strong image you want to make, an image that shows confidence, attentiveness to details, understanding of what is appropriate



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■ *Creating a favorable first impression is vital in the employment interview.*

Neatness costs nothing and pays dividends.

dress and appearance for a formal business setting, respect for the interviewer, and interest in the position and organization. “When you look good, you feel good and when you feel good you are more likely to articulate intelligent and well thought out answers to questions.”¹⁵ While many organizations allow business casual at the workplace, they prefer to see how applicants would present themselves during a formal business presentation or meeting. **Remember:** the organizations staff who may be dressing casually already have jobs with this organization. Being overdressed is better than being underdressed. A casual or sloppy appearance may end your chances of further consideration.

Dress for a formal business occasion.

As a rule, wear a conservative, solid-color, professional suit to most interviews. Think competence rather than fashion. If you are unsure about appropriate dress for an interview, contact someone from within the organization and ask discretely about how you should dress. Other sources are professors, counselors in your career center, or friends in the industry. Organizations and career fields have their own unique cultures and environments. For example, recruiters in finance, government, human resources, banking, sales, and hospitality are likely to prefer formal dress. Those in public relations, advertising, graphic design, technology, and the trades may prefer less formal dress such as Dockers and buttoned shirts and blouses. When in doubt, dress up.

It is unnecessary to spend a fortune on interview attire, but invest in quality, well-fitting clothing that will remain pressed and wrinkle free. Check for missing buttons or un-removed tags. Be neat, clean, and lint free. Polish your shoes. Do not carry a book bag or backpack. Cover up tattoos. Keep jewelry to a minimum. Use cologne sparingly. Brush your teeth, particularly if you have just finished eating, comb your hair, clean your hands and fingernails, and take a breath mint.

Your goal should be to have your dress and appearance play a strong **supporting role**, one that generates positive attention and approval at the start of the interview. Then you want the recruiter to focus attention on your interpersonal skills, answers, and questions that indicate you are prepared and well-qualified for this position with this organization. If the recruiter remembers you because of the way you looked, you are probably in trouble.

Be on the conservative side in dress and appearance.

Advice for Men

Standard interviewing attire for men is a two-piece dark suit (blue, gray, black) with a white or pastel solid shirt and a contrasting but not “wild” tie. Wear conservative, professional apparel to the interview, even if the interviewer may be dressed informally. Wear a long-sleeved shirt even during the summer. Do not wear a turtleneck shirt. Wear leather, laced business shoes with leather soles, preferably black or cordovan, and not clunky looking. Your belt should match your shoes.

Try the sit-down test to check for fit. Almost anyone can wear clothes that are a bit too tight when standing, but sitting down quickly reveals if the jacket, waistband, seat, or collar is too tight or the shirt gaps at the waist. Insert one finger into the collar of your shirt. If the collar is too tight, you need a larger shirt; if it is too loose, you need a smaller shirt to avoid the sloppy look of a drooping collar.

Coordinate colors carefully.

Wear dark socks that complement your suit and cover at least half a calf so when you sit down and cross your legs, no skin is visible. Tie size and design depend upon what

When in doubt, ask for help.

is in style, but it is always safe to wear a wide stripe, small polka dot, or conservative pattern that is blue, red, gray, or burgundy.

Choose clothing that is appropriate for your body shape: regular, thin or slender, heavy or muscular, and tall or short. A heavy, muscular male for instance, should choose dark shades with small pinstripes. A thin or slender male may wear a greater variety of clothing, and some plaids might add size and depth to the physical appearance.

A sport coat or blazer is nearly always too casual except for informal gatherings or dinners associated with the selection process. Your hair should be trimmed and neatly combed or brushed. Facial hair is generally accepted (if neat and trimmed), but know your industries preferences. Professional and conservative also applies to watches, ball-point pens, briefcases, earrings, tattoos, and cologne. It is wise to play it safe and seek every advantage.

Advice for Women

Appearance should not call attention to itself.

Makeup, hairstyle, and clothing are personal decisions that reveal a great deal about your personality—who you are, your self-concept, and what you think of others. Take them seriously. No makeup is probably too little, but if makeup calls attention to itself, it is too much. Recruiters suggest small (not dangling) earrings with one per ear, one ring per hand, and no noisy bracelets. Coloring is essential, and a cosmetic counselor can help determine what is professionally appropriate for you. Keep perfume to an absolute minimum or use none at all. You do not want to be recalled for your smell.

Provocative clothing can end your candidacy.

Wear a tailored two-piece suit with skirt or slacks and in navy, black, dark gray, or brown. Skirt length should be to the bottom of the knees when standing and cover your thighs when seated. If you must tug at your skirt when you sit down, it is too short. Avoid skirts with long slits. Select a tailored, conservative blouse that matches your suit while avoiding “see through” blouses or ones with plunging necklines. Wear clear or plain styled stockings appropriate for your outfit. Low, closed-toe, and comfortable pumps are more appropriate than high heels. Carry a simple handbag and a professional-looking briefcase.

Nonverbal Communication

Nonverbal communication (voice, eye contact, gestures, and posture) are important ingredients in every interview. Scott Reeves reports a typical example in which an applicant looked very strong on paper but “offered a deadfish handshake, slouched and fidgeted in his chair, failed to make eye contact with the interviewer and mumbled responses to basic questions.” He was not hired.¹⁶ Interviewers react more favorably toward applicants and rate them higher if they smile, have expressive facial expressions, maintain eye contact, and have clear, forceful voices. Technology plays important roles in the employment process, but recruiters prefer to interview applicants face-to-face because they prefer “high touch” to “high tech” when selecting people who will join and influence the futures of their organizations. They want to see, hear, and observe you in action.

Be alive and dynamic.

Good communication skills are important in all positions.

You communicate dynamism and energy through the way you shake hands, sit, walk, stand, gesture, and move your body. Appear to be calm and relaxed, but sharp and in control. Avoid nervous gestures, fidgets, movements, and playing with pens or objects on the interviewer's desk. Respond crisply and confidently with no sign of arrogance. When replying to questions, maintain eye contact with the recruiter. If there are two or more recruiters in the room, glance at the others when answering a question but focus primarily on the questioner, particularly as you complete your answer.

Speak in a normal conversational tone with vocal variety that exhibits confidence and interpersonal skills. Interviewers prefer standard accents. If English is your second language or you have an accent developed since birth, work on your accent and pronunciation so interviewers can understand you clearly and effectively.

Do not hesitate to pause before answering difficult questions, but frequent pauses may make you appear hesitant, unprepared, or "slow." Interviewers interpret pauses of one second or less as signs of ambition, self-confidence, organization, and intelligence.

Interview Etiquette

Be on time and ready to interact.

Arrive at the interview a few minutes before the scheduled time. If you arrive late, the recruiter is likely to assume the interview is of little importance to you and, if hired, you are likely to arrive late for work. Avoid arriving too early. The recruiter may have other work to do and does not want to assign staff to entertain you until your scheduled time. Discard chewing gum before arriving, turn off your cell phone and keep it out of sight, and do not have a cup of coffee or bottle of water in hand. Shake hands, if and when the recruiter offers to do so, in a firm but not crushing manner. Smile. Introduce yourself formally with no nick names. Place your briefcase and other belongings on the floor and nothing personal on the recruiter's desk or table. Avoid the temptation to play with or rearrange items on the interviewer's desk. Sit down when the recruiter indicates you should, and then sit up straight but not stiff with your feet on the floor. If the recruiter asks if you would like a glass of water, take it. Let the recruiter take the lead with small talk during the opening and questions as the interview progresses. Do not interrupt the recruiter.

Learn and practice proper etiquette.

When interviewing over a meal, give your full attention to the interaction because this is a continuation of the interview, not a time until the interview resumes. **Mind your manners!** Do not check your watch, peruse your résumé or organizational literature, or check your cell phone for messages. Be aware that the recruiter may be testing you to see how you might act in the future when dining with clients or upper management. Using proper etiquette during meals can make or break your interview experience. Wait until others have become seated before you sit down or until asked to do so. Never start eating until everyone at the table has been served. Know how to place your napkin in your lap, how and when to use silverware properly, how to pass food to others, and how to eat soup. Do not place your elbows on the table. Order an alcoholic drink only if the recruiter invites you to do so, and then drink **one slowly** throughout the meal. If you do not drink alcoholic beverages, simply refuse the offer tactfully. Let the recruiter initiate business. Say thank you at the end of the meal.

Answering Questions

Decisions are made on the total interview.

With a favorable first impression established, it is time to reveal the substance of your product—you.

Preparing to Respond

Be ready and eager to answer questions effectively. Concentrate on answering confidently and thoroughly, and be prepared to address frequently asked questions.

Be ready to handle traditional questions.

- Tell me about yourself.
- Why do you want to work for us?
- What are your greatest strengths? Weaknesses?
- What are your short-range career goals? Long-range goals?
- Why did you leave your position with _____?
- What did you like best in your position at _____? Like least?
- Why should we select you over the other applicants for this position?
- What do you know about our organization?

These traditional questions play major roles in selection interviews, particularly in the opening minutes. Interviewers use them to get applicants talking and relaxed, and to learn about them as human beings and professionals.

The nature of questioning has changed with interviewers asking more challenging questions about your experiences in **joblike situations** to see how you might fit in and function as an employee. Employers believe they can determine best how applicants might operate in specific positions by placing them in these positions during the interview. Task-oriented questions assess thinking and communication abilities and reveal how well you can operate in stressful or surprise situations. Here are common on-the-job question strategies:

Welcome on-the-job questions to show what you can do.

- *Behavior-based questions:*
“Tell me about a time when you operated as part of a team to solve a vexing financial problem.”
- *Current critical incident questions:*
“We are facing a situation in which we . . . If you were on our team, what would you recommend we do to resolve this situation?”
- *Historical critical incident questions:*
“Two years ago we had a conflict between . . . If you had been the supervisor in this situation, what would you have done?”
- *Hypothetical questions:*
“Suppose you had a customer who claimed his computer hardware was damaged in shipment. How would you handle this?”
- *Task-oriented questions:*
“Here’s a tablet. Write a policy statement for preparing and sending press releases.”

Many employers are requiring would-be teachers to teach, salespersons to sell, engineers to engineer, managers to manage, and designers to design. Job simulations, role-playing, presentations, and day-long case studies challenge applicants to demonstrate their knowledge, skills, experiences, maturity, and integrity on the job.

Structuring Answers

Questions that place applicants in job-like situations typically require them to tell narratives about experiences or would-be experiences. Good stories are internally consistent, consistent with the facts employers hold to be true, relevant to questions asked and the applicant's claims, provide details that support claims, and reflect the applicant's beliefs and values.¹⁷ Try one or more of these patterns to structure your answers in a way that tell your stories effectively. The following structural patterns will help you with stories.

Structure
answers
strategically.

Mini-speech method: Approach questions, particularly ones that require you to tell stories, as if you were giving a brief speech. This method is a good way to approach critical incident and hypothetical questions that *do not focus* specifically on your *past experiences*. Your speech would be in three traditional parts.

Introduction: Tell recruiters what you are going to tell them.

Body: Tell them.

Conclusion: Tell them what you told them.

STAR Method: The S.T.A.R. method is highly recommended for answering behavior-based questions because it zeroes in on behaviors and skills exhibited in *past experiences* that are highly relevant to the specific position being sought. It has four parts adding up to the word “star.”

Situation: Describe the setting or background including when, where, and with whom.

Task: What needed to be done, why, and with what expectations?

Action: What action did you take and how did you do it?

Results: What were the results, accomplishments, consequences?

PAR Method: The P.A.R. method is a variation of the STAR approach and is recommended for behavioral-based questions. The goal is to focus on your past performance while emphasizing experiences, skills, leadership, and ability to get a job done. It has three parts.

P: The problem or task you were assigned

A: The actions you took solving the task or problem

R: The results or consequences of your actions

Responding Successfully

Listen carefully to the **whole** question; **think** before opening your mouth; **structure** your answer clearly; provide **substance**; **phrase** your answer with good grammar and choice of words; aim your answer precisely at the **point** of the question; and show

Listen and
think, then
respond.

Think before
you speak.

Avoid
evasiveness.

enthusiasm and a **positive attitude**. If you are answering a behavior-based, critical incident, hypothetical, or task question, do not hesitate to ask for additional clarification or seek more information on background or organizational policies that may be important to your response. Answer questions thoroughly but know when to stop. Knowing when to stop may be a problem in telephone interviews because you do not have the advantage of nonverbal cues from the recruiter to signal that you have answered the question and it is time to move on.

Do not underestimate the importance of wording. For instance, while you are answering a question about working in teams, the recruiter may be focusing on your use of **pronouns**. If you use *us*, *we*, and *our*, you indicate that you work well in teams. If you use *I*, *me*, and *mine*, you indicate you work better alone. Use **action verbs** to show you are a **doer** and **technical jargon** to show experience and familiarity with your field and the position for which you are interviewing. **Qualifiers** such as “maybe,” “perhaps,” and “sort of” communicate hesitancy and that you are unsure of yourself. Avoid **meaningless slang** such as “you know,” “know what I’m sayin’,” “know what I mean,” “and stuff like that,” and “that sort of thing.” A Marist College poll identified words such as “actually,” “whatever,” “awesome,” and “literally” and phrases such as “twenty-four seven,” “It is what it is,” and “At the end of the day” to be among the most annoying.¹⁸ We would add “ton of” as in “I have a ton of experience.”

Be **honest** and **authentic** in your answers. If you appear evasive or hesitant in responding, the recruiter may interpret this as evidence of dishonesty or fear of revealing something the recruiter has a right to know. Do not create and rehearse answers that merely sound good or provide what you think the recruiter wants to hear. Beware of sources, particularly the Internet, that offer sure-fire answers to a variety of common interview questions. There is rarely a single correct answer to any question. Five recruiters from the same organization may be seeking different answers to the same question.

Your **attitudes** can make or break an interview. Be positive and realistic about yourself and your future but not arrogant or cocky. Speak positively about your education, training, experiences, and former employers. Show sincere interest in this position with this organization. Be flexible in the position you are seeking and willing to bend a little to fit a position and organizational needs. No one is going to start at the top.

Use your **head** instead of your mouth. One of the authors remembers too well answering this question during one of his first interviews, “Tell me about yourself” with “Well, there’s not much to tell.” Recruiters tell similar stories. When one recruiter asked “Why should I hire you?” one applicant replied that he would be a great asset to the company softball team while another said he was bored with watching television. In another instance, an applicant defended his résumé by declaring, “My résumé might look like I am a job hopper. But I want you to know that I never left any of those jobs voluntarily.” Unthinking applicants often reveal symptoms of the “foot-in-mouth disease.”

Do not be
surprised
by unlawful
questions.

Responding to Unlawful Questions

Applicants, particularly women, continue to encounter unlawful questions even though federal and state laws have existed for decades and most organizations train employees to follow EEO guidelines. Violations range from mild infractions such as “What

does your husband do?” to sexual harassment. Some are accidental during informal chatting with applicants and some are due to curiosity, tradition, lack of training, ignorance of the laws or arrogance.

Unlawful questions pose dilemmas for applicants. If you answer an unlawful question honestly and directly, you may lose the position. If you refuse to answer an unlawful question (almost impossible to do graciously), you may lose a position because you are uncooperative, evasive, or “one of those.”

Be prepared to answer unlawful questions tactfully and effectively. First, review the EEO laws and exercise in Chapter 7 so you can determine when a question is unlawful.

Review EEO laws and your rights.

Exercise #1—Which Questions Are Unlawful and Why?

If you are a Hispanic, female college graduate interviewing for a management position for a national retail chain, which of these questions would be unlawful? Why? How might you reply?

1. Where are you from?

2. Any marriage plans?

3. Tell me about your internship at Macy’s.

4. Where do you hope to be in your career in five years?

5. How long would you expect to work for us?

6. How well do you speak Spanish?

7. Which religious holidays do you observe?

8. Do you have a significant other?

9. What do you do after work?

10. I see you have a hearing aid; how might that affect your work with us?

Second, be aware of tricks recruiters use to get unlawful information without appearing to ask for it. For example, a benefits person may ask you which health insurance plan you would choose if hired; your answer may reveal that you are married and have children, that you are a single parent, or that you have a serious medical problem. During lunch or dinner or a tour of the organization’s facilities when you are least expecting serious questions, an employer, perhaps a female, may probe into child care under the guise of talking about her own problems: “What a day! My daughter Emily woke up this

Beware of recruiter tricks to get unlawful information.

morning with a fever, my husband is out of town, and I had an eight o'clock conference downtown. Do you ever have days like this?" You may begin to tell problems you have had with your children or family members and, in the process, reveal a great deal of irrelevant, unlawful, and perhaps damaging information without knowing it. Employers have learned how to get unlawful information through lawful questions. Instead of asking, "Do you have children?" an employer asks, "Is there any limit on your ability to work overtime (evenings, weekends, holidays)?" Others use coded questions and comments.

- "Our employees put a lot into their work" means "Older workers like you don't have much energy."
- "We have a very young staff" means "You won't fit in."
- "I'm sure your former company had its own corporate culture, just as we do here" means "Hispanics need not apply."
- "We are a very traditional company" means "We don't hire women beyond clerical staff."

Consider your needs and desires before responding.

Third, determine how important the position is for you. Your primary goal is to get a good position, and if you are hired, you may be able to change organizational attitudes and recruiters' practices. You can do nothing from the outside. If questions are gross violations, consider reporting the recruiter to his or her superior or to the career center. If this person is typical of the organization or a person you would report to if hired, you might be wise to look elsewhere.

Fourth, practice using a variety of answer tactics. For example, try a tactful refusal that is more than a simple "I will not answer that question because it is unlawful."

Be tactful!

1. Interviewer: How old are you?

Interviewee: I don't think age is important if you are well qualified for a position.

2. Interviewer: Do you plan to have children?

Interviewee: My plans to have a family will not interfere with my ability to perform the requirements of this position.

Use a *direct, brief* answer, hoping the interviewer will move on to relevant, lawful questions.

1. Interviewer: What does your wife do?

Interviewee: She's a pharmacist.

2. Interviewer: Do you attend church regularly?

Interviewee: Yes, I do / No, I don't.

Pose a *tactful inquiry* such as the following that skirts the question and attempts to guide the recruiter away from the unlawful inquiry with a job-related question.

1. Interviewer: What does your husband do?

Interviewee: He's in construction. Why do you ask?

- 2. Interviewer:** You seem confined to a wheelchair; how might this affect your work performance?

Interviewee: I am quite mobile in my chair. How is my disability relevant for a position as a computer software designer?

Try to *neutralize* the recruiter's obvious concern.

- 1. Interviewer:** Do you plan on having a family?

Interviewee: Yes, I do. I'm looking forward to the challenges of both family and career. I've observed many of my women professors and fellow workers handling both quite satisfactorily.

- 2. Interviewer:** What happens if your husband gets transferred or needs to relocate?

Interviewee: The same that would happen if I would get transferred or asked to relocate. We would discuss location moves that either of us might have to consider and make the best decision.

Try to *take advantage* of the question to support your candidacy.

Make
unlawful
questions
work for you.

- 1. Interviewer:** Where were you born?

Interviewee: I am quite proud that my background is _____ because it has helped me work effectively with people of diverse backgrounds.

- 2. Interviewer:** Are you married?

Interviewee: Yes, I am, and I believe that is a plus. As you know, studies show that married employees are more stable and dependable than unmarried employees.

You might try what Bernice Sandler, an authority on discrimination in hiring, calls a **tongue-in-cheek test response** that sends an unmistakable signal to the recruiter that he or she has asked an unlawful question. This tactic must be accompanied by appropriate nonverbal signals to avoid offending the interviewer.

Be careful when
being clever.

- 1. Interviewer:** Who will take care of your children?

Interviewee: (smiling, pleasant tone of voice) Are you trying to see if I can recognize an unlawful question in the selection process?

- 2. Interviewer:** How long do you expect to work for us?

Interviewee: (smiling, pleasant tone of voice) Is this a test to see how I might reply to an unlawful question?

Asking Questions

Most of the people seeking positions review lists of common recruiter questions on the Internet and in publications and mull over how they would answer them. Unfortunately, few job-seekers give much thought to the questions they will ask. Nearly all recruiters

will provide you with time to ask questions, so plan to take full advantage of these opportunities to reveal your preparation, maturity, professionalism, interests, and motivation. A major mistake recruiters identify is having too few questions to ask or none at all. Successful applicants ask more questions than unsuccessful applicants.

Guidelines for Asking Questions

Asking good questions results in more than information.

Ask open-ended questions that delve into the position and organization and follow-up with probing questions to get complete and insightful answers. Always prepare more questions than you are likely to have time to ask. If the interviewer answers all of your questions while giving information, do not ask a question merely to ask a question. Simply reply, “You have answered all of my questions.” If a question were important, you would have given it careful thought and included it on your list. Your “off the top of the head” question is likely to be poorly phrased and do more harm than good.

Review the question guidelines in Chapter 3 and the following guidelines for employment interviews.

Successful applicants ask probing questions.

- Avoid the “me . . . me . . . me . . .” syndrome in which all of your questions inquire about what you will get, how much you will get, and when you will get it. These questions indicate that you are *self-centered* and care little about others, including future colleagues and organizations. Organizations expect you to be team-oriented and organization-centered with a healthy desire for rewards and advancement.

Ask your most important question first.

- Avoid questions about salary, promotion, vacation, and retirement during screening interviews and never pose them as your first questions. If salary is your primary concern when choosing a position and organization, the recruiter will turn to others. Recruiters expect you to be interested in rising to higher levels within their organizations, but they also expect you to be interested in and dedicated to the position for which you are interviewing. If time away from work is a primary concern, then perhaps you have little interest in *working* for them.
- Do not waste time asking for information that is readily available on the organization’s Web site or in the library. If answers to your questions are readily available on Web sites and company literature, you have obviously expended little effort researching the position and the organization.

Question Pitfalls

In addition to common question pitfalls, applicants have some pitfalls of their own. These are centered on common wording that can produce a *negative impression* at a critical time late in the interview.

Prepare a schedule to avoid question pitfalls.

Exercise #2—Applicant Pitfalls

Rephrase each of the following bad question to make it a good question.

1. *The have to question* may sound like you will be an unhappy and uncooperative employee.

How you ask
may be more
important than
what you ask.

Bad: Would I have to travel much?

Good:

2. *The typology question* focuses on type rather than explanation that is desired.

Bad: What type of training program do you have?

Good:

3. *The pleading question* (often a series of them) seems to beg for answers.

Bad: Could you please tell me about your expansion plans?

Good:

4. *The little bitty question* may indicate lack of interest in detailed information, perhaps asking a question merely to ask a question.

Bad: Tell me a little bit about your facility in Atlanta.

Good:

5. *The uninformed question* may exhibit lack of maturity or background study prior to the interview.

Bad: Tell me about benefits and stuff like that.

Good:

Prepare a moderate schedule of carefully phrased questions. Order them according to importance because you may not get the opportunity to ask five or six questions in a 20- to 25-minute interview, particularly if your questions are open-ended and you probe into answers. Also, the recruiter will assume that you will ask your most important questions first or second. If these are salary and benefits, this is a major turnoff.

Sample Applicant Questions

Adapt your
questions
to each
position and
organization.

The following sample applicant questions show interest in the position and the organization, are not overly self-centered, and meet question guidelines:

- Describe your ideal employee for me.
- Tell me about the culture of your organization.
- How does your organization encourage employees to come up with new ideas?
- How much choice would I have in selecting geographical location?
- What is a typical workday for this position?
- What is the possibility of flexible working hours?
- How does your organization evaluate employees?
- What characteristics are you looking for in applicants for this position?
- How might your organization support me if I wanted to pursue an MBA?
- How often would I be working as part of a team?
- What, in your estimation, is the most unique characteristic of your organization?
- How might an advanced degree affect my position in your organization?

- Tell me about where other persons who have held this position have advanced within the organization.
- What do you like most about working for this organization?
- Tell me about the merger with TelEx.
- I noticed in *The Wall Street Journal* last week that your stock has risen almost 4 percent during this economic recession. What explains this increase?
- Tell me about the people I would be working with.
- Tell me about your training program.
- What major departmental changes do you anticipate during the next five years?
- What is the most important criterion for selecting a person for this position?

The following questions may help with a variety of positions in new and startup organizations:

- Which of your products are most in demand?
- Who are your major competitors?
- How much collective experience do your top officers have in the field?
- What are your plans for going public?
- Who are the major regulators of your business?

The Closing

**Be aware
of everything
you say
and do.**

The closing stage of the employment interview is usually brief. Play an active role in the closing but avoid saying or doing anything that may harm what has been a strong interview. Express your interest in the position and organization. And discover what will happen next, when, and whom you should contact and how if you need to get in touch about the position. Ask for the position tactfully.

The interview “Is not over ‘til it’s over.” When a member of the organization walks you to the outer office, the elevator, or the parking lot, the interview is not over. When a person takes you on a tour of the organization or the area, it is not over. When a person takes you to lunch or dinner, it is not over. The employer will note everything you do and say. Positions are lost because of the way applicants react during a tour, converse informally, meet other people, eat dinner, or handle alcoholic beverages.

Evaluation and Follow-Up

Debrief yourself immediately following each interview. Jot down your answers to tough questions, information the recruiter provided, and the recruiter’s answers to your questions. Make a list of pros and cons of the position and organization and what you don’t know that would be critical in making a decision. Do you think you did well or not so well? Be careful not to overreact. Your perceptions of what took place during the interview may be greatly exaggerated toward the positive or the negative.

Ask questions such as these during your postinterview debriefing:

- How adequate was my preparation?
- How effective was I during the opening?
- How appropriate were my dress and appearance?
- What opportunities to sell myself did I hit and miss?
- How thorough and to the point were my answers?
- How well did I adapt my questions to this organization and position?
- How effectively did I show interest in this organization and position?
- How much information on this position and organization did I obtain to make a good career decision?

Be thorough
in your
debriefing.

Follow up the interview with a brief, professional letter thanking the interviewer for the time given you. Promptness is less important than content. Avoid firing off letters with little thought. Lisa Ryan, managing director for recruiting at Heyman Associates of New York, tells the story about walking a person to the elevator and finding an e-mail thank-you note waiting for her when she returned to her office moments later. The candidate had e-mailed her from the elevator. She recommends that you “put some substance into your thank-you note.”¹⁹ Emphasize your interest in this position and organization. The thank-you letter provides an excuse to contact the interviewer, keeps your name alive, and includes additional information that might help the organization decide in your favor.

Quality
applicants
write thank-you
notes.

Handling Rejection

All applicants face rejection, even when they feel interviews went well. Potential employers reject applicants for a variety of reasons, often because of fit or because another applicant has a valued experience or skill. They may interview dozens of people for a single position and must make difficult choices. You will never hear from some recruiters.

How you handle rejections influences your attitudes, attitudes that may lead to further rejections. One writer warns: “**Don’t be a victim.** The worst thing tired and frustrated job seekers can do is to conclude that employer reps and hiring managers are out to get them, that the job search process is out of their control, and that they’re the victims of some evil, monolithic power.”²⁰ Do not take rejection personally.

Use each interview as a learning process. Ask what you might do differently in the next interview. How did you handle behavioral-based and critical incident questions? How effective were your questions? How thorough was your preparation? How qualified were you for this position? What might you have done or not done to turn off for the recruiter?

Learn from
rejections.

Summary

Technology enables you to communicate instantly and to send and check information immediately. The scanning of résumés and the use of the Internet as sources for positions and résumé storage are changing the face of job searching. Personality, integrity, and drug tests are adding a new dimension to the process.

We have become a part of the global community and economy and are undergoing a second industrial revolution moving from a manufacturing to a service- and information-oriented society. The best positions in the future will go to those who understand and are prepared for the selection process. You must know yourself, the position, and the organization to persuade an employer to select you from hundreds of other applicants. The job search must be extensive and rely more on networking and hard work than merely appearing at your college career center for an interview. Your résumés and cover letters must be thorough, professional, attractive, adapted to specific positions with specific organizations, and persuasive.

Interviewing skills are increasingly important because employers are looking for employees with communication, interpersonal, and people skills. You can exhibit these best during the interview. Take an active part in the opening, answer questions thoroughly and to the point, and ask carefully phrased questions about the position and the organization. Take an active part in the closing, and be sure the interviewer knows you want this position. Close on a high note.

Follow up the interview with a carefully crafted thank-you letter that expresses again your interest in this position and organization. Do an insightful evaluation that addresses strengths and weaknesses and with future interviews in mind.

Key Terms and Concepts

Appearance	First impression	Portfolio
Arrival	Follow-up	Relationship
Attitudes	Functional format résumé	Research
Behavior-based	Honesty tests	Résumé
Branding	Integrity interview	Screening interview
Career/job fair	Joblike situations	Self-analysis
Career objective	Mini-speech method	Social media
Chronological format résumé	Network tree	STAR method
Cover letter	Networking	Successful applicants
Determinate interview	Nonverbal communication	Talent-based
Dress	PAR method	Trait-based
Electronically scanned	Percentage agencies	Unsuccessful applicants
Fee-paid positions	Placement agency	

Employment Role-Playing Cases

A Career in Computer Technology

You are a recent graduate with a degree in computer science and media technology and design. Although you are confined to a wheelchair because of a swimming accident while in high school, you have managed to get around a large university campus for four years and played in a wheelchair basketball league. Your interest is in a computer design position that would require you to travel to a variety of locations in the United States and Japan to confer with other designers and check out technological developments.

Managing a Corporate Farm

You grew up on a 1700-acre grain farm in eastern Kansas and will graduate this spring in the animal science department at Kansas State University. Since there is no opportunity to manage the family farm and your interests are in livestock rather than grain, you are interviewing for positions with corporate farms. You have an appointment with a recruiter for Prairie Farms, a corporation that owns both grain and livestock farms in the Midwest and Southwest. The opening is for a manager of Bar Y farms in South Dakota that includes herds of beef cattle and bison. It is a major supplier for specialty steak restaurants in the Midwest, particularly Omaha, Kansas City, Minneapolis, and Chicago.

A Buyer for a Major Department Store

You are in your mid-twenties and have worked with a specialty women's clothing store since graduating from college three years ago with a degree in retail management. You have a good record as a sales associate, and many of your customers seek you out for assistance. Your real professional interest is serving as a buyer rather than a career primarily in sales. You are interviewing in Chicago for a buyer position with Macy's. This would be your dream job.

A Public Relations Position

You recently graduated from college with a major in general communication rather than a specialty because you weren't sure what you wanted to do. The position you are applying for is with a public relations and advertising agency. Its advertisement specified a degree and experience in public relations. While you only took a couple of public relations courses in college, you have worked with local politicians on their campaigns and with the intercollegiate communications office. You helped write press releases and organize events.

Student Activities

1. Contact five college recruiters from different corporations of diverse sizes. See if they use a behavior-based, talent-based, or trait-based system. If so, why do they use this system and how have they modified it over time to suit their specific needs? If they do not use such a system, why have they decided not to do so? If they have abandoned one of these systems after trying it for a few years, why did they abandon it?
2. Visit your college career center to discover the services and materials they offer. How do they counsel students who are trying to determine careers they might be interested in and qualified for? How can they help you arrange and prepare for interviews?
3. Take the Myers-Briggs Personality Indicator. How do the results compare to your self-perceptions? How might these results help determine career paths and positions?
4. Interview five recent college graduates with your major. How large were their networks, and how did they use these networks to locate positions? Who on their networks proved most helpful? How many interviews were involved in the hiring process for their current positions? Did they experience panel interviews as well as traditional

one-on-one interviews? How did screening interviews differ from determinate interviews? What were the most critical questions they were asked? What were the most critical questions they asked?

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The performance interview remains controversial.

When an organization attracts an employee who appears to be an ideal fit for its organizational culture and position and the new employee believes this position with this organization is an ideal career and life choice, both parties initiate a mutual, professional relationship. The employer's goals should be to develop, empower, and ultimately to retain the best talent the organization can attract. The millennial population from which employers must locate this talent values collaboration, mentoring, development, professional and personal growth, and opportunities to make a difference. Conducting frequent performance reviews is essential to achieving the goals of both parties.

Unfortunately, the performance review can be one of the most trying of management responsibilities, and much of this is due to its history. Until recently, reviews were called "appraisals" and were annual or semi-annual, top-down, judgmental processes with little input from the employee. After an exhaustive review of the literature and research on the "appraisal process," Michael Gordon and Vernon Miller drew two conclusions: that the process is the "source of widespread dissatisfaction" and "is an indispensable management responsibility."¹ Those of us who have been intimately involved in performance reviews can relate to these findings. In place of the traditional judgmental process, Gordon and Miller advocate an interview that is "a conversation about performance" that serves as the "defining moment in the appraisal process."² Their review also revealed that few interview parties are trained in conducting and taking part in these conversations.

The interview is the key to the performance review.

Fortunately, this new vision Gordon and Miller advocate is transforming how organizations are approaching the review process. Instead of the superior to subordinate relationship practiced in the past, the emphasis is on **collaborating** with employees to develop, empower and retain them. The interviewer is identified as a **coach** with all this word implies—to tutor, mentor, teach, inform, guide, and nurture. This philosophy of the performance review is an ideal fit with the millennial generation that will soon dominate the workforce.

The objectives of this chapter are to introduce you to the notion of the performance review interview as a *coaching process*, to ways of preparing effectively for these critical *organizational conversations*, to a variety of *review models*, to the principles of *conducting* and *taking part* in performance interviews, and to the performance *problem* interview. Let us begin by approaching the performance interview as a coaching event.

Approaching the Interview as a Coaching Opportunity

Author and management consultant Garold L. Markle advocates what he calls “catalytic coaching” designed to “energize and engage the human spirit at work.” He claims this approach “spells the end of the performance review” as we have known it. Markle describes catalytic coaching as:

A comprehensive, integrated performance management system built on a paradigm of development. Its purpose is to enable individuals to improve their production capabilities and rise to their potential, ultimately causing organizations to generate better business results. It features clearly defined infrastructure, methodology and skill sets. It assigns responsibility for career development to employees and establishes the boss as developmental coach.³

Catalytic coaching is *future* rather than *past* centered, places responsibility on the employee rather than the supervisor, and deals with salary indirectly. The supervisor is a coach rather than evaluator.

When we reviewed several performance review models designed to develop employees and enhance performance, the notion of coaching—effective communication in a nonjudgmental atmosphere—was the centerpiece of each. Former pro-football coach Don Shula and former pro-football player Ken Blanchard have developed a set of basic principles that appropriately spell out the word “coach.”⁴

- Conviction driven—Never compromise your beliefs.
- Overlearning—Practice until it’s perfect.
- Audible ready—Respond predictably to performance.
- Consistency of leadership—Consistency in performance.
- Honesty based—Walk the talk.

The coaching philosophy heightens the need for frequent contacts, discussions, and interviews between supervisors and employees that result in more favorable job-related performance ratings.⁵ Conversations about performance become reviews of prior discussions connected closely to developmental and coaching plans. Employees know what to expect and are not be confronted with surprises.

Create a supportive climate that involves the interviewee.

Establish a **relaxed and supportive climate** that is based on mutual trust. Employees must see fairness in the process, and Gordon and Miller claim “the nature of the communication that takes place” is “critical in creating” this sense of fairness.⁶ They want to be treated sensitively without being judged and to get credit and rewarded for what they have done. Trust encourages employees to participate actively and equally in all aspects of the review and makes them feel free to express feelings and ideas.

You play a major role in creating a positive and supportive climate by continually monitoring the employee’s progress, offering psychological support in the forms of praise and encouragement, helping correct mistakes, and offering substantial feedback. Base your review on performance, not on the individual. Provide performance-related information and measure performance against specific standards

**“Too seldom”
is a common
complaint.**

agreed upon during previous reviews. Providing feedback on a regular basis can avoid formal, once-a-year “tooth-pulling” reviews both parties dread. Identify poor performance immediately before damage to the organization and the employee is irreparable. Avoid surprises during the interview caused by withholding criticisms until the formal review session.

Preparing for the Performance Interview

**Be careful of
judging what
you cannot
measure.**

Training is essential because you must know how to create a genuine dialogue with the interviewee. Be attentive by not talking when the other wants to talk and by encouraging the employee to speak freely and openly. Be an active listener by asking appropriate and tactful questions. Provide guidance and support. Avoid “Why” questions that place the interviewee on the defensive and may intentionally or unintentionally communicate disapproval, disbelief, or mistrust. Playing the role of evaluator reduces the two-way communication process and affects your relationship negatively. Credible interviewers who know how to handle performance-related information, assign goals, and give feedback that is equitable, accurate, and clear.

Reviewing Rules, Laws, and Regulations

There are no laws that address the performance review directly, but several EEO laws and guidelines pertain to the review process. Be familiar with laws such as the following Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act as amended, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967, and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 forbid discrimination based on age, race, color, gender, religion, national origin, and physical and mental impairments. All

elements of the employment process are covered by civil rights laws and EEO guidelines, including hiring, training, compensating, promoting, transferring, and discharging.

Be careful when assessing traits such as honesty, integrity, appearance, initiative, leadership, attitude, and loyalty that are difficult to rate objectively and fairly. “Using unreliable and unvalidated performance appraisal” systems may cause serious legal problems because personal preferences, prejudices, and first impressions may lead to intentionally inflating or deflating performance ratings to get even, punish employees, or promote them to another department.⁷



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■ Supervisors at all levels have found it useful to talk periodically with each subordinate about personal and work-related issues.

Laws do not require performance reviews, but ones conducted must be standardized in form and administration, measure work performance, and be applied equally to all employees. Communication between “superiors” and “subordinants” in reviews may lead to ritual forms of address “that are guided by commonly understood cultural and social stereotypes, traditional etiquette, and gender-specific rules.”⁸ If so, do not be surprised if you violate EEO laws and guidelines. As the American workforce grows older, age discrimination is becoming a prominent area of litigation.

Diane Chinn and Maurice Baskin, two authorities on performance reviews and EEO laws, offer suggestions to make all reviews conform to the law and avoid lawsuits.⁹ Supervisors who conduct performance reviews must receive detailed written guidelines and instructions and be trained in conducting all aspects of reviews, particularly the interview. They must follow these guidelines to the letter. Have two or more staff review employees separately as cross-checks on accuracy and avoidance of bias. Be sure performance appraisals are reviewed with employees, making sure employees have the opportunity to offer suggestions and raise concerns before signing them. Employees should have full access to all records pertaining to their work.

Age will play an ever-greater role as baby boomers turn 50 and 60 in ever-greater numbers.

Selecting Review Model

Theorists and organizations have developed several performance review models that meet EEO laws and conduct fair and objective performance-centered interviews applicable to different types of positions and organizations. Their goals are to establish competencies, set goals and expectations, monitor performance, and provide meaningful feedback.

Behaviorally Anchored Rating Scales (BARS) Model

In the **behaviorally anchored rating scales** (BARS) model, interviewers identify skills essential to a specific position through a position analysis and set standards with the aid of industrial engineers. Typical jobs with behaviors identified and standards set include telephone survey takers (at so many telephone calls per hour), meter readers for utility companies (at so many meters per hour), and data entry staff or programmers (at so many lines of entry per hour). Job analysts identify specific skills and weigh their relative worth and usage. Each job has specific measurable skills that eliminate game-playing and subjective interpretation by interviewers.

Employees report high levels of review satisfaction with the BARS model because they feel they have greater impact upon the process and see interviewers as supportive. They know what skills they are expected to have, their relative worth to the organization, and how their performance will be measured. However, not every job has measurable or easily identifiable skills, and arguments often arise over when, how, and by whom specific standards are set. Gordon and Miller discovered that “Raters distort the evaluations they make on subjective instruments in order to achieve goals other than providing

The BARS model focuses on skills.

an accurate assessment of the employee's performance (e.g., maintaining interpersonal relationships and group harmony)."¹⁰

Management by Objectives (MBO) Model

The MBO model focuses on goals.

The MBO model applies four criteria to each position: quality, quantity, time, and cost.

Do not consider too many objectives.

The **management by objectives** model involves a supervisor and an employee in a mutual (50-50) setting of results-oriented goals rather than activities to be performed. Advocates of the MBO model contend that behaviorally based measures can account for more job complexity, be rated directly to what an employee does, and minimize factors the employee cannot control. This model is designed to be less role ambiguous and subjective than person-based measures by making clear which behaviors are required for a specific job. It facilitates performance feedback and goal setting by encouraging employer-employee discussions regarding strengths and weaknesses.

The MBO model classifies all work in terms of four major elements: inputs, activities, outputs, and feedback. Inputs include equipment, tools, materials, money, and staff needed to do the work. Activities refer to the actual work performed: typing, writing, drawing, calculating, selling, writing, shipping. Outputs are results, end products, dollars, reports prepared, or services rendered. Feedback refers to subsequent supervisor reaction (or lack of it) to the output. When you act as a performance review interviewer using an MBO model, keep several principles in mind.

1. Always consider quality, quantity, time, and cost. The more criteria you use, the greater the chances that the measurement will be accurate.
2. State results in terms of ranges rather than absolutes. Allow for freedom of movement and adjustment.
3. Keep the number of measurable objectives critical to performance to no more than six or eight, and set a mutual environment.
4. Try for trade-offs between mutually exclusive aims and measures. An objective that is too complex may be self-defeating. For example, attempts to reduce labor and decrease cost at the same time may create more problems than you solve.
5. When the value of the performance is abstract, initiate practices that make it measurable.
6. If you cannot predict conditions on which performance success depends, use a floating or gliding goal that enables you to adapt to changing circumstances. Unfortunately the strengths of the MBO model, including its interactive nature and adaptability to complex positions, have led many organizations to abandon it because of "the large number of meetings required and the amount of documentation necessitated." Gordon and Miller write that unlike other models, it cannot be standardized to facilitate comparisons "across individuals or organizational units."¹¹

Universal Performance Interviewing (UPI) Model

William B. Cash developed the **universal performance interviewing model** and tested it in more than 40 organizations.¹² This model begins with four basic questions that can

serve as guidelines for fairness and comparisons among employees. Interviewers must be able to specify what is missing or not being done well so they can provide feedback to institute change.

The UPI model focuses on performance and work requirements.

1. What is not being done that should be?
2. What expectations are not being met at what standard?
3. Could the person do it if motivated?
4. Does the individual have the skills to perform as needed?

Understand why performance is lagging.

Narrow each problem to a coachable answer. For example, maybe no one has emphasized that getting 100 percent of customers' numbers at the beginning of calls is critical because the customer number drives the system and makes it easier to access billing and other information under that number. Maybe the employee knows the customer's number by heart and intends to place it in the correct position on the screen after the customer hangs up. The observation judgment dilemma has always been a problem for performance reviewers.

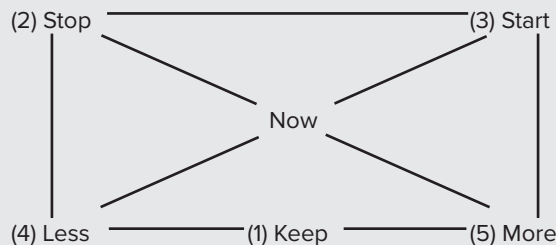
The four questions in conjunction with six key words shown in Figure 9.1 enable interviewers to make several observations about performance. This model can be employed with others (such as the popular 360-degree review process) or with separate observations by supervisors, peers, and customers (internal and external) that can be compared to one another for consistency, trends, and rater reliability.

A sheet of paper with the four questions in columns can provide the bases for coaching sessions that take place weekly for production workers and monthly for professionals. A summary session may be done quarterly with an annual review to set goals for the coming year, review progress, and look at developmental needs.

Reviews must recognize excellence as well as problems.

Once you have answered the four basic questions, start on the model with *keep*. When an employee is doing something well, make sure the person knows you appreciate a job well done. Then go to *stop*, followed by *start*, *less*, *more*, and finishing with a time frame for improving performance. The word *now* emphasizes the importance of making appropriate changes immediately. Define *now* specifically in terms of weeks or perhaps months.

Figure 9.1 Six key words in the universal performance interviewing model



Play the role of coach rather than evaluator or disciplinarian.

The universal performance interviewing model enables the coach to start with positive behavior for the employee to maintain, followed by behaviors to be corrected now. This begins the interview on a positive note. The *stop* list should be the shortest and reserved for behaviors that are qualitatively and procedurally incorrect, place an employee at risk, or are destructive to others in the workplace.

Present each of the four questions and the six words at different verbal and nonverbal levels, including hints, suggestions, and corrections. For example, you might say:

I want you to stop doing . . .

You must do more of . . .

I want you to start doing . . . now

You must do less of . . .

Interviewers may spend too much time on the analytical end and too little time on a specific behavior to be altered and how. If there is no specific alternative behavior, do not discuss it.

Don't turn a mole hill problem into a mountain.

Use the customer service representative mentioned earlier as an example. Assume that the representative knows many customer numbers because of the frequency of calls from them and has the numbers memorized. She thinks it is unnecessary to log each number into the system until she has finished discussing specific problems with customers. One of the following styles may present the problem without making it worse.

Hint and suggest before correcting.

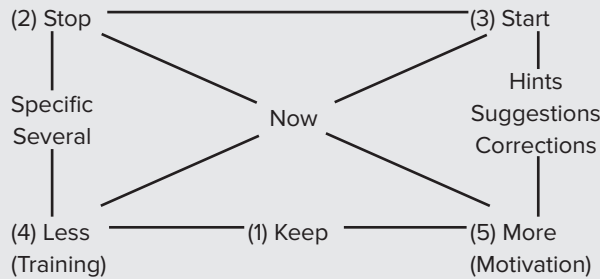
- *Hint:* (smiling pleasantly) I noticed you were busy this morning when I stopped by to observe you. I just thought it might be easier for you to record each customer's number at the beginning of your conversation.
- *Suggestion:* (neutral facial expression and matter-of-fact vocal inflections) Just one idea came to mind from my observation this morning. I'd like to see you record each customer's number early so it doesn't get lost in the shuffle of answers to other callers.
- *Correction:* (stern voice and face) Based on my observation this morning, you must be sure to record each customer's number before you do anything else on the system for that number. This number drives our entire system, and problems result when it is not recorded immediately.

Vague comments and suggestions may harm relationships and fail to improve performance.

A major purpose of every performance interview is to provide accurate feedback to the employee about what must be altered, changed, or eliminated and when. Most employees want to do a good job, and the performance mentor or coach must provide direction for resolving the problem.

Another part of the model, crucial in performance interviews, are the two Ss—*specific* and *several*. Performance interviews are not guessing games. The two Ss enable interviewers to provide specific examples to show the problem is not a one-time incident.

Figure 9.2 includes all parts of the universal performance interviewing model. It enables you to measure or observe on-the-job behavior and either compare it to goals or quickly correct the smallest error.

Figure 9.2 *The universal performance interviewing model*

The 360-Degree Approach

The 360-degree approach involves multiple observers.

The **360-degree** approach, while controversial, has gained acceptance in many large organizations. It enables them to receive input on employee performance from major constituents such as clients, customers, subcontractors, supervisors, and peers.

Although firms employ different 360-degree processes, an employee typically meets with a mentor or coach to select a review team that may include a direct supervisor, staff at the same level as the employee, colleagues, and staff from other departments within the organization. The process requires a review team with interpersonal and coaching skills. Each member of the review team fills out a questionnaire covering the employee's skills, knowledge, and style. When the completed questionnaires are summarized, scored, and displayed on a spreadsheet, the facilitator takes the raw data and interviews each team member. The employee receives the data prior to an interview with the team. The purpose of the review interview is to provide objective, behavior-based feedback, and suggestions for improvement. Compliments are integral to the process.

The 360-degree approach uses a team feedback interview.

The facilitator may ask the employee to start with reactions to the data and then ask open questions with neutral probes. For example:

- Tell me about your responsibilities in R&D.
Tell me more.
Explain it to me.
Describe your frustrations with the consultants' training manual.
- If you were going to take on a similar project, what would you do more or less of?
- When you identified people in accounting as "bean-counters", what did you mean?
How did they behave?
What did they say?
What did they do?

Employ open questions and probe into answers.

ON THE WEB

As you begin to think seriously about specific careers and organizations, investigate how organizations assess the performance of employees. Use the Internet to discover the types of performance review models used by employers in which you have a career interest. Access two types of resources. First, research employers through general resources such

as CareerBuilder (<http://www.careerbuilder.com>), MonsterTrak (<http://www.monstertrak.com/>), and Monster (<http://www.monster.com/>). Second, check the Web sites of specific organizations such as Pricewaterhousecoopers (<http://www.pwc.com>), Ford (<http://www.ford.com/>), and Electronic Data Systems (<http://www.eds.com>).

Be aware of pluses and minuses of each review model.

Once the feedback session is completed, both parties formulate a plan for improvement.

The use of **multisource feedback** for employee development works best in organizations that use a goal-setting process from the top down. The 360-degree approach has a number of pluses. The questionnaires and interview provide objective data and feedback necessary for employee improvement and development because this feedback emanates from multiple sources: supervisors, peers, subordinates, and clients. The employee controls who gives feedback but is able to read, hear, and discuss the data that provide documentation for dealing with the performance review.

Although the 360-degree approach is used widely as a performance review model, its critics raise serious questions that organizations need to address to make it reliable and effective.¹³ Some critics see the 360-degree approach as too similar to the old appraisal system in which superiors placed undue emphasis on what the employee was not doing well. They also cite untrained staff with little experience in important areas leading to deficient data on performance. Careful selection of the review team with strong employee input can reduce the influence of superiors, and training can resolve lack of experience and expertise of team members. Another criticism is that anonymous input from the team may be inaccurate, incompetent, and biased. Organizations must build transparency into the system that provides quality input while protecting the employee and members of the team. Critics also attack the underlying assumption that more people involved necessarily make for better performance reviews. Limiting the number of team members can resolve this concern. Garold Markle criticizes the 360-degree approach as too time-consuming on the parts of employee and staff. It may take weeks or months to complete. Organizations selecting this approach must develop tight time-lines for conducting and completing performance reviews using this system so they do not consume too many resources and drag on too long. Timely feedback and improvements in performance are essential to all review models.

Select a model best suited to your organization and employees.

Choosing from among these models, modifying one of them, or creating a model that seems best for your organization and employees is critical to the review process. Unfortunately, studies reveal that many organizations try one model or system after another and often adopt one that other organizations are abandoning.¹⁴

The Performance Interview

Select and understand the perspective of the interview.

Selecting or modifying a performance review model for your organization and employees is central to developing, empowering, and retaining the best talent. The best model will fail to achieve these goals, however, if it is not planned and conducted skillfully or if either party is dissatisfied with its nature or outcome. Effective communication is critical in every performance review.

Planning the Interview

Understand the nature of the employee's position and work and then design forms and questionnaires that focus on relevant and measurable goals. Pay particular attention to the fit between the employee, the position, and the work performed. What is the primary purpose of this interview, particularly if it is one among several interviews? Study the employee's past record, recent performance reviews, and reports from the person's mentor or coach. Review the employee's self-evaluation if one is part of the process.

Know yourself. Do you have potential biases that may affect the interaction? If so, how can you minimize or eliminate them? How comfortable are you with a developmental perspective that is employee-directed, bottom-up, skill-based, now- and future-oriented, and collaborative in nature? If a performance review team is involved, how comfortable and effective are you as a facilitator or as a team member?

What is the nature of your past and current relationship with the employee? If you are serving as the employee's mentor or coach, how amicable and collaborative is this relationship? What is the level of trust between you and the employee and between each member of the review team and the employee? Effective communication and cooperation suffers whenever an employee has serious concerns about the fairness of any part of the review process and any member of the review team. Research indicates, for instance, that reviewers evaluate employees differently when their relationships differ.

Opening the Interview

Provide privacy because the interview may delve into sensitive matters. Choose a seating arrangement that is comfortable, enhances communication, and avoids any semblance of superior and subordinate positions. Greet the employee in a warm and friendly manner and begin with some small talk. Do not prolong the opening, however, because this may enhance apprehension of what may be coming. Fear of performance reviews often comes from a history of unpleasant and nonproductive encounters with interviewers and teams, and this history may interfere with the communication between you and the employee in this interview. As a result, the review process may fail to achieve its full potential unless you can defuse such concerns and fears at the outset.

Begin orientation by noting that this is a routine part of the review process and not the result of some major problem or concern. Emphasize that it is a collaborative effort to develop and empower each employee to grow professionally and personally and to make a difference within organization and community. Provide a brief outline of how

Relationship influences both parties and the nature of the interview.

Be prepared but flexible in opening the interview.

the interview will proceed with the employee's input. If the employee wants to address a relevant topic or issue first, do it. No interview plan should be set in stone if it is to be a professional conversation about performance. Encourage the employee to ask questions, provide input, introduce topics, and participate freely.

Discussing Performance

Use all of your listening skills.

Communication skills are essential when discussing performance. Be aware of nonverbal cues you and the interviewee may be exchanging. It is often not **what is said** but **how it is said**. Avoid words and actions that either party may perceive as accusatory or threatening or to insinuate criticism, skepticism, or blame. Be an active listener, and adapt your listening approach to the changing needs of the interview, listening for comprehension when you need to understand, for evaluation when you must appraise, with empathy when you must show sensitivity and understanding, and for resolution when developing courses of action to enhance performance.

Feedback is central in performance interviews.

Maintain an atmosphere that ensures two-way communication beyond Level 1 by being sensitive, providing feedback and positive reinforcement, reflecting feelings, and exchanging information. Feedback may be your most important skill. Consider using more than one interviewer because research indicates that the team approach produces higher judgment validation, better developmental action planning, greater compliance with EEO laws, more realistic promotion expectations, and reduced perception of favoritism.

Develop a true dialogue with the interviewee.

Make the discussion full and open between both parties with the goal of improving individual and organizational performance. Keys to success are your abilities to communicate information effectively and encourage open dialogue. Strive to be a coach in career management and development.

Discuss the interviewee's total performance, not just one event. Begin with areas of excellence so you can focus on the person's strengths. Strive for an objective, positive integration of work and results. Cover standards that are met and encourage the interviewee to identify strengths. Communicate factual, performance-related information and give specific examples.

Strive for a balance between praise and criticism.

Excessive praise or criticism may create anxiety and distrust. Employees expect and desire to discuss performance weaknesses. An employee who receives no negative feedback or suggestions of ways to improve will not know which behavior to change. Discuss needed improvements in terms of specific behaviors in a constructive, nondirective, problem-solving manner. Employees are likely to know what they are not doing, but unlikely to know what they should be doing. Let the employee provide input. Probe tactfully and sensitively for causes of problems. On the other hand, do not heap criticism upon the employee. The more you point out shortcomings, the more threatened, anxious, and defensive the employee will become. As a perceived threat grows, so will the person's negative attitude toward you and the review process. It is often not what is intended that counts but what the other party believes is intended.

There are many ways to ruin a performance review. The **halo effect** occurs when you give favorable ratings to all duties when the interviewee excels in only one. The **pitchfork effect** leads to negative ratings for all facets of performance because of a

particular trait you dislike in others. The **central tendency** causes you to refrain from assigning extreme ratings to facets of performance. The **recency error** occurs when you rely too heavily on the most recent events or performance levels. The length of service of an interviewee may lead you to assume that present performance is high because past performance was high. The **loose rater** is reluctant to point out weak areas and dwells on the average or better areas of performance. The **tight rater** believes that no one can perform at the necessary standards. And **competitive raters** believe no one can perform higher than their levels of performance.

Use question tools to gain and verify information.

Summarize the performance discussion and make sure the employee has had ample opportunity to ask questions and make comments before establishing goals. Use reflective probes and mirror questions to verify information received and feedback given. Use clearinghouse questions to be sure the employee has no further concerns or comments.

Setting New Goals and a Plan of Action

Focus on the future and not the past.

Although you are likely to focus on past and current performance early in the interview, it is vitally important that you look toward future goals, growth, and paths for the employee. The millennial generation is heavily interested in professional and personal growth and opportunities to make a difference.

The interviewee must be an active participant.

Review previous goals before setting new ones because both parties must be able to determine when goals have been met and why. Make goals few in number, specific and well-defined rather than ambiguous, practical, neither too easy nor too difficult, and measurable. Avoid either-or statements, demands, and ultimatums. Combining feedback and employee suggestions with clear goal setting—while avoiding intentional or unintentional imposition of goals—produces the highest employee satisfaction. Decide upon follow-up procedures with the employee and how goals will be implemented.

Close with the perception that the interview has been valuable for both parties.

Closing the Interview

Do not rush the closing. Be sure the interviewee understands all that has transpired. Conclude on a note of trust and open communication and with the feeling that this has been an important session for interviewee, interviewer, and the organization. If you have filled out a required form, sign off on all agreements. If organizational policy allows, permit interviewees to put notes by items they feel strongly about. Provide a copy of the signed form as a record of the plan for the coming performance period.

The Employee in the Performance Review

Do a self-evaluation before the interview.

Maintain complete, detailed, accurate, and verifiable records of your career activities, initiatives, accomplishments, successes, and problem areas. Make a list of goals set during the last performance review. Keep letters and e-mails that contain positive and unsolicited comments from supervisors, co-workers, subordinates, clients, customers, and management. Analyze your strengths and weaknesses and be prepared for

corrective actions with ideas to improve on your own. Self-criticism may soften criticism from others.

At least half of the responsibility for making the performance interview a success rests with you. Approach the interview as a valuable source of information on prospects for advancement, a chance to get meaningful feedback about how the organization views your performance and future, and an opportunity to display your strengths and accomplishments. Be prepared to give concrete examples of how you have met or exceeded expectations. Prepare intelligent, well-thought-out questions, and be ready to discuss career goals.

Avoid unnecessary defensiveness.

Maintain a productive, positive relationship with the interviewer. Avoid defensiveness unless there is something to become defensive about. If the interviewer puts you on the defense, maintain direct eye contact and clarify the facts before answering charges. Ask, “How did this information come to your attention?” or “What are the exact production figures for the third quarter?” This gives you time to formulate thorough and reasonable responses based on complete understanding of the situation. Answer all questions thoroughly. Ask for clarification of questions you do not understand. Offer explanations, not excuses. Assess your performance and abilities reasonably, and be honest with yourself and your supervisor. Realize that what you are, what you think you are, what others think you are, and what you would like to be may describe different people.

A good offense is better than a good defense.

The performance review interview is not a time to be shy or self-effacing. Mention achievements such as special or extra projects, help you have given other employees, and community involvement. Be honest about challenges or problems you expect to encounter in the future. Correct any of the interviewer’s false impressions or mistaken assumptions. Do not be afraid to ask for help.

Leave your temper at the door.

If you are confronting a serious problem, discover how much time is available to solve it. Suggest or request ways to solve your differences as soon as possible. The interviewer is not out to humiliate you, but to help you grow for your own sake and that of the organization. Keep your cool. Telling off your supervisor may give you a brief sense of satisfaction, but the person will still be your supervisor and the problem will be worse. Do not try to improve everything at once. Set priorities with manageable short- and long-range goals.

During the closing, summarize or restate problems, solutions, and new goals in your own words. Be sure you understand all that has taken place and agreements for the next review period. Close on a positive note with a determination to meet the new goals.

The Performance Problem Interview

Employee problems range from excessive absences, simple theft, failure to follow rules and procedures, and insubordination with supervisors to actions that threaten the well-being of fellow employees and supervisors, the organization, or customers and clients. The current practice is to handle all but extreme cases as a performance problem that requires coaching and to avoid the use of the term *discipline* that *implies guilt*. In many states, employers must show *just cause* for disciplining or terminating an employee.

Determine Just Cause

When “just cause” pertains to employment, it means that an employer must have sufficient justification for disciplining an employee to improve performance (rather than as punishment) or to terminate employment because of “misconduct irreconcilable or inconsistent with the contract of employment.”¹⁵ The opposite of just cause is *at will* which means that “either party may terminate the employment relationship at any time for any reason.”¹⁶

Seven tests have become standard criteria employed in both union and nonunion discipline and termination actions.¹⁷ They can serve as guides when conducting performance problem interviews.

- *Was the employee given clear and unambiguous warning of possible disciplinary consequences for failure to follow a rule or directive?*

Follow an oral warning with a written warning within a short time.

- *Was the rule or directive reasonably related to the orderly, efficient, and safe operation of the organization?*

This rule or directive must be applied routinely and equally to all similar employees.

- *Before taking action, was the alleged incident investigated timely to determine if the employee had in fact disobeyed a rule or directive?*

Timely usually means that an investigation occurred within one to three days.

- *Was the investigation conducted fairly, objectively, and in an impartial manner?*

Did the employer interview all parties involved and obtain all necessary proof and documentation?

- *Was adequate evidence and documentation gathered to prove that a violation of a rule or directive had occurred?*

Write down the problem in detail and obtain necessary proof and records before arranging for a performance problem interview.

- *Were all employees determined to be in violation of a rule or directive given equal treatment?*

Each organizational investigation of a performance problem must be conducted in exactly the same manner with no evidence of discrimination.

- *Is the penalty applied reasonably related to the seriousness of the problem and the employee’s total performance record?*

Penalties must be appropriate for the performance problem and progressive rather than regressive in nature.

Treat all employees fairly and equally.

The punishment must fit the infraction.

Practice before conducting the real thing.

Prepare for the Interview

Prepare for performance problem interviews by taking part in realistic role-playing cases. These rehearsals can lessen anxiety and help you anticipate employee reactions, questions, and rebuttals. The variety of situations and interviewees encountered can help you refine your case-making, questioning, and responding.

Prepare for common employee responses that occur in the majority of performance problem interviews.

Be prepared for common reactions and responses.

1. *Apparent compliance*: overpoliteness and deference, apologies, promises, or statements of good intentions.
2. *Relational leverage*: statements that they have been with the organization longer than the interviewer and therefore know best, that they are the best and you can't fire or discipline them, reference to friends or relatives within the organization, or reference to your close relationship to them.
3. *Alibis*: claims of tiredness, sickness, being overworked, budget cuts, family problems, it's someone else's fault, or poor instructions or information.
4. *Avoidance*: disappearing on sick leave or vacation, failure to respond to memos or phone calls, or failure to make an appointment.

What evidence do you have of the infraction?

Review *how* you know the employee has committed an infraction that warrants an interview. Did you see the infraction directly, as in the case of absenteeism, poor workmanship, intoxication, harassing another employee, or insubordination? Did you find out indirectly through a third party or by observing the results (such as lateness of a report, poor quality products, or goals unmet)? Were you anticipating an infraction because of a previous incident, behavior, or stereotype? For example, African-Americans and other minorities are often watched more closely than others because supervisors believe they are more likely to violate rules. On the other hand, supervisors tend to be lenient with persons they perceive as likable, similar to themselves, or possessing high status or exceptional talent. Supervisors may avoid confronting persons they know will “explode” if confronted. Avoid the practice of **gunnysacking** (a word based on the old burlap bag) in which you store up several grievances before dumping them on an employee all at once. While evading confrontation for a time, gunnysacking merely delays the inevitable, significantly worsens your relationship with the employee, and clouds the issue that has finally brought the employee's behavior to this point. The interviewee is likely to be hostile with attention diverted to prior behaviors instead of the current and probably most important one. Delay is not the easy way out.

Distinguish between the severity of infractions.

Decide whether the perceived problem warrants a review. Absenteeism and low performance are generally considered more serious than tardiness and horseplay. Determine the cause of the infraction because this will affect how you conduct the interview and determine what action to take.

Review the employee's past performance and history. Two basic reasons for action are poor performance and a troubled employee. When a person's performance gradually declines, the cause may be motivational, work-related, or lack of mentoring. Drops in performance are indicated by swings in the employee's behavior or mood. Keep an eye on indicators such as attendance, quality or quantity of work, willingness to take instructions, cooperation with supervisors, and interactions with colleagues and clients.

When an employee's performance declines suddenly, causes may be a marital problem, a breakup with a girlfriend or boyfriend, problem with a child, money problems,

a gambling habit, alcohol or drug dependency, or a physical or mental health problem. Clinical depression is common. These employees may need medical help or professional counseling. Know your limits. Coaching and mentoring may do more harm than good. Know that EEO laws restrict actions of employers in some of these situations. Review Chapter 11 on the counseling interview to see which problems lay counselors can and cannot address.

Relational dimensions are critical in performance problem interviews.

What is your relationship with the employee at this time? Often neither party may want to take part, and you may have delayed the interview until there is no recourse and multiple problems have piled up. As problems come to a head, you and the employee may come to dislike and mistrust one another, even to the point of verbal and nonverbal abuse.

Keep Self and the Situation under Control

Uncontrolled anger can destroy an interaction.

While you want to head off a problem before it becomes critical, do not conduct a performance problem interview when you are angry. You will be unable to control the interview if you are unable to control yourself. Trust, cooperation, and disclosure are difficult to attain in a threatening environment.

When one party has difficulty containing anger or animosity, follow these suggestions.

- *Hold the interview in a private location.* Meet where you and the employee can discuss the problem freely and openly.
- *When severe problems arise, consider delaying a confrontation and obtaining assistance.* Let tempers cool down. You may want to consult a counselor or call security before acting.
- *Include a witness.* The witness should be another supervisor because using one employee as a witness against another employee is dangerous for all parties involved. Follow to the letter all procedures spelled out in the union contract and organizational policies.

Focus on the Problem

Deal with facts rather than impressions and opinions.

Deal in *facts*, such as absences, witnesses, departmental records, and previous disciplinary actions. Do not allow the situation to become a trading contest: “Well, look at all the times I have been on time” or “How come others get away with it?”

- *Record all available facts.* Unions, EEOC, and attorneys often require complete and accurate records. Take detailed notes, record the time and date on all material that might be used later, and obtain the interviewee’s signature or initials for legal protection. Establish a **paper trail**.
- *Do not be accusatory.* Avoid words and statements such as troublemaker, drunk, thief, and liar. You cannot make medical diagnoses so avoid medical terms.
- *Preface remarks carefully.* Begin comments with phrases such as “According to your attendance report . . .,” “As I understand it . . .,” and “I have observed . . .” These force you to be factual and avoid accusing an employee of being guilty until proven innocent.

Ask questions that draw out the interviewee.



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- *Never conduct a performance review interview when you are angry and conduct the interview in a private location.*

**Be slow
to draw
conclusions.**

Closing the Interview

Conclude the interview in neutral. If discipline is appropriate, do it. Realize, however, that delaying action may enable you to think more clearly about the incident. Be consistent with organizational policies, the union contract, and all employees. Refer to your organization's prescribed disciplinary actions for specific offenses.

- *Ask questions that enable the employee to express feelings and explain behavior.* Begin questions with "Tell me what happened . . .," "When he said that, what did you . . .," "Why do you feel that . . .?" Open-ended questions allow you to get facts, feelings, and explanations from the employee.

Avoid Conclusions during the Interview

A hastily drawn conclusion may create more problems than it solves. Some organizations train supervisors to use standard statements under particular circumstances. If you are sending an employee off the job, you may say:

- "I do not believe you are in a condition to work, so I am sending you home. Report to me tomorrow at . . ."
- "I want you to go to medical services and have a test made; bring me a slip from the physician when you return to my office."
- "I'm sending you off the job. Call me tomorrow morning at nine, and we can discuss what action I will take."

Such statements give you time to talk to others, think about possible actions, and cool-off.

Summary

Performance reviews should play an integral role in developing, empowering, and retaining employees. They should occur frequently and be collaborative efforts to further the goals of both employee and employer. Avoid top-down appraisals in which the superior is a judge and disciplinarian. Strive to be a coach or a mentor in reviews that are professional conversations about performance with an emphasis on the future rather than the past. There are a number of performance models you might employ. Select or modify one that is best suited to your organization and the work an employee performs and which assesses performance accurately and positively. If you detect problems in performance or on-the-job behavior, do not let them accumulate and then drop them on the employee all at once, a practice that is called gunnysacking. Help employees gain insights into their performance and behavior and how each affects them, fellow employees, clients, and the organization.

Key Terms and Concepts

360-degree approach	Competitive rater	Pitchfork effect
At will	Gunnysacking	Recency error
Behavior-based feedback	Halo effect	Supportive climate
Behaviorally anchored rating scales	Just cause	Tight rater
Catalytic coaching	Loose rater	Universal performance interviewing model
Central tendency	Management by objectives	
	Multisource feedback	

Performance Review Role-Playing Cases

An Aircraft Maintenance Specialist

The interviewer is the Maintenance Supervisor at the central maintenance repair facility for Mid-American Airlines, a regional carrier. He is conducting a quarterly performance review interview with a maintenance specialist who joined the airline three years ago right out of a university aviation technology program. His record has been excellent with only a few minor problems that appear to have been resolved. Unfortunately, the airline has suffered from a great deal of bad publicity following two recent incidents in which rows of seats came unbolted during flights. No injuries have occurred, but the FAA and consumer advocacy groups are demanding answers. Since the interviewee is primarily responsible for checking and repairing passenger seats, the interviewer will probe into reasons for these potentially deadly occurrences and discover what the interviewee has done and plans to do to make certain no seats come loose in flight again.

A Volleyball Coach

The interviewer is the Athletic Director at Forbes College and reviews the performance of all coaches prior to the start of their seasons in late August and when seasons end from January to May. The interviewee is the head coach of the women's volleyball team that has won 54 percent of its games each of the past three years. This year is expected to be the break-out year because the team is loaded with experience and has two highly recruited players. This interview will focus on the prospects for a stellar season and how the coach is working at motivating the team individually and as a whole. Her teams traditionally start strong and then fade near the end of the season. Degree of success this season may determine the coach's future at Forbes College.

A Retail Manager

The interviewer is the manager of a large department store and conducts performance reviews with the departmental managers semi-annually. The employee is the Women's Department Manager. She is forty-two years old and a single mother of four children ages thirteen to nineteen. The interviewee does an excellent job. She anticipates

problems, thinks of a variety of appropriate solutions for every problem, and is highly professional in manner and dress. Unfortunately, she is starting to come in late for work rather frequently and seems to have ready-made excuses for each occasion, some of which are barely believable. The interviewer must determine how to approach this manager about the effects her tardiness are causing in her department without affecting her outstanding work. She does not want to lose this manager, but she must help her to correct this problem.

A Troubleshooter

The interviewer is the vice president of a large paper products manufacturer that has plants throughout the United States and in several other countries. He oversees plant managers and engineering troubleshooters who travel weekly to different plants to resolve production problems, set up and troubleshoot new computer systems, and train personnel in operating new production equipment. The interviewee, a former plant manager, is an excellent troubleshooter, but he is becoming unhappy with the constant travel and being away from his family. This performance interview is aimed at keeping the interviewee happy and on the job as well as reviewing performance.

Student Activities

1. Interview a human resources director at a medium-to-large organization about performance reviews. Ask questions such as: Which performance review system or model do you employ? Why did you select this system? How did you adapt this model to your organization? How do you train interviewers to be coaches rather than judges? How do you address potential bias in performance reviews?
2. Compare and contrast Garold Markle's "catalytic coaching" approach to performance review with the behaviorally anchored rating scales model, the management by objectives model, and the universal performance interviewing model. How might the catalytic coaching approach alter each and improve each?
3. Contact supervisors at three different types of organizations: industrial, academic, and nonprofit. Ask about the types and severity of behavioral problems they have encountered among employees during the past three years. What were the causes of these problems? How did they use performance interviews to address these problems? Who were involved in these interviews? How were interviews adapted to type and severity of behavioral problems? How effective were the interviews in resolving the problems short of dismissal?
4. Terminating employees is always a difficult decision for organizations to make and is fraught with problems ranging from an angry employee, to lawsuits for unfair and unjustified termination, to violence following termination. Interview three people who have experience in terminating employees to discover how they prepare cases for termination, conduct performance problem interviews that will result in termination, and how they attempt to safeguard against lawsuits and potential violence.

Notes

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2. Gordon and Miller, p. x.
3. Garold L. Markle, *Catalytic Coaching: The End of the Performance Review* (Westport, CT: Quorum Books, 2000), p. 4.
4. Taken from *Everyone's a Coach* by Don Shula and Ken Blanchard. Copyright 1995 by Shula Enterprises and Blanchard Family Partnership. Used by permission of Zondervan Publishing House (<http://www.zondervan.com>).
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10. Gordon and Miller, pp. 21 and 23.
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16. Kirk A. Johnson and Elizabeth Moser, "Improvement #4: Limit 'Just Cause' Discipline and Discharge Clauses," <http://www.mackinac.org/4915>, accessed October 4, 2012.
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The Persuasive Interview

You cannot avoid persuasion in our society.

A great many interviews such as investigations, survey research, employment, and performance review contain elements of persuasion. This chapter, however, focuses on interviews in which persuasion is the primary and dominant purpose. Sales interviews come immediately to mind, but you take part in a persuasive interview whenever one party is attempting to influence how another party **thinks, feels, and/or acts**. The parties may be attorney and client, customer and sales associate, student and professor, voter and candidate, parent and child, or a believer and nonbeliever. The pervasiveness of persuasion in our daily lives led Roderick Hart to write that “one must only breathe to need to know something about persuasion.”¹ Too often we think of persuasion as something **done to** rather than **done with** another party, but the persuasive interview like all interviews should be a **mutual interaction** in which both parties play active and critical roles.

The objectives of this chapter are to enable you to understand the ethics and responsibilities of each party in persuasive interviews. Each must be active, critical, and open-minded. Each must know, understand, and respect one another. Each must be thoroughly informed on the issue and situation. And each must know how to structure, develop, and support positions on issues that range from simple efforts to persuade a friend to try a new restaurant to highly complex interviews dealing with social, political, religious, and commercial issues.

The Ethics of Persuasion

Ethics and persuasion are interrelated.

Since the persuasive interview is a mutual activity in which the intent is to alter or sustain the other party's ways of thinking, feeling, and or acting, both parties “have the responsibility to uphold appropriate ethical standards of persuasion.”² This is easy to say, but it is often difficult to determine which ethical standards are most appropriate for specific situations with diverse parties. We will begin by trying to distinguish between what is ethical and what is unethical in persuasive interactions.

What Is Ethical?

When do you cross ethical boundaries?

Johannesen claims that “**Ethical issues** focus on value judgments concerning degrees of right and wrong, virtue and vice, and ethical obligations in human conduct.”³ **Value judgments** mean that each party must determine what is ethical according to personal and prevailing societal values and make judgments about the **degree** of right or wrong, goodness or badness in highly diverse situations and actions. The words we use every

day indicate how each of us struggles when determining degrees of right or wrong. For instance, when someone tells an untruth—a lie, we may call it a misstatement, coloring the truth, misleading, hedging, or placing a spin on an issue depending upon the severity of the lie, the repercussions, or who said it and in what context and situation. If a person is charged with stealing—a theft, we may call it pocketing, sampling, freeloading, cheating, or making a bad decision. In other words, each of us makes value judgments and assigns degrees of right and wrong, goodness and badness, and these may depend on our relationships with persons, situations, and actions.

Every persuasive strategy and tactic presented in this chapter, including careful analysis and adaptation to the other party, may be manipulated or misused and, therefore, become unethical. Ethical standards, or lack thereof, vary greatly in our society, so how can we come up with an acceptable code of ethics to guide us in persuasive interviews? Since persuasion is pervasive in most societies, each of us has the responsibility to develop one.

Fundamental Ethical Guidelines

As you proceed toward a personal code of ethics for persuasion, start with the proposition that you must be **responsible** for **what you do** when trying to alter or sustain the way another person thinks, feels, or acts. The golden rule—Do unto others as you would have them do unto you—is a good place to start because you know what you do not want others to do to you. Gary Woodward and Robert Denton offer a starting point that is close to the golden rule, “ethical communication should be fair, honest, and designed not to hurt other people.”⁴ In other words, follow the physicians’ maxim, “First, do no harm.”

What are the implications of the golden rule?

Be Honest: Most likely you are basically honest and seldom tell outright lies, but you might “fib” a bit about missing a class or being late for work, “exaggerate” a little to gain approval or sympathy, or “fudge” on a desire or motive. If you are truly honest, however, you will *not* conceal your true motives, compromise your ideas and ideals to gain an advantage, fail to divulge disbelief in what you advocate, or camouflage unwillingness to fulfill commitments and promises. Herbert Simons suggests that you ask “Could I justify my act publicly if called on to do so?”⁵

Be Fair: If you follow the golden rule, fairness will not be a problem. Ask yourself: How vulnerable is the other party because of status difference (authority, expertise, age, health, finances, position held)? How serious are the possible consequences of this interview? How adequate and fair are my arguments, facts, language, tactics, and claims? Am I stockpiling objections and grievances until late in the interview? Am I throwing in irrelevant, trivial, or far-fetched ideas and arguments to derail the interview? Strong and sometimes emotional disagreements are common in persuasive interviews, but unfair tactics may result in irreparable harm to this and future interactions with this party.

Being fair is the basis of ethical persuasion.

Be Skeptical: Trust others, but do not be gullible. Every con artist depends on your assistance and gullibility. Balance your trust with skepticism. Do not let greed or getting something for nothing make you a willing accomplice. Be wary of simplistic assertions, claims, promises, and solutions that guarantee quick fixes and really good deals. Slick operators may succeed for years because clients ask few questions, do no research, and refuse to listen to those who urge caution.

Appearance
too often
outweighs
substance.

Be Thoughtful and Deliberate in Judgment: The “buyer beware” notion of ethics, alive and well in Ponzi schemes, places the burden of proof on you, the persuadee. Listen, think, question, synthesize, and research, then decide whether or not to accept a person, idea, or proposal. Both parties in persuasive interviews must ask critical questions and demand answers supported by solid evidence. Research indicates that people are typically more interested in appearance than substance. If you like the other party who looks like you, acts like you, sounds like you, talks like you, and appears to have the *right connections* (persons, religions, businesses, political parties, financial institutions), you may assume proposals are logical and acceptable. The *appearance* of reasoning may be more important than substance. You may accept sources and “experts” as long as they agree with your preconceived beliefs, attitudes, and values.

Be open to
opposing
views.

Be Open-Minded: Being open-minded does not mean that you do not have strong beliefs, attitudes, values, and commitments. It does mean that you do not *automatically assume* that persuaders of certain professions, political parties, religions, races, genders, ages, or cultures are trustworthy/untrustworthy, competent/incompetent, caring/uncaring. This is “persuader profiling.” Likewise, do not automatically accept or reject proposals that challenge the ways things have always been done or that appear to be new.

Be Responsive: Provide feedback so the other party understands your needs, limitations, and perceptions of what is taking place and being agreed to. Reveal what you are thinking and how you are reacting. Be actively involved in the interview from opening through closing. Johannesen writes that “persuasion can be seen as a transaction in which both persuaders and persuadees bear mutual responsibility to participate actively in the process.”⁶

With ethical issues and responsibilities clearly in mind, let us focus on the roles of persuader and persuadee and how each should prepare for and take part in persuasive interviews.

Part 1: The Interviewer in the Persuasive Interview

Success in any persuasive interview is never guaranteed because interviewees and situations vary greatly, and they may change from hour to hour, day to day, or season to season. Your chances of success are significantly improved, however, if your persuasive interview can satisfy five criteria.

1. Your proposal appears to create or address this interviewee’s needs, desires, or motives.
2. Your proposal and you (including your profession and organization) appear to be consistent with this interviewee’s values, beliefs, and attitudes.
3. Your proposal appears to be feasible, practical, or affordable for this interviewee.
4. Your proposal’s advantages appear to outweigh its disadvantages for this interviewee.
5. There appears to be no better course of action for this interviewee.

Each of these criteria focuses on **the party you are going to interview**, not on students, clients, customers, or contributors in general. The advantage of the interview is that you can **tailor your persuasive effort to each party**, but this tailoring requires you to learn everything that is relevant about a party as you prepare for an interview.

The lack of information on interviewees is what makes the success rate of “cold calls” very low. Estimates are that only 5 to 10 people out of 100 will listen to cold calls, 2 to 3 may be interested, and only 1 will “buy.”⁷

Analyzing the Interviewee

Learn everything you can about the interviewee so you can tailor your message to this person rather than create a generic approach that is “sort of” adapted. Seek answers to four questions. What are the interviewee’s personal characteristics? What are the interviewee’s educational, social, and economic backgrounds? What are the interviewee’s cultural differences? What are the interviewee’s values, beliefs, and attitudes? What are the interviewee’s feelings?

Personal Characteristics

Take into consideration relevant personal characteristics such as age, gender, race, size, health, disabilities, physical fitness, appearance, and intelligence. Any one or a combination of these characteristics may affect what a person is *able to do* or *wants to do*. Avoid societal stereotypes such as elderly people are slow and gullible, blonds are dumb, Hispanics are illegal aliens, women are technically challenged, and those with poor health lead unhealthy lives. Each one of us is a composite of personal characteristics that defy stereotypes. Research indicates, however, that level of intelligence tends to make interviewees less receptive to persuasion. Highly intelligent interviewees are more influenced by evidence and logical arguments and tend to be highly critical. Both factors make them more difficult to persuade.⁸

Tailoring
requires
knowing.

Educational, Social, and Economic Backgrounds

The level of educational attainment often affects interviewees in significant ways. For example, college graduates tend to be more involved in public affairs, the sciences, and cultural activities, to have good jobs with good incomes and to like them, to hold fewer stereotypes and prejudices, and to be more critical in thinking, flexible, and independent in attitudes.⁹ Socioeconomic background, including the interviewee’s memberships, are important because attitudes are strongly influenced by the groups to which we belong. The more committed an interviewee is to various groups, the less likely you are to persuade with an effort that conflicts with group norms. Charles Larson writes that a major determinant of behavior intention is **Normative influence**, “a person’s belief that important individuals or groups think it is advisable to perform or not to perform certain behaviors.”¹⁰ How relevant are an interviewee’s occupation, income, avocations and hobbies, superior/subordinate relationships, marital status, dependents, work experiences, and geographical background? These affect frames of reference—the persuadee’s way of viewing people, places, things, events, and issues.

Memberships
are powerful
outside forces.

Culture

Identify cultural differences that may affect an interview. For instance, Western cultures, such as the United States, are “me” centered and stress the importance of individual

accomplishment, leadership, and accumulation of awards and things. Others, particularly in Asia, are “we” centered and stress the importance of the group or team and see those who stress self and claim individual achievement as distasteful and offensive. Some cultures consider bribery a normal part of business. Others feel it is necessary to give gifts as part of the process. Bargaining is an essential part of persuasion in many cultures, often preceded by a relationship-building period over dinner or tea. In the United States, “time is money,” so Americans expect others to be on time. In Great Britain it is considered “correct” to be 5 to 15 minutes late, and in Italy a person may arrive two hours late and not understand why you are upset.

Values/Beliefs/Attitudes

Each culture has a set of generally accepted **values**—fundamental beliefs about ideal states of existence and modes of behavior that motivate people to think, feel, or act in particular ways.¹¹ Values, often referred to as “hot buttons” by college recruiters, sales representatives, and politicians, are the foundations of beliefs and attitudes. The following scheme of values includes those central to the American value system, the hot buttons that motivate interviewees to think, feel, or act in certain ways at certain times. Determine which ones are most relevant to this interviewee.

Values are the “hot buttons” pushed in persuasive interviews.	Survival Values	
	Peace and tranquility	Preservation of health
	Personal attractiveness	Safety and security
	Social Values	
	Affection and popularity	Generosity
	Cleanliness	Patriotism and loyalty
	Conformity and imitation	Sociality and belonging
	Success Values	
	Accumulation and ownership	Material comfort
	Ambition	Pride, prestige, and social recognition
	Competition	Sense of accomplishment
	Happiness	
	Independence Values	
	Equity and value of the individual	Freedom from restraint
	Freedom from authority	Power and authority
	Progress Values	
	Change and advancement	Quantification
	Education and knowledge	Science and secular rationality
	Efficiency and practicality	

Recall recent encounters urging you to contribute to a Habitat for Humanity home, help victims of a flood, or change auto insurance. Appeals may have centered on values such as prestige, generosity, considerateness, security, belonging, peace, and salvation. Determine which values are most relevant to this interviewee with this issue in this situation.

Values are the foundations of our belief systems.

Political, economic, social, historical, and religious **beliefs** emanate from values. Determine which beliefs relate to a topic and proposal. If equity and value of the individual are important values, an interviewee is likely to support equal rights and opportunities for women, African-Americans, and Hispanics. If education and knowledge are important values, a persuadee is likely to support increased funding for schools, give to college fund-raising campaigns, and be interested in books and computer databases.

Attitudes tend to predict actions.

Attitudes are relatively enduring combinations of beliefs that predispose people to respond in particular ways to persons, organizations, places, ideas, and issues. If you are a conservative, you are likely to react predictably to things you consider to be liberal. The reverse is true if you are a liberal. Attitudes come from beliefs that come from cherished values. Determine the interviewee's probable attitude toward the need or desire you will develop and the proposal you will make.

Consider the other party's probable attitudes along an imaginary scale from 1 to 9 with 1, 2, and 3 indicating strongly positive; 4, 5, and 6 indicating neutrality or ambivalence; and 7, 8, and 9 indicating strongly negative.

Strongly for			Undecided/neutral			Strongly against		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

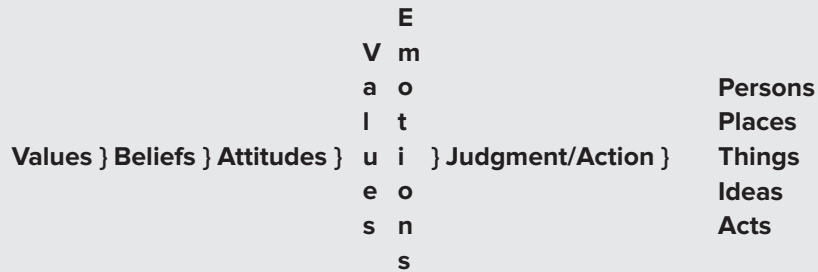
Know what is possible, likely, and impossible.

From what you know about this interviewee, where along this scale is this person's attitude likely to rest? If on positions 1 or 2, little persuasive effort may be required. If on positions 8 or 9, persuasion may be impossible beyond a small shift in feeling or thinking. If the attitude is on positions 4, 5, or 6, theoretically you should be able to alter ways of thinking, feeling, or acting with a good persuasive effort. This may not be the case, however, if an interviewee is strongly committed to remaining neutral, undecided, or noncommitted.

Low credibility may undermine the best effort.

The interviewee's attitude toward the interviewer (credibility, image) is the most important determinant of success. You must assess the interviewee's attitudes toward you, your profession, and the organization you represent. Several dimensions determine your credibility, including *trustworthy/safe* (honest, sincere, reliable, fair), *competent/expert* (intelligent, knowledgeable, good judgment, experienced), *goodwill* (caring, other-centered, sensitive, understanding), *composure* (poised, relaxed, calm, composed), and *dynamic/energetic* (decisive, strong, industrious, active). Think of your previous experiences with this person. If an interviewee dislikes you, distrusts your organization, or sees your profession as dishonest or untrustworthy, you must alter these attitudes during the interview or you will fail. To create and maintain high credibility with an interviewee, your appearance, manner, reputation, attainments, personality, and character must communicate trustworthiness, competence, caring, composure, and dynamism. People react favorably to highly credible interviewers who are similar to them in important ways and appear

Figure 10.1 *The relationship of values, beliefs, attitudes, and emotions*



to share their values, beliefs, and attitudes. While they want interviewers to be similar to them, they also expect them to be wiser, braver, more knowledgeable, more experienced, and more insightful.

Emotions

**How we
feel may
determine what
we do.**

Emotions, sometimes called feelings or passions, significantly influence how people think, feel, and act. Along with values, emotions are “hot buttons” you need to discover and push if you hope to persuade. Some emotions are necessary for *survival* including hate, fear, anger, love, and sexual attraction. Others are necessary for social involvement: pride, shame, guilt, sympathy, pity, humor, joy, and sadness. Be aware of the other party’s mood, why the party feels that way, and how it is likely to affect the interview. With mood of the interviewee in mind along with topic, situation, and purpose, determine which emotions you must appeal to in this interview.

The relationship of values, beliefs, attitudes, and emotions in persuasive interviews is indicated in Figure 10.1. The process begins with values (our fundamental beliefs about existence and behavior), which lead to *specific beliefs* (judgments about what is probably true or believable), which form *attitudes* (organizations of relevant beliefs that predispose us to respond in particular ways), which may result in *judgment or actions* toward persons, places, things, ideas, proposals, and acts. Specific values and emotional appeals serve as triggering devices for judgments and actions. Altering or reinforcing an interviewee's thinking, feeling, or acting is a complex process.

Analyzing the Situation

The interview situation is a total context of persons, relationships, motives, events, time, place, and objects. Study each element carefully.

Atmosphere

Study the atmosphere in which the interview will take place: a regularly scheduled event, an emergency, a crisis, a moment of opportunity, a major event, or a routine interaction. Will the climate be hostile, friendly, ambivalent, or apathetic?

The “why” of the interview may vary significantly between parties.



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■ *The persuasive situation is a total context of persons, relationships, events, time, place, and objects.*

Timing may be everything.

Timing

Timing may be critical. Is this an ideal time to conduct this interview? Is it too early or too late? Contacting a potential donor for a charity months in advance of the annual campaign may be too early for the interviewee to think about making a commitment but the day after the campaign ends may be too late. Beware of events that preceded this interview. Are you the third employee of the day to request taking off Presidents Day? Certain times of the year are ideal for some interviews and terrible for others. For instance, prior to Christmas is great for sales but immediately after Christmas is bad for home improvements and car sales. Prior to the end of the year is good for charities and fund-raising for colleges because people are looking for tax deductions, but the months prior to the April 15 tax deadline are not good times for either request.

Physical Setting

Provide for privacy and control interruptions, especially telephone calls. Make an appointment if you do not know how much time the interview will take.

Will you be the host (the interview is in your office or residence); a guest (the interview is in the interviewee's place of business or residence); or on neutral ground (a conference room, restaurant, hotel, club)? If you are trying to recruit a student for your university, your campus on a beautiful fall day when leaves are turning and following a big football game might be perfect. If you are selling a life insurance policy, you might select the interviewee's home surrounded by family members, furnishings, and valued possessions the family would want protected in case of an accident or death.

On whose turf will the interview take place?

Outside Forces

Outside influences may wage counter-persuasive efforts.

Outside forces may have considerable influence on what you can and cannot do, need and need not do in a persuasive interview. If, as a dedicated alumnus of your alma mater, you are trying to persuade a top basketball player in your area to accept an academic scholarship at the small college from which you graduated, you must know if mom and dad are urging her to wait on a possible full-ride athletic offer from a prestigious university, a favorite uncle is urging her to consider his alma mater, or a significant other is urging her to play closer to home. Awareness of outside influences may determine which values, beliefs and attitudes you must appeal to and which values and emotions may lead the interviewee to the action you prefer.

Researching the Issue

You must have the facts and know how to use them.

Be the best informed and most authoritative person in each interview. Investigate all aspects of the issue, including events that may have contributed to the problem, reasons for and against change, evidence on both sides of an issue, and possible solutions. Search for up-to-date information. You are taking part in a persuasive interview, not giving a speech to an audience of one in which the interviewee can ask for proof, challenge assumptions, generalizations, and claims, and ask for documentation of a source at any time during the interview. Parties are impressed with persuaders who reply to inquiries with facts and documentation rather than generalities and evasions. Determine prior to the interview what the interviewee knows about an issue and attitudes held toward the issue and possible solutions.

Sources

Do not overlook any potentially valuable source of information: the Internet, e-mail, interviews, letters, pamphlets, questionnaires, surveys, unpublished studies, reports, newspapers, periodicals, professional journals, and government documents. Use your own experiences and research. Know which sources are available to and respected by the interviewee.

Types of Evidence

Search for a variety of evidence to support your need and proposal. Collect *examples*, both factual and hypothetical, to illustrate your points. People like good *stories* that make problems real. Gather *statistics* on relevant areas such as inflation, growth rates, expenses, benefits, insurance coverages, profits and losses, causes and effects. Collect *statements* from acknowledged *authorities* on the topic as well as *testimonials* from those who have joined, attended, purchased, signed, or believed. Look for *comparisons and contrasts* between situations, proposals, products, and services. Locate clear and supportable *definitions* for key terms and concepts.

The effect of a well-supported interview lasts longer.

Distinguish *opinion* (something that is assumed, usually cannot be observed, can be made at any time, and either is or should be believed tentatively) from *fact* (something that can be or has been observed, is verifiable, and is thought of as securely established). Present your evidence effectively, including thorough documentation of your sources. The substance of your persuasive interview enhances the long-term effect of your interview and is particularly important if a decision will not be made for weeks or months.

Planning the Interview

After analyzing the interviewee, studying the situation, and researching the topic, tailor the interview to this interviewee.

Determine Your Purpose

If you know the interviewee will be a “hard sell” because of a value, belief, and attitude system, then your purpose may be merely to influence thinking or feeling in a minor way. Getting the interviewee to think about an action or to admit there is a problem may

Be realistic but not defeatist.

be a major success for a first interview. Later you might move the interviewee toward a more significant change or action. On the other hand, if an interviewee contacts you and tells you he or she wants to change auto insurance companies, is interested in an investment, or would like to take a tour of China, you may move quickly through need and desire to solutions with a good chance of success.

Set a realistic goal for each interview. Significant changes come in increments after a series of interviews. Do not assume after one interview that an interviewee is not interested or will not change. Authorities on sales interviews claim that it typically takes five contacts before a sale is made. Be patient.

Select Main Points

Do not make the need too complicated.

Select reasons to establish a need or desire. Do not rely on a *single* reason because the interviewee may see little urgency in a problem that is so simple or unidimensional or find it relatively easy to attack or reject *only* one point. Research indicates that more points enhance the effectiveness of persuasion over time.¹³ On the other hand, six or eight points may make an interview too long and superficial as you rush through so many points. An interviewee may become overloaded with information and complex arguments and end up confused or bored.

Know the strength of each point and introduce it strategically.

After selecting and developing reasons for a change, ideally three or four, determine the strength of each for this interviewee in this situation at this time. Determine the order in which you present points. Assume that you are trying to recruit a top merit scholar for your university and your research indicates this interviewee has three major criteria for choosing a university, ranked in this order: available majors, academic reputation, and financial aid. Introducing your strongest point first or last (available majors) is about equal in effect. If there is any possibility you might run out of time or be interrupted before presenting all of your points or reasons, start with your strongest point.

Develop Main Points

Develop each point into what the interviewee will see as a valid and acceptable logical pattern. Effective interviews are carefully crafted blends of the logical and the psychological. You have choices to make.

Arguing from accepted belief, assumption, or proposition involves three explicitly stated or implied assertions (statements you believe and clearly want others to believe). For instance, a fire inspector might argue this way:

Your assertions must lead to your conclusion.

Assertion #1: All residents should have working fire and smoke alarms in their apartments.

Assertion #2: You reside in an apartment.

Point: You should have working fire and smoke alarms in your apartment.

You need not state all three parts of this pattern if the interviewee is likely to provide the missing assertion or conclusion. Regardless, your argument rests on the first assertion that is the critical belief, assumption, or proposition. For instance, you might leave the second assertion unstated and let the interviewee provide it.

This involves the interviewee in the process and encourages self-persuasion. This strategy is possible with all patterns of argument.

Assertion #1: All residents should have working fire and smoke alarms in their apartments.

Assertion #2: (left unstated)

Point: You should have working fire and smoke alarms.

You might state your assertions and let the interviewee draw the conclusion.

Assertion #1: All residents should have working fire and smoke alarms in their apartments.

Assertion #2: You reside in an apartment.

Point: (left unstated)

Arguing from condition is based on the assertion that if something does or does not happen, something else will or will not happen. You might reason this way with a friend.

Assertion #1: If you continue to text while driving, you're going to have a serious accident.

Assertion #2: I know you're going to continue texting while driving.

Point: So you're going to have a serious accident.

Weigh conditions carefully and support them effectively. As with arguing from accepted belief, you may invite the interviewee to fill in a missing part or parts.

Arguing from two choices is based on the assertion that there are only two possible proposals or courses of action. You remove one by showing it will not work or resolve a problem, and conclude the obvious.

Assertion #1: Only United and Delta provide nonstop service to Albuquerque from here.

Assertion #2: I have flown both, and Delta has always provided the best service.

Point: I recommend Delta.

**Your evidence
must warrant
your conclusion.**

You must be able to limit the choices to two and then convince the interviewee that one is unacceptable so yours is the only option.

Arguing from example leads to a generalization about a whole class of people, places, things, or ideas from a sample of this class.

Sample: A survey of recent female college graduates found that 25 percent reported being sexually assaulted while in college.

Point: One in four female college students are sexually assaulted while attending college.

The quality of the sample, as in the survey interview, is critical in argument from example.

Arguing from cause–effect is related to example because interviewers often use a sample as proof of a causal relationship. Unlike the argument from example that leads to a generalization, this argument attempts to establish what caused a specific effect.

**Beware of
false causes.**

Evidence: In a study of 200 auto accidents that involved teenage drivers, law enforcement officers said speed was the leading cause.

Point: Speed is the cause of most accidents involving teenage drivers.

Your evidence must convince the other party that this is the only or major cause of an effect.

Arguing from facts, unlike arguing from example, does not rely on a **sample of a class** of people, places, things, or ideas to prove a point but on a **body of facts** to prove a point that best explains a phenomenon.

Facts: While investigating the storm damage caused in a two-county area on August 5, we noted that the storm had moved in a nearly straight line. In open areas, there was no evidence of a twisting motion in grass and weeds. Trees and small buildings were knocked down but not twisted. No one heard the tell-tale freight train sound of a tornado.

Point: The storm damage was the result of straight line winds and not a tornado.

Arguing from analogy occurs when you point out that two things (people, places, objects, proposals, ideas) have important characteristics in common and draw a conclusion based on these similarities.

**How similar are
the similarities?**

Similarities: This tragic accident is very similar to one during spring break last year. A young, male college student was on spring break with several friends, and the weather was too cool to spend much time on the beach. They spent nearly all day around the indoor pool at their hotel drinking a variety of alcoholic beverages. This student was seen walking into the parking garage around 10:00 p.m. and appeared to be very drunk. A little after 11:30 p.m., a person walking his dog found the student's body outside the parking garage. The student was pronounced dead at the scene.

Point: Unfortunately, he too was drunk and fell from the garage like the student did last year.

The number of significant similarities are critical in developing this argument.

Select Strategies

**When you
think theo-
ries, think
strategies.**

Over many years, theorists have developed theories from real world observations and research to explain how people become convinced to alter or sustain their ways of thinking, feeling, and acting. These **theories** have evolved into highly useful **strategies** for persuasive interviews.

Identification Theory

Kenneth Burke claims that you persuade others by **identifying** with them, by establishing **consubstantiality** (substantial similarity) with them. The overlapping circles in the interviewing model developed in Chapter 2 are based on Burke's theory that you

must literally talk the other's language through "speech, gesture, tonality, order, image, attitude, *identifying* your ways with theirs."¹³ There are several ways to establish this common ground with an interviewee.

Appearances are important in perceiving common ground.

- *Associating* with groups to which you both belong, shared cultural heritage or regional identification, programs you both support.
- *Disassociating* from groups, cultures, regions, or programs the interviewee opposes or is distant from.
- Developing *appearance and visual symbols* that establish identification such as dress, hairstyle, makeup, jewelry, political buttons, or religious symbols.
- Sharing *language* such as jargon, slang, colloquialisms, and in-group words and phrases.
- Employing *content and values* important to the interviewee.

Balance or Consistency Theory

According to **balance and consistency theories**, human beings strive for a harmonious existence with self (values, beliefs, and attitudes) and experience psychological discomfort (dissonance) when aspects of existence seem inconsistent or unbalanced. You may experience source-proposition conflict when you like persons but detest their positions on issues or dislike persons but favor their products or services. You experience attitude-attitude conflict when you oppose government involvement in your life but want the government to outlaw hate speech and require prayer in the public schools. You experience perception-perception conflict when you see Mexico as a beautiful but dangerous place to vacation. You experience a behavior-attitude conflict when you believe strongly in law and order but use a fake ID to get into bars.

Not all interviewees are happy with harmony.

An interviewer may create or resolve dissonance.

You may create psychological discomfort (dissonance) by attacking a source or pointing out attitude, perception, and behavioral conflicts. Then you show how the interviewee can bring these inconsistencies into balance by providing changes in sources, attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors. If you detect an interviewee is experiencing psychological discomfort, bring about balance or consistency by helping the interviewee see no inconsistency, perceive the inconsistency to be insignificant, or tolerate inconsistency.

Inoculation Theory

According to **inoculation theory** it is more effective to prevent undesired persuasive effects from occurring than using damage control afterward. For example, a few years ago one of the authors received a telephone call from the state police warning him of solicitors who were claiming to be representatives of a state police sponsored charity for children and relating what solicitors were telling contributors. The caller hoped the preemptive call would prevent the author from being victimized and maintain the credibility of legitimate state police charities.

An inoculation strategy immunizes an interviewee from future persuasion.

In this strategy, you forewarn the interviewee, perhaps by exposing the interviewee to small "doses" of a potential persuader's language, arguments, and evidence so the

interviewee can resist the effort. You might provide arguments and evidence the interviewee may use when confronting an interviewer.

Induced Compliance Theory

There are many ways to trigger self-persuasion.

According to the **induced compliance theory**, you may change an interviewee's thinking, feeling, or acting by inducing her or him to engage in activities counter to values, beliefs, and attitudes. Participation in counteractivities may bring about self-persuasion. Apply enough pressure so an interviewee will comply without feeling there is no choice. Feeling coerced may prevent change.

There are a variety of ways to induce compliance. You might induce an interviewee to *espouse* a belief or counterattitude to understand or appreciate the other side of an issue, such as a liberal position on sex education or a conservative position on health care reform. You might induce an interviewee to *take part* in an unaccustomed or unattractive activity, such as going to a religious service or helping at a homeless shelter. You might induce an interviewee to *play an opposite role*, such as a superior instead of a subordinate, teacher instead of a student, parent instead of a child. You might induce a party to act to *receive a reward* or *avoid a punishment*, such as tickets to a concert or a speeding ticket.

Psychological Reactance Theory

Restricting behavior may lead to persuasion or resentment.

According to **psychological reactance theory**, people react negatively when someone threatens to restrict a behavior they want to engage in. They may value the restricted behavior more and want to engage in it more frequently, or devalue alternatives they feel "stuck with" and resent the restricting agent. Organizations produce limited editions of books, stamps, coins, and cars to enhance demand for them. Tickets to the NCAA March madness are of great value because they are scarce. Interviewees may be less in favor of giving to the college development fund or joining their athletic booster clubs when feeling forced to do so. When possible, avoid real or perceived pressure on the other party to think, feel, or act differently. Make your proposal attractive, make scarcity or a deadline known without appearing to threaten, develop a serious need without excessive appeals to fear, and offer choices.

Conducting the Interview

The purpose of the opening is to create mutual interest in the interview and establish trust between the interview parties. Encourage the other party to play an active role throughout the interview because it is not a persuasive presentation but a collaborative effort toward altering or changing ways of thinking, feeling, or acting. Be flexible and adaptive.

Opening

Avoid routine openings even for routine interviews.

Tailor your opening to this party, at this time, and in this situation. From what you know about this interviewee and your relational history, how can you gain attention, create interest, establish rapport, and provide orientation to motivate the interviewee to take an active part in a collaborative effort? Avoid the temptation to rely on a standard opening

such as those used in cold calls. Most of us are turned off by “one size fits all” openings, so it is no mystery why these interviews usually fail within the first few seconds.

If you have had little or no opportunity to study the interviewee ahead of time, use the first few minutes of the interview to discover how you can best adapt to this person. *Take note of* the interviewee’s dress, appearance, and manner. *Ask a few questions* designed to discover background, interests, and attitudes critical to this interview. *Listen* to what the interviewee “says” verbally and nonverbally. If the party consists of more than one person, *detect* who is the leader or spokesperson.

If the opening fails, there will be no body or closing.

Review the opening techniques and principles discussed in Chapter 4. Select the techniques suitable for this party and situation. Begin with a warm greeting and use the interviewee’s name. If the person is a stranger, do not make your greeting sound like a question. This suggests you are unsure of the person’s name or identity, unsure of yourself, or not prepared. If you know the interviewee well and both the situation and your relationship warrant it, use the person’s first name or nickname.

Neither rush nor prolong the opening.

It may be necessary to introduce yourself (name, position, title, background), your organization (name, location, nature, history, products, services), state the purpose of the interview. Orientation is essential when you have not made an appointment or arrangements ahead of time. Each party must understand the purpose of the interview, how it will proceed, and how the parties will share control. Be brief.

You may begin with a sincere inquiry about family or mutual friends or small talk about the weather, sports, highway construction, or campus facilities. Do not prolong this stage. Be conscious of the interviewee’s situation and preferences. If a person replies immediately after the greeting, “What can I do for you?” the person wants to get down to business.

Reduce reticence by involving the interviewee immediately and often.

Cultures differ in amount of acceptable small talk and socializing. Most Americans want to “get to the point” and “get the job done.” Japanese and other cultures desire to get acquainted, to follow “interaction rituals,” and to go slower in making commitments and decisions.¹⁴ Do not prolong this stage. Involve all members of the other party from the start so each plays an active role throughout the interaction. Americans, particularly males, take turns unevenly during interactions and speak at length during each turn. Japanese and others take turns evenly and make shorter statements.

Need or Desire

Create a need or desire by developing in detail the three or four points you developed in the preparation stage. Introduce them in the order you believe will be most effective, strongest point first or last with weaker points in the middle.

Develop One Point at a Time

Explain each point thoroughly. Provide sufficient evidence that is factually based, authoritative, recent, and well documented. Use a variety of evidence so the interviewee is neither buried under an avalanche of figures nor bored with one story after another. Incorporate the values, beliefs, and attitudes important to this interviewee.

Encourage Interaction

Don’t lecture; interact.

You are more likely to persuade when the interviewee is actively involved. Stress how each point affects this interviewee’s needs and desires. Try to get some sort of

agreement before going to your next point, but do not ask for an agreement until you have **established something** upon which you both can agree.

With one point developed and agreed upon, move to point two, then three, and so on. Do not rush through a point or jump to the next one if the interviewee raises an objection or poses a question. Move on when the interviewee seems ready. Be patient and persistent.

Questions

Questions play unique roles in persuasive interviews.

Your persuasive effort cannot rely on a schedule of questions, particularly when an interviewee sees no need, has no desire, or is unaware of options. Questions do play important functions, however, because they involve the interviewee as an active participant, discover information you do not have, reveal feelings and attitudes, and bring potential objections to the table.

Use questions to analyze the interviewee.

Information-Gathering Questions

Ask questions to determine knowledge level and to draw out concerns and objections. Listen carefully to responses and probe for accuracy and details.

- What concerns you most about this situation?
- What do you know about the city-university plans to revitalize the village?
- How frequently do you use the city bus system?

Verification Questions

Questions can clarify and verify interactions.

Use reflective, mirror, and clearinghouse questions to check the accuracy of assumptions, impressions, and information obtained before and during an interview. You may assume you have answered an objection or gotten an agreement when you have not. Be certain an interviewee understands the significance of your evidence and points. An interviewee's silence may indicate uncertainty, confusion, or disagreement as well as understanding and agreement.

- Does this answer your concerns about your student loan?
- You appear to be very concerned about the safety of traveling to Europe at this time.
- Are we in agreement on the need to delay the strategic planning process until we hire a new director?

Encouraging Interaction Questions

Questions can stimulate interactions.

Employ questions to encourage the other party to play an active role in the interview. When a party knows what to expect in an interview and feels free to ask questions, you are more likely to receive meaningful feedback and draw out noncommittal interviewees.

- What do you like best about this new facility?
- How was your tour of the digital library?
- What are your thoughts about the proposed three-semester schedule?

Attention and Interest Questions

Questions can sustain attention and interest.

Use questions to keep interviewees tuned in to what you are saying. They may be busy or preoccupied with other concerns, and interesting, challenging, and thought-provoking questions will maintain interest and attention and encourage participation.

- How would you feel if your insurance company refused to cover your child born with a physical problem?
- Do you remember the winter of 2010 when your power went out for six days?
- What would you do if your company suddenly went out of business?

Agreement Questions

Questions can attain agreements and commitments.

Use questions to obtain small agreements that lead to bigger agreements. Getting agreement after each point is likely to lead to agreement at the end. Ask for agreement or commitment only after you have developed a point thoroughly. A barrage of generalizations and claims will not establish a need. Use a yes-response question (often in the form of a statement) to control the interview and lead to an agreement.

- You don't want to risk your child's education, do you?
- This is a great time to invest in a new house, isn't it?
- Do you want to run the risk of driving on worn-out tires?

Objection Questions

Do not try to substitute questions for substance.

Use questions to respond tactfully to objections and draw out unstated questions and objections. Get these on the table at the proper time.

- How important is this objection to taking on-line courses?
- You say you are concerned about traveling to Europe at this time; why is that?
- What additional information do you need to remove your doubts?

Use leading and loaded questions sparingly because high-pressure tactics turn off interviewees.

Adapting to the Interviewee

From all that you have learned about the interviewee, determine the interviewee's probable predisposition toward you, the issue, and your proposal. Then select strategies most appropriate for interviewing this party at this time.

Indecisive, Uninterested Interviewees

The interviewee may see no personal need or relevance.

If an interviewee is indecisive, uninterested, or uncertain, use opening techniques to get the interviewee's attention and generate interest in the issue. Lead off with your strongest point and provide a variety of evidence that informs and persuades. Use questions to draw out feelings and perceptions and involve the interviewee.

Emphasize the urgency of the problem and the necessity of acting *now*. Use moderate fear appeals to awaken the interviewee to dangers to self, family, or friends. Appeal to values such as preservation of health, safety and security, freedom from

restraint, ownership, and value of the individual. Show *how* this interviewee can make a difference.

Hostile Interviewees

Do not assume there will be hostility.

If an interviewee may be hostile, be sure your impression is accurate. Do not mistake legitimate concerns or objections or a gruff demeanor for hostility. If a person is truly hostile, determine why; then consider a common ground approach.

- A **yes-but approach** begins with areas of agreement and similarity and gradually leads into points of disagreement. It lessens hostility and disagreement later by establishing common ground early on.
- A **yes-yes approach** gets an interviewee in the habit of agreeing, so when you reach apparent disagreements, the person will be less likely to disagree.
- An **implicative approach** withholds an explicit statement of purpose or intent to avoid a knee-jerk negative reaction from the interviewee. You want the interviewee to see the implications of what you are saying, perhaps feeling they came up with the concerns and solution.

You must get to the point in a reasonable amount of time.

Regardless of the common ground approach, listen, be polite, and avoid defensiveness or anger when working with hostile interviewees. Hostility may result from lack of information, misinformation, or rumors. Respond with facts, expert testimony, examples, stories, and comparisons that clarify, prove, and resolve issues between parties. Be willing to accept minor points of disagreement and to admit your proposal is not perfect; no proposal is. Employ **shock-absorber** phrases that reduce the sting of critical questions: “Many residents I talk to feel that way, however . . .” “That’s an excellent question, but when you consider . . .” “I’m glad you thought of that because. . .”

Closed-Minded and Authoritarian Interviewees

Select evidence most appropriate for each party.

A **closed-minded or authoritarian interviewee** relies on trusted authorities and is concerned about **who** supports a proposal. Facts alone, particularly statistics, will not do the job. Show that the interviewee’s accepted authorities support your persuasive efforts. The closed-minded and authoritarian person has strong, unchangeable central values and beliefs. Identify yourself and your proposal with these values and beliefs only when you truly share them.

Do not bypass hierarchical channels or alter prescribed methods. Authoritarians react negatively to interviewers who do not belong or appear to be out of line, and may demand censure or punishment for appearing to violate accepted and valued norms.

Skeptical Interviewees

If the interviewee is skeptical, begin the interview by expressing some views the interviewee holds—a yes-but or yes-yes approach. Maintain positive nonverbal cues such as a firm handshake, good eye contact, a warm and friendly manner, and appropriate appearance and dress. If the interviewee feels you are young and inexperienced, allude tactfully to your qualifications, experiences, and training and provide substantial and authoritative evidence. Be well prepared and experienced without bragging. Avoid undue informality and a cocky attitude. If the interviewee sees you as argumentative,

Image or credibility may be the major cause of failure.

avoid confrontations, attacks on the person's position, and demands. If the interviewee thinks you are a know-it-all, be careful when referring to your qualifications, experiences, and achievements.

If the interviewee has concerns about your organization, try to withhold its name until you have created personal credibility with the interviewee. If the name must come out early in the interview, try to improve its image by countering common misperceptions, relating how it has changed, or identifying its strengths. You may have to distance yourself from some elements or past practices of your organization.

Shopping-Around Interviewees

Interviewees may shop around before making a major purchase or decision and will face **counterpersuasion** from other interviewers. When meeting with a shopper or an undecided interviewee, forewarn and prepare the interviewee. Provide the interviewee with supportive arguments, evidence, and responses to questions or points others are likely to raise. Give small doses of the opposition's case (inoculation theory) to show the strengths and weaknesses of both sides. Develop a positive, factual, nonemotional approach that addresses the competition when necessary but dwells primarily on the strengths of *your* position and proposal.

Be prepared for interviewees facing counterpersuasion.

Intelligent, Educated Interviewees

The highly **intelligent or educated interviewee** tends to be less persuadable because of knowledge level, critical ability, and faculty for seeing the implications behind arguments and proposals. Such interviewees "are more likely to attend to and comprehend the message position but are less likely to yield to it."¹⁵ For example, they are likely to see through the good guy–bad guy approach used in many situations.

When working with highly intelligent and educated interviewees, support your ideas thoroughly, develop arguments logically, and present a two-sided approach that weighs both sides of the issue. Minimize emotional appeals, particularly if the interviewee is neutral or initially disagrees with your position and proposal. Encourage the interviewee to ask questions, raise objections, and be an active participant.

If an interviewee is of low intelligence or education, develop a simple, one-sided approach to minimize confusion and maximize comprehension. A complex, two-sided approach and intricate arguments supported by a variety of evidence may confuse the interviewee. Use examples, stories, and comparisons rather than expert testimony and statistics.

A two-sided approach addresses but does not advocate each side.

The Solution

When you have presented the need, summarized your main points, and gotten important agreements, you are ready for solutions.

Establishing Criteria

Begin the solution phase by establishing criteria (requirements, standards, rules, norms, principles) that any solution should meet. If the interviewee is obviously ready to move into this phase of the interview before you have presented all of your points, move on.

Establish a set of criteria *with the interviewee* for evaluating possible solutions. This process is natural to us. For example, when selecting a college major, you may have

Establishing criteria is natural but often unconscious.

considered courses, core requirements, specialties, careers, faculty, availability of internships, and marketability when you graduate. In simple decisions such as selecting a place to eat, you have criteria in mind, such as type of food and beverage, cost, distance, location, atmosphere, music, availability of large screen television for watching a football game, and preferences of others. Use this natural process in persuasive interviews.

As you think of criteria prior to the interview and develop them with the interviewee during the interview, realize that not all criteria are of equal importance. For example, admissions directors at state universities have found that quality of school is the most important criterion for out-of-state applicants while cost is number 1 and quality is number 2 for in-state students. The situation can influence criteria. For instance, cost may override all other criteria during economic recessions.

Criteria are designed to evaluate and to persuade.

Establishing a set of criteria involves the interviewee in the process; shows that you are attempting to tailor your proposal to his or her needs, desires, and capabilities; provides a smooth transition from the need to the solution; and reduces the impression that you are overly eager to sell your point. Agreed-upon criteria enable you to build on a foundation of agreements, provide an effective means of comparing and assessing solutions, and deal with objections.

Considering the Solution

Seeing is believing.

Present your solution in detail. Do not assume the interviewee will understand the details and nature of the solution you have in mind unless this becomes clear during the interview. It is best to err on the side of too much information.

If you consider more than one solution, deal with one at a time. Explain a solution in detail and use whatever visual aids might be available and appropriate: booklets and brochures, drawings and diagrams, graphs, letters, pictures, slides, computer printouts, sketch pads, swatches of materials, objects, and models. Interviewees may remember only about 10 percent of *what they hear* but 50 percent of *what they do* and 90 percent of *what they both see and do*.¹⁶

Approach the solution positively, constructively, and enthusiastically. Believe in what you are presenting and show it. Emphasize the strengths and benefits of your proposal rather than the weaknesses of the competition. Avoid **negative selling** unless the competition forces you to do so as a matter of self-defense. The interviewee will be more interested in the advantages of your proposal than the disadvantages of another.

Help interviewees make decisions that are best for them. Encourage questions and active involvement. Use repetition to enhance understanding, aid memory, gain and maintain attention, and make the interviewee aware of what is most important. Educate interviewees about options, requirements, time constraints, and new features.

Handling Objections

You cannot address an objection you do not hear.

Perhaps nothing seems more threatening than the thought of an interviewee raising unexpected or difficult objections. Encourage the interviewee to voice objections to reveal the interviewee's concerns, fears, misunderstandings, and misinformation. Do not assume agreement because the interviewee raises no questions or objections. Watch for nonverbal clues such as restlessness, fidgeting, poor eye contact, raised eyebrows, confused expressions, signs of boredom, or silences. Find out what is happening within.

Objections are numerous and often issue, goal, situation, or interviewee specific.

**Anticipate
common
objections.**

- *Procrastination: Never do today what you can put off until tomorrow.*
Let me think about it.
I've still got three weeks before that paper is due.
My old truck is doing fine, so I'll wait awhile.
- *Cost: That's a lot of money.*
That iPhone is too expensive for me.
I didn't expect remodeling to cost that much.
That's pretty expensive for a two-day conference.
- *Tradition: We've always done it this way.*
That's how we've always done business.
We've always had our reunions in Eagle River.
My grandfather chose that line of clothing when he opened the business in 1924.
- *Uncertain future: Who knows what tomorrow will bring.*
My job is rather iffy right now.
The economy is struggling, so I'm reluctant to hire new staff.
At my age, I don't buy green bananas.
- *Need: What's the problem?*
We've got good investments, so we don't need life insurance.
The current performance review system is working just fine.
We don't have much crime around here, so we don't need an alarm system.

How to Approach Objections

**Meeting
objections
requires
thought,
understand-
ing, tact, and
substance.**

Anticipate objections to eliminate surprises. Think about handling each objection as a series of steps.

Plan how to respond to reduce surprises.

Listen carefully, completely, and objectively, never assuming you understand the other person's point or concern until you have heard it.

Clarify the objection, making sure you understand exactly what it is and its importance before you respond.

Respond appropriately, tactfully, and seriously. *If an objection is serious to the interviewee, it is serious.* There are four common strategies for handling objections.

Minimize the Objection

**Reduce the
importance of
the objection.**

Minimize an objection by restating it to make it less important or by comparing it to other weightier matters. Provide evidence to reduce its importance.

1. **Interviewee:** I've thought about changing majors from building construction technology to civil engineering, but I think it would take me an extra year of coursework before I could graduate.
2. **Interviewer:** I've looked into the coursework in both majors and the transcript you sent me, and you would not be a year behind. In fact, it would take a bit less than one semester, and you could make most of this up with summer school classes.

Capitalize on the Objection

Take advantage of the objection.

Capitalize on an objection to *clarify* your point, *review* the proposal's advantages, *offer* more evidence, or *isolate* the motive behind the objection. Convert a perceived disadvantage into an advantage.

1. **Interviewee:** I would like to study abroad for a semester, probably in Germany, but alumni I talk to say that it is very expensive to live and study in Europe.
2. **Interviewer:** That was true a few years ago when they studied abroad in Europe because the U.S. dollar was worth only about eighty cents to one Euro. Now the reverse is true, and the U.S. dollar is worth much more than the Euro. This makes living and traveling abroad much cheaper. Now is a great time to study abroad. Don't wait.

Deny an Objection

If you deny it, you must prove it isn't so.

Deny an objection *directly* or *indirectly* by offering new or more accurate information or by introducing new features of a proposal. You cannot deny an objection by merely denying it; *prove it*.

1. **Interviewee:** I've heard that your group, Families Against Gun Violence, wants to ban all sales of military style guns, even those used in competitive shooting matches. I have my 2nd Amendment rights and want them protected from groups like yours.
2. **Interviewer:** I've heard those claims before. Actually, many of us own and shoot military style weapons as a sport. All we want to do is ban large clips or magazines that hold ten or more rounds that enable killers to shoot school kids, shoppers, fellow workers, and even police officers without having to reload. These innocent victims have little or no chance against a shooter who has a magazine holding thirty rounds or more.

Confirm an Objection

Do not try to deny the undeniable.

Confirm an objection by agreeing with the interviewee. It is better to be honest and admit problems than to offer weak defenses.

1. **Interviewee:** I've been looking into tours of New Zealand and Australia, but they are running nearly \$10,000 per person. That is really expensive.
2. **Interviewer:** Yes it is. Much of this is due to high air fares for such long flights.

Closing

Both parties may fear the closing.

Approach the closing positively and confidently. Do not pressure the interviewee or appear too eager. Interviewers may hesitate to close, fearing they may fail to persuade, while interviewees fear they will make a wrong decision. Hesitation to ask for a sale is the major cause of failure to sell.

The closing consists of three stages: (1) trial closing, (2) contract or agreement, and (3) leave-taking.

Trial Closing

Close as soon as possible and do not continue talking if the interviewee is sold on your proposal. You may talk yourself out of an agreement.

As you approach the end of the solution phase, watch and listen for verbal and non-verbal cues that the interviewee is moving toward a decision. Verbal cues include questions and statements such as “How soon will the new software be available?” “Your idea appears sound.” “This looks like a great tour.” Nonverbal cues include enthusiastic vocal expressions, head nods, smiles, exchange of glances between interviewees, or handling brochures, pictures, and written reports.

Yes-response and leading questions verify that the interviewee is ready to close: “I’m sure you can see this is the best way to go.” “You want this condo, don’t you?” “Do you want to face a lawsuit?” After you ask a trial closing question, *be quiet!* Give the interviewee time to think and self-persuade. Silence communicates confidence and gives the interviewee an opportunity to raise unanswered questions and objections.

If you get a no to your trial closing question, ask why. You may need to review the criteria, compare advantages and disadvantages of acting now, or provide more information. An interviewee may not be ready to act. Fear of possible consequences and how others may react (outside forces) may overcome a need or desire.

If you get a yes to your trial closing question, lead into the contract or agreement stage: “We can sign off on this today.” “We can have this equipment installed within two weeks.” “It would be a relief to have this decision made.”

Know when to stop talking.

Probe insightfully and cautiously into negative responses.



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■ The contract or agreement stage is critical because the interviewee knows a commitment is imminent.

Contract or Agreement

After a successful trial closing, move to the contract or agreement stage. This is a critical time because the interviewee knows the closing and a commitment are coming. Be natural and pleasant. Maintain good communication. Consider closing techniques appropriate for this stage.

- An *assumptive close* addresses part of the agreement with a phrase, such as “I assume that you prefer . . .”
- A *summary close* summarizes agreements made as a basis for decisions.

Select closing techniques most appropriate for this interview and interviewee.

- An *elimination of a single objection close* responds to the single objection that stands in the way of an agreement.
- An *either-or close* limits the interviewee’s choices, then shows that the solution you advocate has the most advantages and the fewest disadvantages.
- An *I’ll think it over close* acknowledges the interviewee’s desire to think about a decision. Try to discover the level of interest and why the interviewee is hesitating.

Leave-taking
should reinforce
all you have
accomplished.

- A *sense of urgency close* stresses why an interviewee should act now.
- A *price close* emphasizes the savings possible or the bottom line of the offer.

Leave-Taking

When the contract or agreement is completed, no agreement or contract is reached, or another interview is necessary, conclude pleasantly and positively. Do not let the **leave-taking** phase be **abrupt** or **curt**. You may undo the rapport, trust, and ease you worked hard to establish.

Adapt verbal and nonverbal leave-taking techniques or combine them to suit each interviewee. Be sincere and honest in this final closing phase, and make no promises you cannot or will not keep because of personal or authority limitations, organizational policies, laws, or time constraints.

Summary Outline

This outline summarizes the elements in the structure of a persuasive interview that covers need/desire and solution.

- I. Opening the interview
 - A. Select the most appropriate techniques from Chapter 4.
 - B. Establish rapport according to relationship and situation.
 - C. Provide appropriate orientation.
- II. Creating a need or desire
 - A. Provide an appropriate statement of purpose.
 - B. Develop a need point-by-point with maximum involvement of and careful adaptation to the other party.
 1. Use appropriate argument patterns.
 2. Provide a variety of evidence.
 3. Employ effective strategies.
 4. Appeal to important values and emotions.
 5. Obtain overt agreements as you proceed, being sure to point out how the interviewee party is involved or must be concerned.
 - C. Summarize the need or problem and attain overt agreements from the interviewee.
- III. Establishing criteria
 - A. Present the criteria you have in mind, explaining briefly the rationale and importance of each criterion.
 - B. Encourage the interviewee to add criteria.
 - C. Involve the interviewee in the discussion of criteria.
 - D. Summarize and get agreement on all criteria.
- IV. Presenting the solution
 - A. Present one solution at a time.
 1. Explain the solution in detail using visual aids when possible.
 2. Evaluate the solution using agreed-upon criteria.
 - B. Respond to anticipated and vocalized objections.
 - C. Get agreement on the appropriateness, quality, and feasibility of the preferred solution.

V. Closing the interview

- A. Begin a trial closing as soon as it seems appropriate to do so.
- B. When the trial closing is successful, move to a contract or agreement with the interviewee.
- C. Use appropriate leave-taking techniques discussed in this chapter and Chapter 4.

There is no set pattern for all persuasive interviews.

You will not develop all parts of this plan in every interview. If an interviewee agrees with the need or problem prior to the interview, merely summarize the need in the opening and move directly to criteria. An interviewee may see the need but not agree with your proposed solution. Or an interviewee may feel constraints making any move impossible at this time. Feasibility is the central concern in this interview, not need or a specific proposal. The interviewee may like your proposal but see no personal need.

Part 2: The Interviewee in the Persuasive Interview

Remember that persuasion is *done with* and *not to* another and both parties are responsible for making the interview a success. With these principles in mind, let us focus on the interviewee in the persuasive interview.

Be an Informed Participant

Interviewees often have little or no training in persuasion and may have scars from failed persuasive encounters. The remainder of this chapter introduces you as interviewee to the *tricks of the trade* to level the persuasive playing field.

Psychological Strategies

We may act automatically during persuasive interviews.

Interviewers use strategies designed to create psychological discomfort—dissonance—to alter your ways of thinking, feeling, and/or acting. For instance, **standard/learned principles** may automatically guide an action or decision. You may believe, for example, that:

You get what you pay for.

If it's expensive, it's got to be good.

Sales save money.

If an expert says so, it must be true.

If it meets industry standards, it's safe.

Upscale retailers depend on these standard/learned principles to move expensive, high-quality items ranging from jewelry to automobiles.

Look for real differences.

In the **contrast principle**, interviewers know that if a second item is fairly different from the first in attractiveness, cost, or size, it seems *more different* than it actually is. If I want to rent you an apartment, I may show you a rundown one first and then a somewhat better apartment. You may see the second apartment as substantially rather than moderately better. If a tour agent can persuade you to go on an expensive cruise

down the Danube River in Europe, the optional excursions may appear quite reasonable in comparison.

We feel obligated to return favors.

The **rule of reciprocity** instills in you a sense of obligation to repay in kind what another provides. For instance, if a person gives you a free soft drink and then asks you to buy a raffle ticket, you feel obligated to buy the ticket even though it may cost more than the soft drink. This process is at work every time you open your mail and discover yet another packet of personalized address labels. You are likely to send in a donation or not use the labels even though you did not request them. If you use the labels and do not send in a donation, you may experience psychological discomfort and fear shame if someone discovers your action.

One concession deserves another, or not.

In a **reciprocal concessions** strategy, you feel a sense of obligation to make a concession in response to a concession. Parties employ this psychological strategy in employment-management negotiations when an employee concedes on health care and the other then feels obligated to concede on retirement benefits. This strategy occurs in everyday interactions such as when a roommate agrees to provide the car for spring break and you feel obligated to pay for the gas.

Persuaders may ask for a lot and settle for less.

A **rejection then retreat** strategy begins with one proposal that makes a second more acceptable. If you reject the first you may feel both obligated or relieved to agree to the second. One study discovered that if Boy Scouts asked persons to purchase \$5 circus tickets and were turned down, the same persons were likely to say yes to a second proposal of a \$1 chocolate bar. The Boy Scouts gained either way, and the persuadees felt good about helping out for a lesser amount. Salespersons often start with the top of the line and then retreat to a fallback position *if* necessary.

In **undercover** or **stealth marketing**, an interviewer party of two or more persons pretends to be a friendly, disinterested party, and not a sales representative. For example, two people appearing to be tourists or visitors ask a person passing by if she will take their picture. The cooperative passerby agrees and just happens to notice that the couple has a very interesting and attractive digital camera, and asks about it. The party, who just happen to be undercover sales reps for this camera company, gladly comply. The persuadee has no idea that a sales interview is taking place.

Be a Critical Participant

Language Strategies

Seek the meanings of symbols.

Woodward and Denton write that language “is far more than a collection of words and rules for proper usage. Language is the instrument and vehicle of human action and expression.”¹⁷ Skilled interviewers are keenly aware of the power and manipulation of verbal symbols, but too many of us see these symbols as merely words and rules. Larson warns that “as receivers, we need to get to the bottom of persuasive meanings; carefully analyzing the symbols used or misused by persuaders can help us get there.”¹⁸ The following are common language strategies.

Jargon is not harmless.

Framing and Reframing

Persuaders use language to frame or construct the way you see people, places, things, and objects. For instance, **jargon** substitutes peculiar words for common words. While

some jargon seems harmless enough (schedule irregularity for airline flight delay), others can hide the truth (terminological inexactitude for lie), make something sound more technical than it is (emergency exit light for a flashlight), more valuable than it is (garment management system for one hook and two hangers), or less severe (collateral damage for the killing of civilians during military actions).

Ambiguities say little but sound like a lot.

Strategic ambiguities are words with multiple or vague meanings. Persuaders want you to interpret the words according to their specific needs or perceptions without asking embarrassing, negative, or insightful questions. If a politician claims to be a conservative or moderate, what exactly is this person? What is a lifetime guarantee or a limited warranty? What is an affordable apartment or a top salary? What is free-range poultry or poultry raised the old-fashioned way? We pay premium prices for lite, diet, natural, and low-carb products without knowing how these differ from ones that are not.

Imagery substitutes for experiences.

Imagery—word pictures—contains multisensory words to color what you have experienced, will experience, may experience, or experience indirectly. A representative of a travel agency, with the aid of leaflets, posters, and Web sites, will help you visualize skiing in Switzerland, visiting the Aztec ruins in Mexico, surfing in Hawaii, or seeing the wildlife of Kenya. On the other hand, an interviewer might employ the same tactics to paint a negative picture complete with apocalyptic images and dire predictions if you vote for a political opponent, purchase a competing product, join a different religious group, accept a scholarship with another school, or travel to Kenya, instead of South Africa.

Euphemisms replace substance with sound.

Euphemisms substitute *better sounding* words for common words. Cadillac was the first to substitute preowned for used cars to emphasize ownership rather than use. Real estate agencies are now substituting the word “bought” for “sold” to emphasize purchasing rather than selling. You might find an inexpensive interview suit but not a cheap one and purchase it from a sales associate rather than a clerk. A lifelike Christmas tree sounds better than an artificial one. When you walk into a women’s department for clothing, you may see signs for “women’s sizes” that sound better than “large sizes.” On the other hand, when you walk into a men’s department, you may see signs for “large men’s sizes” but not “petite men’s sizes.” Words make a difference. Would you go into a favorite campus hangout and order a “diet Beer?” You might well order a “lite beer.”

Words may alter reality.

Differentiation is not an attempt to find a better-sounding word but to alter how you see *reality*. For example, when an animal rights advocate wants you to become an animal guardian instead of an animal owner, this person wants to change how you see your relationship with your pet. Calling female members of an organization, women, is not “political correctness”—a euphemism—but an effort to change perceptions of the abilities, capabilities, and maturity of women compared to girls. The purposes of euphemisms and differentiation are very different; the first wants to make something *sound better* while the second seeks to change your *visions of reality*.

For many of us, the majority rules.

Appealing to the People

Interviewers appeal to your faith in the rule and wisdom of “the people,” following Lincoln’s adage that “you can fool all of the people some of the time and some of the people all of the time, but you can’t fool all of the people all of the time.” The

ad populum tactic claims to speak on behalf of the people—the alleged majority—such as voters, students, employees, college athletes, consumers, and small business owners. It is the “common folk,” of course, not the elite, the government, the administration, or the executives. When, for instance, an attorney claims that he is “here for the people,” who are these people?

The **bandwagon** tactic urges you to follow the crowd, to do what everyone else is allegedly doing, buying, wearing, attending, or voting. It appeals to your desire to belong and conform, often accompanied by a note of urgency: “Everyone’s going,” “Football tickets are really going fast,” and “The party is behind Jim in this election.” Listen for qualifiers such as nearly, probably, almost, and majority. Ask for numbers or names of those who have signed a petition, agreed to a change, or joined an organization. Be cautious of phrases such as, “people in the know” and “those who are on the move” that are designed to pressure and flatter.

Have an
inquiring mind.

Simplifying the Complex

Interviewers attempt to reduce complex problems, issues, controversies, and situations to their simplest elements. The **thin entering wedge**, also known as the **domino effect** or the **slippery slope**, claims that one decision, action, or law after another is leading toward disastrous consequences. Talk to a person who is against censorship, gun control, or same-sex marriages and you are likely to hear how censorship of books in public schools is one more step toward censoring all reading materials, how the registration of handguns is yet another step toward outlawing and confiscating all guns, and how same-sex marriage is a slippery slope toward the destruction of the home and the family. Look for evidence of a related, intentional string of actions that are tipping dominos, producing wedges, or sliding down a dangerous slope.

Fear of chain
reactions may
stifle any action.

Slogans are clever words or phrases that encapsulate positions, stands, or goals. They are a vague but powerful means to alter the way you think, feel, or act because they are catchy and entice you to fill in the meaning—to self-persuade. Interviewers rely on slogans to attract customers, recruits, contributors, and loyalty and may change them to communicate different messages. For instance, when Purdue University changed its slogan from “Touching tomorrow today” and then “Discover Purdue” with “Purdue: It’s Happening Here,” the president explained that “there is a tremendous amount of excitement around campus. . . . I think this theme is just trying to capture that sense of energy, momentum and pride that we have at Purdue.”¹⁹ Ask what slogans mean and if they truly represent a person, organization, campaign, or solution.

Slogans are
clever phrases
and more.

An interviewer may **polarize** people, organizations, positions, or courses of action by claiming that you have only a choice of two: conservative or liberal, friend or foe, Chevy or Ford, wind power or nuclear power, for gun control or against gun control. It is a simplistic but persuasive view of the world. Are you either a conservative or liberal, a mixture of each, or something else?

Polarizing limits
our choices and
our thinking.

Dodging the Issue

Interviewers may attempt to dodge critical issues, questions, or objections. **Ad hominem** (getting personal) dodges undesired challenges by discrediting a source because of age, culture, gender, race, affiliation, or past positions, statements, or claims. A parent

Attacking a
source does
not address the
issue.

may tell a child to “just consider the source” when the child is called a name or has a belief challenged. An acquaintance may urge you to ignore research conducted by a known conservative or liberal, government agency or corporate association, religious or secular organization. Insist that the interviewer address the issue, point, or substance of the research.

Sharing guilt does not remove guilt.

You have used the *tu quoque* tactic since childhood to dodge an issue or objection by revolving it upon the challenger or questioner: “You’re one too,” “It takes one to know one,” or “So do you.” These are classic *tu quoque* responses. If you question a political candidate about taking money from special interests, the person may reply, “All politicians take money from special interests” or “Your candidate has accepted money from labor unions and trial lawyers.”

Blaming others is an attempt to dodge responsibility.

Interviewers may dodge issues by **transferring guilt** to others, making the accuser, victim, or questioner the guilty party. Cheating on an exam is the professor’s fault; failing to report all income on a tax report is the IRS’s fault; parking illegally is the college’s fault for not providing enough parking places. Defense attorneys turn victims of crimes into the guilty parties, particularly in rape and abuse cases.

The logical and psychological are inseparable.

Logical Strategies

As discussed earlier, persuaders develop arguments into what appear to be valid and acceptable patterns. It is important to recognize and challenge these patterns.

Argument from example is a statement, based on a sample, about the distribution of some characteristic among the members of a whole class of people, places, or things. If you recognize this pattern, ask

Always check the sample from which generalizations come.

- What is the total amount of this sample?
- What is the nature of this sample?
- When was the sample taken?
- What is the interviewer asserting from this sample?

Beware of the *hasty generalization* in which the persuader generalizes to a whole group from one or a few examples. For instance, a friend may warn you against dining at a particular restaurant because he had a bad meal there once.

Be careful of coincidences seen as causes.

Argument from cause-to-effect addresses what caused an effect. Ask questions such as

- Was this cause able to generate this effect?
- Was this cause the only possible cause?
- Was this cause the major cause?
- What evidence is offered to establish this causal link?
- Is a coincidence mistaken for the cause?

Just because B followed A, it does not mean that A caused B.

Beware of the *post hoc* or **scrambling cause–effect** fallacy that argues simply because B followed A, A must have caused B. For instance, I got the flu the day after I got that flu shot, so the shot gave me the flu.

Be a super-sleuth when encountering hypotheses.

Arguing from fact or hypothesis offers the best explanation for a body of facts and is the type of reasoning investigators use when trying to explain murders, disasters, accidents, and teams losing in the NCAA's March madness.

- How frequently is this hypothesis accurate with these facts?
- Is the body of facts sufficient?
- What facts would make the claim more or less convincing?
- How simple or complex is the hypothesis?

A sign may have many meanings or no meanings.

Arguing from sign is a claim that two or more variables are related in such a way that the presence or absence of one may be taken as an indication of the presence or absence of the other. For example, if the flag on the post office is at half-mast, you may reason that someone of importance has died. Ask these questions when hearing an argument from the sign:

- What is the relationship between the variables?
- Is the presence or absence verifiable?
- What is the believability or reliability of the sign?

Look for important differences as well as important similarities.

Arguing from analogy compares two people, places, things, or proposals that have several important characteristics and then claims they share other important characteristics.

- How similar are the similarities?
- Are enough similarities provided?
- Are important **dissimilarities** ignored?
- Are the similarities critical to the claim?

Identify the major assertion upon which the argument rests.

Arguing from accepted belief, assumption, or proposition is based on a statement that is thought to be accepted or proven. The remainder of the argument follows from this assertion, such as: Using marijuana leads to use of hard drugs such as heroin and coke. John is using marijuana, so he will eventually turn to hard drugs. Ask these questions:

- Do you accept the foundational assertion?
- Do the other assertions follow logically from this assertion?
- Does the claim necessarily follow from these assertions?

"If" arguments may ignore obvious or unpredictable conditions.

Beware of arguments based on alleged self-evident truths that cannot be questioned or disputed because they are "fact."

In argument from condition, an interviewer asserts that if something does or does not happen, something else will or will not happen. "If you stop smoking, you will not get lung cancer." The central focus is the word *if*. Ask these questions:

- Is the condition acceptable?
- Is this the only condition?
- Is this the major condition?

Evidence

Look closely at the evidence an interviewer offers (or does not offer) to gain attention and interest, establish credibility and legitimacy, support arguments, develop a need, and present a solution. Evidence includes examples, stories, authorities or witnesses, comparisons and contrasts, statistics, and key definitions. Question the acceptability of the interviewer's evidence.

Assess the reliability and expertise of sources.

- *Is the evidence trustworthy?* Are the persuader and the persons and organizations being cited unbiased and reliable? Are the sources of the evidence (newspapers, reports, Internet, publications) unbiased and reliable?
- *Is the evidence authoritative?* What are the training, experience, and reputation of the authorities or witnesses being cited? Were they in positions to have observed the facts, events, or data?
- *Is the evidence recent?* Is it the most recent available? Are newer statistics or findings available? Have authorities changed their minds?
- *Is the evidence documented sufficiently?* Do you know where and how the statistics or results were determined? Who determined them? Where and when were they reported?
- *Is the evidence communicated accurately?* Can you detect alterations or deletions in quotations, statistics, or documentation? Is the evidence cited in context?
- *Is the evidence sufficient in quantity?* Are enough authorities cited? Enough examples given? Enough points of comparison made? Adequate facts revealed?
- *Is the evidence sufficient in quality?* Are opinions stated as facts? How satisfactory is the sample used for generalizations and causal arguments? Does proof evidence (factual illustrations, statistics, authority, detailed comparisons) outweigh clarifying evidence (hypothetical illustrations, paid testimonials, figurative analogies, and metaphors)?

Insist on both quantity and quality of evidence.

Be an active and critical player in the interview.

Be an active participant. Each interview has the potential of altering or reinforcing the way you think, feel, or act, including the money you spend, the votes you cast, the relationships you establish or maintain, the possessions you protect, the work you do, and the life you lead. Ask questions to obtain information and explanations, probe into vague and ambiguous words and comments, and reveal feelings and attitudes that may lie hidden or merely suggested. There are no foolish questions, only questions you fail to ask.

Play an active role in the opening because it initiates the persuasive process.

The Opening

Be alert and active from the first moments of the interview. If it is a “cold call” in which you have had no time to prepare, use carefully phrased questions to discover the identity, position, and qualifications of the interviewer. Discover the real purpose and intent of the interview.

Too many persuadees play passive roles during openings. Here is an example from an interview in one of our classes. The persuadee is head of surgery at

this hospital, believes in following strict hierarchies with surgeons at the top, feels physicians rather than nurses should detect and address real problems, and is all business.

Persuader: Dr. Smalley, I'm Lilly McDowell, one of the surgical nurse supervisors.

Persuadee: Hi Lilly, have a seat.

Persuader: I'd like to talk to you about the problems we are having with surgical patients after they leave the hospital and a solution to this problem.

Persuadee: Okay.

Persuader: Well, we have discovered that . . .

The interviewee does not exhibit his personality or attitudes and learns little about the purpose of this interview, how long it will take, or the nature of the problem. He allows the interviewer to launch into the need without question even though the interviewer appears to be encroaching on his authority and status, his area of expertise and responsibility, and does not explain the nature of the problem or how it was determined.

Need or Desire

Ask questions, challenge arguments, and demand solid evidence.

If an interviewer attempts to conduct an interview without a clear purpose and in which the need is a collection of generalizations and ambiguous claims, insist on a point-by-point development with each point crafted carefully and logically, supported with adequate evidence, and adapted to *your* values, beliefs, and attitudes. Beware of fallacies and tactics that dodge your questions and objections. If an interviewer attempts to introduce another point rather than address your concerns, insist on answers to your questions and objections and get agreements before proceeding to another point.

Weigh evidence carefully. Be on guard against psychological strategies designed to manipulate your reactions and make you feel obligated to reply in kind. Do not tolerate negative selling or mudslinging. Insist on getting agreements before going into criteria or a solution.

Criteria

Criteria enable you to weigh solutions.

Establishing criteria with the interviewer that any solution should meet is a critical part of the persuasion process. An interviewer may come to an interview with a list of criteria, and this helps the process and shows planning. Take an active part in establishing criteria. Are the criteria clear? Do you wish to modify some criteria? Which are the most important criteria? Are there criteria you wish to add?

Solution

Be sure the solution meets the need and is the best available.

An interviewer may claim there is only *one* obvious solution to the need or desire agreed upon. There is rarely only one solution to any problem. Insist upon a detailed presentation of each possible solution. Ask questions and raise objections. Be sure the criteria are applied equally to each solution to determine which is best for you in this situation. If possible, insist on seeing, feeling, hearing, or experiencing the product or proposal.

When you have agreed upon a solution or course of action, beware of qualifiers or “add-ons” such as guarantees, rebates, accessories, processing fees, and commitments. What exactly is a “lifetime” warranty or guarantee? The persuader may hope that since you have made the *big* decision, you will agree to *small* decisions—the contrast principle discussed earlier. What are you getting that is “free”?

**Take your time
when making a
final decision.**

The Closing

Do not rush into making a decision or commitment. You have little to gain and much to lose. A common tactic is to create a psychological reaction by claiming the possibility of censorship or the scarcity of a product. An organization may produce a limited number of books, coins, cars, or positions to make them more in demand, to urge you to act quickly before it is too late.

Take time to think about a decision; sleep on it. Be sure your questions and objections are answered satisfactorily. Understand the possible ramifications of your decision. Consider getting a second or third opinion. Talk to persons who have relevant expertise or experiences. Check out competing products, candidates, offers, and programs. For instance, visit several universities before deciding where to pursue a graduate or professional degree; try out several laptops before deciding which to purchase; listen or talk to different political candidates before voting.

ON THE WEB

Assume you are going to purchase a new car upon graduation. You want to be thoroughly informed and prepared when you contact sales representatives so you can make an intelligent decision and get a good deal. Use the World Wide Web to access information on brands, models, features, comparative prices, and assessments by automotive experts. Sample manufacturer sites are Toyota (<http://www.toyota.com>), Acura

(<http://www.acura.com>), Mazda (<http://mazdausa.com>), Buick (<http://www.parkavenue.com>), and Chrysler (<http://www.chryslercars.com>). What information is readily available on the Internet, and why is this so? What information is not included on the Internet, and why is this so? What are common persuasive tactics used on the Internet? What questions does your research suggest you pursue during interviews?

Summary

Good persuasive interviews are ones in which both parties are actively involved in interpersonal interactions in which both parties speak and listen effectively. Persuasion should be *done with* not *done to* another party.

Good persuasive interviews are honest endeavors conducted according to fundamental ethical guidelines. They are not games in which the end justifies the means or *buyer beware* is a guiding principle. The appeal should be to the head and the heart rather than relying on emotional hot buttons that will override critical thought and decision making.

Good persuasive interviews are carefully researched, planned, and structured, yet they remain flexible enough to meet unforeseen reactions, objections, and arguments. The interviewer adapts the effort to *this persuadee*; develops, supports, and documents important reasons for a change in thinking, feeling, or acting; and presents a detailed solution that meets criteria agreed upon by both parties. Persuasion often entails several contacts in which the persuader and persuadee reach incremental agreements.

Good persuasive interviews involve the interviewee as a responsible, informed, critical, and active participant who plays a central role. The interviewee acts ethically, listens carefully, asks insightful and challenging questions, raises important objections, challenges evidence and arguments, recognizes common persuasive tactics for what they are, and weighs solutions according to agreed-upon criteria.

Key Terms and Concepts

<i>Ad hominem</i>	Culture	Psychological strategies
<i>Ad populum</i>	Differentiation	Reciprocal concessions
Agreement questions	Domino effect	Rejection then retreat
Analyzing the interviewee	Dissonance	Rule of reciprocation
Arguing from accepted belief	Encouraging interaction questions	Scrambling cause–effect
Arguing from analogy	Ethics	Self-evident truths
Arguing from cause–effect	Evidence	Shock-absorber phrases
Arguing from condition	False dichotomy	Shopping-around interviewee
Arguing from example	Framing	Skeptical interviewee
Arguing from facts	Hasty generalization	Slippery slope
Arguing from two choices	Hostile interviewee	Slogans
Argument from sign	Identification theory	Socioeconomic background
Attention and interest questions	Implicative approach	Solution
Attitude–attitude conflict	Indecisive interviewee	Source-perception conflict
Attitudes	Induced compliance theory	Standard/learned principles
Balance or consistency theory	Intelligent interviewee	Stealth marketing
Bandwagon tactic	Interrelated conditions	Strategic ambiguities
Behavior–attitude conflict	Motives	Thin entering wedge
Beliefs	Name-calling	Transferring guilt
Buyer beware	Normative influence	<i>Tu quoque</i>
Closed-minded or authoritarian interviewee	Objection questions	Trial closing
Cold calls	Objections	Two-sided approach
Consubstantiality	One-sided approach	Undercover marketing
Contract or agreement closing	Open-minded	Values
Contrast principle	Polarization	Verification questions
Criteria	<i>Post hoc fallacy</i>	Yes-but approach
	Prospecting	Yes-yes approach
	Psychological discomfort	
	Psychological reactance theory	

Persuasion Role-Playing Cases

Acquiring a Commuter Airline Service

The interviewer is the manager of a university-operated airport that had provided commercial passenger service to the area since the 1950s. Unfortunately, the convenience and limo service every two hours to an international airport just 65 miles away and the cost of commuter airline tickets resulted in several airlines coming and going over the years because of lack of passengers. Nighthawk Air is the only airline continuing to serve the airport with two morning and two afternoon flights to Detroit. It has announced that it will discontinue service on December 1. The interviewer is scheduling interviews with several commuter airlines in an effort to persuade them to begin service in December.

The interviewee is chief of operations for Eastern-Southern, a four-year-old commuter airline serving Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, and North Carolina. Its long-range plans are to extend service to Pennsylvania and Ohio. Competition from large airlines and airline consolidations have made these plans tenuous at best. She is willing to listen to the interviewer from a service area that might be in the airline's future, but she is well aware of the number of airlines that have come and gone from his airport. There would have to be guarantees of reasonable passenger numbers and some financial incentives. The interviewer has a good background in the aviation industry but little management experience or success in selling commuter service to his campus and community.

Adoption of the New Line of Clothing

The interviewer is 24 years old and is the assistant manager of Abbey's, a women's clothing store in a shopping mall close to a college campus. The three lines of clothing and the selection of jewelry clearly appeal to "mature" women in their late 30s and older, not the college customer but her mother. The interviewer wants to persuade the owner-manager to eliminate at least one line of clothing and replace it with one or ones that will attract the teenage and young adult clientele. The selection of jewelry would be mixed in appeal. The interview is taking place in the interviewee's office at 8:00 a.m. before the shop opens at 9:30.

The interviewee has owned Abbey's for nearly 20 years and has been satisfied with sales and the number of repeat customers she attracts. Ego involvement is high because the interviewee personally selected the shop's brands and jewelry and travels to Chicago, San Francisco, and New York to make stock selections. She sees Abbey's as offering a distinct alternative, one of the very few remaining in the area, to all of the "teeny-bopper" stores that populate the local mall that have nothing for women over 30. The interviewer is seen as a very hard worker with excellent communication skills but highly interested in her own tastes in clothing and jewelry. She is part of her generation, but this does not prevent her from interacting with and selling to women several years older.

A Drought-Resistant Seed Corn

The interviewer is a sales representative for Millennium Hybrids, which has developed a new drought-resistant seed corn that has proven highly successful in tests in drought-prone

areas of the midwestern states and Colorado. It was developed following the disastrous summer of 2012 when widespread drought reduced corn production by some 53 percent. It is more expensive than traditional hybrids, but predictions are for more summers like that of 2012 over the next several years. The interviewer first met the interviewee, a farmer-owner of a 3000-acre grain farm in western Iowa, when he was doing research on seed corn at Iowa State University.

The interviewee has used seeds from Millennium Hybrids in the past but switched to King Hybrids after he lost more than 80 percent of his crop in 2012. He believed King's seed corn was more drought resistant. Although he is willing to talk about the new Millennium hybrid, he has been happy with the King Hybrids and its sales representative who has worked very closely with him during the past two years.

Preserve a Historical Home

The Harrison home was built in the country west of New Goshen in the early 1850s and remained in the family until 1932, when it was willed to the Jefferson County Historical Society along with many of its original furnishings. Since then, it has served as a historical attraction, a place to house and exhibit the Society's wealth of artifacts, and a space for offices. Many of the materials used to build this home were imported from Italy, Switzerland, and Germany and then transported up the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers before being loaded onto wagons for their trip to the building site seven miles from New Goshen. Recently the Historical Society announced that the Harrison home was now too small for all of its holdings and that it could no longer afford the upkeep of the aging building. It plans to sell it and move into the former Jefferson County Academy, a much larger building that is also of significant historical value. The interviewer, a retired college history teacher, hopes to persuade the director of the State Department of Historic preservation to provide a grant that would enable the Historical Society to maintain the home.

The director of the State Department of Historic Preservation has read a detailed proposal from the persuader and is sympathetic. However, her agency is swamped with requests to preserve old homes, schools, and buildings throughout the state. Each request seems to have merit but funds are limited and efforts to reduce the federal budget have eliminated or greatly reduced funds for preservation of structures. The director is interested in how much money the persuader is willing to invest in the Harrison home and what efforts he is willing to undertake to raise additional funds.

Student Activities

1. Locate a professional (sales representative, recruiter, fund-raiser) who conducts persuasive interviews on a regular basis and spend a day on the job with this person. Observe how this person prepares for each interview, selects strategies, opens interviews, develops needs and solutions, closes interviews, and adapts to interviewees.
2. Select three persons in different career fields (e.g., sales, medicine, athletics, lobbying, recruiting, advocacy) who have extensive experience in persuasive interviewing.

Probe into how they prepare for and try to persuade three of the following types of interviewees: indecisive, hostile, closed-minded, skeptical, shopping around, highly educated. Which do they find most difficult? What are their most effective strategies for each? Which value and emotional appeals do they use most often and why?

3. Identify an acquaintance or family member who is known for driving hard bargains. Go with this person to a persuasive interview; it need not be a sales situation. Observe the role this person plays in the opening, how this person handles the need or desire, the information this person obtains, objections and questions raised about the solution, and how this person negotiates a final decision. If this interviewee threatens to go to a competitor or a person higher up in an organization, how does the interviewer react?
4. Keep a log over a two-week period of the telephone and e-mail solicitations you receive. How well are these adapted to you as a person and to your needs, desires, and motives? Which values and emotions do they use as triggering devices? How ethical are their tactics? Which types of evidence do they employ? How do they react when you raise questions or objections? How do they close the interviews?

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The Counseling Interview

Be a helper
not a problem
solver.

The counseling interview, often referred to as the helping interview, is conducted to **assist** another party to **gain insights** into and ways of **coping** with a **personal problem**. The interviewer's task is **not to resolve** a problem; that is the interviewee's task. Common personal problems concern work or academic performance, finances, relationships, health, and motivation. Counseling interactions are among the most sensitive of interviews because they occur only when another party feels **incapable** or **unsure** of handling something that is personal, and this party may be persuaded or compelled to take part by a third party.

While few people in society are highly trained counselors or therapists, all of us counsel others on a regular basis. Family members, neighbors, friends, co-workers, subordinates, students, and team members ask us to listen to a problem or concern, offer a bit of advice, or provide emotional, moral, legal, financial, or professional assistance. We tend to comply because that is what we humans do. Experts in crisis management claim that in a time of crisis "everyone is a resource."¹ Lay counselors that include most of us with little or minimal training, have proven to be quite successful at counseling, partly because those seeking help seek out people they trust, are similar to them, and are open, caring, and good listeners.

The objectives of this chapter are to introduce you to the basic principles of counseling including ethical responsibilities when helping another person, important steps in preparing for a counseling interview, nondirective and directive interviewing approaches, structuring the interview, and the critical ingredients of a successful counseling interview. This chapter prepares you to help those who turn to you for assistance with day-to-day problems in their personal and work lives. **It does not prepare you to be a psychotherapist or to handle critical problems such as drug or alcohol abuse, severe psychological problems, or legal issues.**

Ethics and the Counseling Interview

A concern for ethics must be ever-present in interviews because they inevitably affect the lives and careers of both parties. This concern is enhanced when you agree to listen to another's problem, weigh its ramifications, and suggest courses of action. The "Code of Ethics" of the American Counseling Association (ACA) states that "Through a chosen ethical decision-making process and evaluation of the context of the situation, counselors work collaboratively with clients to make decisions that promote clients'

Know when to say no.

growth and development.” This code must “bear public scrutiny of its application.”² Let us focus on seven ethical principles that are central to counseling interviews in which you are most likely to take part.

Establish and Maintain Trust

Trust is the keystone of effective counseling.

The ACA identifies **trust** as “the cornerstone of the counseling relationship,”³ while Sherry Cormier and her colleagues write that the “value of a sound relationship base cannot be overlooked because” it “conveys the counselor’s interest in an acceptance of the client as a unique and worthwhile person and builds sufficient trust for eventual self-disclosure and self-revelations to occur.”⁴ Without trust, an interview is unlikely to take place. Persons thinking of change, engaged in change, or trying to maintain change tend to accept the interviewer’s help as **genuine** and **trustworthy**.⁵ Interviewees are unlikely to disclose their innermost thoughts and concerns unless they **trust** interviewers to keep their interactions strictly confidential.

Act in the Interviewee’s Best Interests

Respect the other party’s dignity and worth.

To assure your efforts are in the interviewee’s best interests, you must respect the interviewee’s dignity, know if the interviewee is capable of making sound choices and decisions, and encourage the interviewee to make choices and decisions within their personal beliefs, attitudes, and values. Research in counseling indicates that **interviewer** self-disclosure of personal experiences and background has a favorable impact on the **interviewee’s** willingness to disclose important information. Interviewees gain new insights and perspectives for making changes when they perceive important similarities that indicate an equal and favorable relationship with an interviewer who can understand their problems and situations.⁶

Beware of preconceptions.

Provide information so the interviewee can make informed decisions and choices. Be well-informed about relevant information on this person’s socioeconomic status, education, work history, family background, group memberships, medical and psychological histories, test results, and past problems and courses of action. Talk to people who know the interviewee well to gain insights into the interviewee that will guide you when conducting the counseling interview. Assess information from others carefully. Do they have reasons to lie or exaggerate? Have they formed negative, defensive, or wary attitudes toward a person because of second-hand information? You may discover the opposite is true when you interact directly with them. Beware of preconceptions that may lead you to prejudge an interviewee or anticipate a defensive or antagonistic interaction. Be particularly cautious when working with children.

Understand Your Limitations

Know your limits.

Know your counseling skills and limitations, and avoid situations for which you have neither the training nor the experience. Sherry Cormier, Paula Nurius, and Cynthia Osborn write, “Self-awareness is an important aspect of competence and involves a balanced assessment of our strengths and limitations.”⁷ Know when to refer the interviewee to a person with greater counseling skills and expertise. For instance, a teacher must be able to detect when a student needs psychological or medical rather than academic help.

Listening is your critical skill.

Skilled counselors are open-minded, optimistic, self-assured, relaxed, flexible, and patient. They are people-centered rather than problem-centered, sensitive to others' needs, able to communicate understanding, warmth, comfort, and reassurance, and give interviewees undivided and focused attention. They provide appropriate verbal and nonverbal responses, and they are excellent listeners. Jeffrey Kottler, author of *A Brief Primer of Helping Skills*, writes, *Listening is the most crucial helping skill.*⁸

How comfortable are you when a person reveals an embarrassing problem or incident or expresses intense feelings of sorrow, anxiety, fear, or anger? How comfortable are you with using proper terms and names for conditions, actions, and body parts? Your unease may become apparent to the interviewee and stifle disclosure and communication.

Do Not Impose Your Values, Beliefs, and Attitudes

Can you reveal your motives and agenda?

You bring who you are to every counseling interview, including your values, beliefs, attitudes, personality, and experiences. Be acutely aware of the important values you hold and how you communicate these to others through eye contact, voice, manner, words, dress, and appearance. Helen Cameron cautions, "Anyone who feels they can operate from a *value neutral* perspective is deeply mistaken."⁹ How do your values compare and contrast with those of the interviewee? It is not enough to tolerate differences in values and the beliefs and attitudes that emanate from them; you must be able to understand and respect value differences. Can you suspend judgment and avoid becoming argumentative and defensive? Can you guide the direction and flow of the interview without ordering, prescribing, or persuading?

Respect Diversity

Strive to be more than "culturally aware."

You must be **culturally aware** in today's global village because "Culture controls our lives and defines reality for us, with or without our permission and/or intentional awareness."¹⁰ You need to truly **understand** and **appreciate** the interviewee's culture and how it is similar to and different from yours. Cormier, Nurius, and Osborn claim that you must "regard *all* conversations as 'cross-cultural.'"¹¹ Culture includes not only gender, race, ethnicity, and national origin but also sexual orientation, socioeconomic class, geographical area, religion or spirituality, physical and mental abilities, and family form. On the other hand, do not assume cultural differences are greater than all other considerations in counseling interviews. Qualities intrinsic to personalities, values, attitudes, and nonverbal behavior often account for counseling effectiveness.

We all value our values.

If you feel inadequately prepared for cross-cultural counseling situations, seek training and assistance from those with expertise and skill in interacting with others in culturally appropriate ways.¹² Learn to recognize and avoid common cultural generalizations and stereotypes such as people on welfare are lazy, Hispanics are illegal immigrants, women are nurturing, young workers are superior to old workers, Muslims are terrorists, and Asian students are high academic achievers. Research indicates that where there is a match of world views in interactions, the parties establish good working relationships because interviewees feel more understood and appreciated as individuals.

Maintain Relational Boundaries

Know where the boundaries are.

Maintain appropriate relational boundaries with interviewees, particularly when you have an administrative, supervisory, professional, or evaluative role as a teacher, employer, counselor, coach, or physician. Avoid nonverbal actions and words that might be interpreted as authoritative harassment. Maintain an emotional and relational distance to avoid any form of unintentional or intentional intimacy with an interviewee. Sources warn that it is an easy step across the line to sexual involvement. News reports of male and female teachers having affairs with their students are distressingly common. Thousands of men and women helped families, friends, and co-workers following the tragedy of September 11, 2001. In some cases, the helpers became emotionally and sexually involved to the extent that they destroyed their own families while trying to help other families.

Do No Harm

Do no harm!

This code encompasses all of the others. Be aware of dangers in trying to help others. Always act within the boundaries of your competence to avoid giving bad or ill-informed advice. Regardless of the advice you give, you may be blamed for outcomes or lack of them. Behave legally, morally, and ethically at all times. Know when to refer the interviewee to a professional with greater counseling and specialized skills. Reports of suicides, sexual molestation and assault, and violent attacks in homes, schools, businesses, theaters, and shopping centers by disturbed individuals often reveal that the perpetrators had sought help or revealed their intentions to others. When a person's "condition indicates that there is a clear and imminent danger" to self or others, you must refer this person to a more qualified counselor, inform possible victims, and notify authorities immediately.¹³

Prepare Thoroughly for the Counseling Interview

The more thoroughly you know an interviewee, the more likely you are to understand why a person is seemingly rejecting offers of help and how to respond effectively to statements such as the following that are intended to stifle an interview before it starts.

Be prepared for rejections of offers to counsel.

If I need help, I'll let you know.

I can take care of myself.

I need to get back to work.

Why should I discuss my personal problems with you?

You wouldn't understand.

Don't tell Mom and Dad.

Just tell me what I should do.

No one knows how I feel.

You don't know what it's like being a student (parent, patient, teenager).

Get off my back.

I can't afford to take time off.

Listen rather
than talk.

On the other hand, if a person requests help without notice or explanation and you two have little or no relational history, you must rely on your training and experiences to discover what is bothering the person and how you might help. Do not assume you know why a person is calling, showing up at your door, or bringing up a topic. Ask open-ended questions that enable the interviewee to explain the purpose of the interview. Listen carefully for information and insights that will enable you to help this person.

Select an Interviewing Approach

Determine which interviewing approach introduced in Chapter 2 (directive and nondirective) is the most suitable for this interviewee and situation. Each has its advantages and disadvantages. The sensitive and potentially explosive nature of the counseling interview necessitates a careful selection of approach.

Directive Approach

Know when to
maintain control
and when to
let go.

When using a directive approach, you control the structure of the interview, subject matter, pace of interactions, and length of the interview. You collect and share information, define and analyze problems, suggest and evaluate solutions, and provide guidelines for actions. In brief, you serve as an expert or consultant who analyzes problems and provides guidelines for actions. The interviewee is a reactor and recipient rather than an equal or major player in the interaction. The directive approach is based on the assumption that you know more about the problem than the interviewee and are better suited to analyze it and recommend solutions. The accuracy of this assumption, depends upon you, the interviewee, and the situation.

Nondirective Approach

Is the inter-
viewee capable
of or willing to
take control?

When using a **nondirective approach**, the interviewee controls the structure of the interview, determines the topics, decides when and how each will be discussed, and sets the pace and length of the interview. You assist the interviewee in obtaining information, gaining insights, defining and analyzing problems, and discovering and evaluating solutions by listening, observing, and encouraging. Do not impose ideas. A nondirective approach to counseling emphasizes the interviewer's role as engaging, exploring, encouraging, listening, understanding, affirming, reassuring, and validating rather than ordering, confronting, directing, warning, threatening, cautioning, and judging.

Do not assume
the problem is
lack of
information.

The nondirective approach is based on the assumption that the interviewee is more capable than you of analyzing problems, assessing solutions, and making correct decisions. The interviewee must implement recommendations and solutions. The accuracy of this assumption, like the directive assumption, depends on you, the interviewee, and the situation.

The interviewee may know nothing about the problem or potential solutions, or worse, may be misinformed about both. The interviewee's problem may not be lack of information or misinformation but the inability to visualize a current or future problem or make sound decisions. The interviewer serves as an objective, neutral referee, presenting pros and cons of specific courses of action. Distinguish between when you are serving as expert advisor and when, perhaps subtly and unintentionally, you are imposing personal preferences.



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■ *Provide a climate conducive to effective counseling, which is a quiet, comfortable, private location, free of interruptions.*

The interviewee may prefer a directive (highly structured) approach. For instance, a study of Asian-American students discovered that when career counselors used a directive approach, students saw them as more empathetic, culturally competent, and providing concrete guidance that produced immediate benefits.¹⁴

Combination of Approaches

You may employ a combination of approaches by beginning with a nondirective approach to encourage the interviewee to talk and reveal the problem and its causes. Then you may switch to a more directive

approach when discussing possible solutions or courses of action. A directive approach is best for obtaining facts, giving information, and making diagnoses, while a nondirective approach opens up large areas and brings out spontaneous information.

**Be flexible
in choosing
and changing
approaches.**

Select a Structure

There is no standard structural format for the counseling interview, but Hartsough, Echterling, and Zarle's "sequential phase model" is applicable to most counseling situations.¹⁵ They developed this structure originally for handling calls to campus and community crisis centers. Figure 11.1 illustrates their sequential phase model.

The affective or emotional phases, boxes 1 and 3, involve the interviewee's feelings of trust in the counselor, feelings about self, and feelings about the problem. A nondirective approach is usually best for the affective phases of the interview. The cognitive or thinking phases, boxes 2 and 4, involve thinking about the problem and taking action. A directive or combination of approaches is usually best for the cognitive phases.

The typical counseling interview begins with establishing rapport and a feeling of trust (phase 1), proceeds to discovering the nature of the interviewee's problem (phase 2), probes more deeply into the interviewee's feelings (phase 3), and comes to a decision about a course of action (phase 4). Except in emergencies, you should not move from phase 1 to phase 4, or omit phase 3, without careful thought. If you do not discover the depth of the interviewee's feelings, you are unlikely to understand the problem or solutions.

Do not expect to move through all four phases in every counseling interview or to proceed uninterrupted in numerical order. You may go back and forth between phases 2 and 3, or between phases 3 and 4, as different aspects of the problem are revealed or disclosed, feelings increase or decrease in intensity, and solutions are introduced and weighed. Unless the interviewee wants specific information (where to get medical or housing assistance, how to drop or add a course, how to get an emergency monetary loan), you may not get to phase 4 until a second, third, or fourth interview. Be patient.

Figure 11.1 *Phases of counseling interviews*

Affective	Cognitive
1. Establishment of a helpful climate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Making contact b. Defining roles c. Developing a relationship 	2. Assessment of crisis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Accepting information b. Encouraging information c. Restating information d. Questioning for information
3. Affect integration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Accepting feelings b. Encouraging feelings c. Reflecting feelings d. Questioning for feelings e. Relating feelings to consequences or precedents 	4. Problem solving <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Offering information or explanations b. Generating alternatives c. Decision making d. Mobilizing resources

Select the Setting

Do not underestimate the importance of location and seating.

Consider carefully the climate and tone of the interview. Each affects the levels of communication that take place and the willingness to disclose feelings and attitudes.

Provide a climate that is quiet, comfortable, private, and free of interruptions. An interviewee will not be open and honest if other employees, students, workers, or clients can overhear the conversation. Select a neutral location such as a lounge, park, or an organization's cafeteria where the interviewee might feel less threatened and more relaxed. Some interviewees feel comfortable or safe only on their own turf, so consider meeting in the person's room, home, office, or place of business.

A round table is a traditional arrangement for problem solving.

If possible, arrange the seating so that both parties can communicate freely. You may sit on the floor with a child, perhaps playing a game, drawing pictures, or looking at a book. An optimal interpersonal distance is 3.5 feet. Students comment that an interviewer behind a desk makes them ill at ease, as though the "mighty one" is sitting in judgment. They prefer a chair at the end of the desk—at a right angle to the interviewer—or in chairs facing one another with no desk in between.

Arrangements of furniture contribute to or detract from the informal, conversational atmosphere important in counseling sessions. Interviewees prefer a round table, similar to a dining room or kitchen table, because it includes no power or leader position and they often handle family matters around the dining or kitchen table.

Conducting the Interview

As you approach the interview, remember that you are “investing in people” and that people can change, grow, and improve. Accept the person as the person is. Do not approach the interview as an opportunity to remodel an individual to your liking. The interview is a learning process for both parties and is unlikely to be a one-shot effort.

The Opening

**Want to help
and show it.**

The first minutes of a counseling session set the verbal and psychological tone for the remainder. Show you want to be involved and to help. Do not be condescending or patronizing. You might want to say, “It’s about time you showed up!” or “What have you done this time?” Stifle your frustration or irritation. Try to understand “the client’s world from inside the client’s frame of reference.”¹⁶

Initial Comments and Reactions

Do not second-guess the interviewee’s reason for making an appointment or dropping by. Avoid statements such as:

Are you still fighting with your roommate?

I assume you want another day off.

I suppose this is about money.

I know why you’re here.

A person may not have initiated this interview for any of these reasons but feel threatened or angry by your comment and attitude. Your interruption may ruin an opening the interviewee has prepared that would have revealed why the interviewee has turned to you for help.

**Be tactful and
neutral but not
indifferent.**

Avoid tactless and leading reactions common in interactions with family members, children, friends, and associates. All of us have been on the receiving end of such statements as:

Why did you dye your hair green?

You look terrible.

You’ve been going to class, haven’t you?

Looks like you’ve put on a few pounds.

Such comments and questions may destroy the climate and tone necessary for a successful counseling interview along with the interviewee’s self-confidence and self-esteem.

**Accept seem-
ingly irrelevant
opening
comments.**

Rapport and Orientation

Take your time getting acquainted and establishing a working relationship, even when your relationship has a long history. Your relational history may be positive or negative because both parties monitor previous interactions and enter a new exchange with high

or low expectations. The interview may be more threatening than other interactions. An interviewee may begin by talking about the building, books on the shelves, pictures on the walls, the view out the window, or the weather. Be patient. The person is sizing up you, the situation, and the setting and building up nerve to introduce an issue.

The **rappport** stage is your opportunity to show attention, interest, fairness, willingness to listen, and ability to maintain confidences. Both parties are establishing trust. Discover the interviewee's expectations and apprehensions about the interview and attitudes toward you, your position, your organization, and counseling sessions.

When rapport and orientation are completed, let the interviewee begin with what is of most interest or concern. It is the first step toward revealing the precise nature of the problem the interviewee has been unable to face or resolve. Do not rush this process. Observe the nonverbal cues that reveal inner feelings and intensity.

Encourage Self-Disclosure

The ability and willingness to disclose beliefs, attitudes, concerns, and feelings are major factors in the interviewee's decision to seek help and the degree to which the interview will be successful. "Self-disclosing is a very complex process that involves intricate decision making."¹⁷ The situation and its climate may be the most important determinant of the level of self-disclosure. A positive climate creates trust and engenders "feelings of safety, pride, and authenticity." The interviewee must believe that keeping secrets, or worse lying, inhibits the helping process "whereas disclosing produces a sense of relief from physical as well as emotional tension."¹⁸ During this stage, focus attention on strengths and achievements rather than weaknesses and failures and what is most in need of attention. This approach builds confidence and a feeling that it is safe to disclose beliefs, attitudes, and feelings. Although full self-disclosure is a desirable goal, an interviewee may be less tense and more willing to talk to you by hiding some undesirable facets of themselves.

Work within
a known time
frame.

If you initiate the counseling session, state clearly and honestly what you want to talk about. If there is a specific amount of time allotted for the interview, make this known so you can work within it. The interviewee will be more at ease knowing how much time is available. Quality is more important than the length of time spent with an interviewee. Attire and role behavior significantly affect the interviewee's perceptions of attractiveness and level of expertise and determine how closely the person will be drawn to you and the level of self-disclosure.

Enhance self-disclosure through appropriate reactions and responses. Prepare carefully to reduce surprises, and do not be shocked by what you see and hear. Release tensions with tasteful humor but do not appear to minimize the interviewee's problem. Speak as little as possible, and do not interrupt the interviewee. Listen empathically. Your voice, facial expressions, eye contact, and gestures must communicate a confident, warm, and caring image. Avoid highly directive responses until you have established a close, working relationship based on tact and honesty.

Culture and gender may be major determinates of self-disclosure in counseling interviews. A study of African-Americans engaging in counseling at a community health agency discovered that African-Americans in this setting "engaged in an ongoing assessing process." Initially, they assessed client-therapist match [white or black],

which was influenced by three factors: salience of Black identity, court involvement, and ideology similarity between client and therapist. These clients then assessed their safety in therapy and their counselor's effectiveness simultaneously. They used this information to monitor and manage their degree of self-disclosing along a continuum.¹⁹ Counselor self-disclosure in cross-cultural counseling—particularly their reactions to and experiences of racism or oppression may improve the counseling relationship and make clients feel more understood.²⁰ In some Eastern cultures, people see counselors as authority figures and may find a nondirective approach unsettling because the authority has turned the interview over to them to control. They feel more comfortable when counselors use a directive, interviewer-centered approach. Gender may determine self-disclosure. Females disclose significantly more about themselves and their problems than do males, especially on intimate topics such as sex, and a person's self-disclosure history often affects disclosure in other interviews. Males often have psychological defenses to protect themselves from feelings of weakness and to restrict emotional reactions.

Listen

Focus on the interviewee and the interviewee's problem.

Listening is a critical skill to master. Listen for empathy so you can reassure, comfort, express warmth, and place yourself in the interviewee's situation and world. Listen for comprehension so you can be patient, receive, understand, and recall interactions accurately and completely. Avoid listening for evaluation that judges and criticizes. Directly or indirectly moralizing, blaming, questioning, and disagreeing are major roadblocks to effective counseling. To get to the heart of a problem, give undivided attention to the interviewee's words and their implications and to what is intentionally or unintentionally left unmentioned.

Do not interrupt or take over the conversation. Beware of interjecting personal opinions, experiences, or problems. Too often, a person may want to talk about a serious illness of a father or mother, but the counselor takes over with a story about his or her own family illness.

If the interviewee pauses or stops talking for a few moments, use silence to encourage the interviewee to continue talking. Lean toward, face the other person squarely, maintain good eye contact, and reflect attention through facial expressions. Interviewees interpret smiles, attentive body postures, and gestures as evidence of warmth and enthusiasm.

Observe

Look for nonverbal signals but interpret them cautiously.

Observe how the interviewee sits, gestures, fidgets, and maintains eye contact. Pay attention to the voice for loudness, timidity, evidence of tenseness, and changes. These observations provide clues about the seriousness of the problem and the interviewee's state of mind. Deceptive answers may be lengthier, more hesitant, and with long pauses. People maintain eye contact longer when they lie.

If you are going to take notes or record the interview, explain why, and stop if you detect that either activity is affecting the interview adversely. People may be hesitant to leave a recording that others might hear. They are willing to confide in you, but not others.

Question

Do not ask too many questions.

Keep your questions open-ended.

Questions play important roles in counseling interviews, but asking too many questions is a common mistake. Your questions may interrupt the interviewee, change topics prematurely, or break the flow of self-disclosure. Numerous questions reduce the interviewee to a mere respondent and may stifle the interviewee's own questions.

Open-ended questions encourage interviewees to talk and express emotions. Both are important for encouraging, reflecting, and questioning about feelings and restating and probing for information. Ask one question at a time because double-barreled questions may result in ambiguous answers with neither portion answered clearly and thoroughly. Use encouragement probes such as

And?

I see.

Uh-huh?

Go on.

Then what happened?

And then?

Use *informational probes* for clarification, explanation, and in-depth information.

Why do you think that happened?

How did she react?

What do you mean he "overreacted"?

Tell me more about your confrontation with Professor Barger.

The *clearinghouse probe* can ensure that you have obtained all necessary information about an incident or problem.

What happened after that?

Are these all of the important details?

Anything else you would like to talk about?

Have I answered all of your questions?

Questions can help interviewees *find meanings* in situations. Steele and Echterling offer these examples:²¹

What worries you most right now?

What do you think you can learn from this?

What scares you most now?

These examples of *getting through* questions help interviewees manage their emotions.

How did you get through that?

How are you finding it possible to get through this family crisis?

What did you do to feel better about this?

Phrase all questions with care.

Avoid **curious probes** into feelings and embarrassing incidents, especially if the interviewee seems hesitant to elaborate. Beware of questions that communicate

A client-centered approach focuses the interview on the interviewee.

disapproval, displeasure, or mistrust that make the interviewee less open and trusting. Avoid leading questions except under *unusual* circumstances. Counselors working with children may go through intensive training in programs such as “Finding Words” that stress the use of nonleading questions. Avoid *why* questions that appear to demand explanations and justifications and put the interviewee on the defensive. Imagine how an interviewee might react to questions such as, *Why* weren’t you on time? *Why* did you do that? *Why* confront Doug? *Why* do you think that?

Respond

Center the interview on this interviewee, no one else.

Selecting appropriate responses to questions and information requests may be difficult. The emphasis in this chapter is on a client-centered approach to the counseling interview in which the focus is on what the interviewee is saying verbally and nonverbally and feeling. This approach emphasizes appropriate responses to elicit and identify feelings about self, problem, and trust in the interviewer. Interviewers may respond to interviewee information, questions, comments, and feelings in a variety of ways along a continuum from highly nondirective to nondirective, directive, and highly directive.

Highly nondirective reactions give total control to the interviewee.

Highly Nondirective Reactions and Responses

Highly nondirective reactions and responses encourage interviewees to continue commenting, analyze ideas and solutions, and be self-reliant. The interviewer offers no information, assistance, or evaluation of the interviewee, the interviewee’s ideas, or possible courses of action.

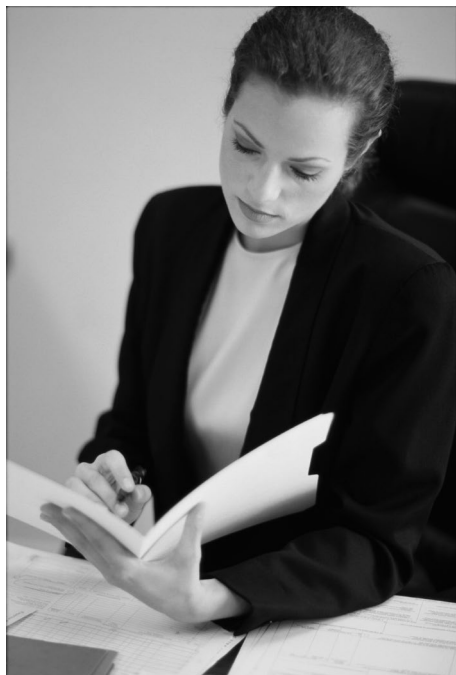
Remain silent to encourage interviewees to continue or to answer their own questions.

1. **Interviewee:** I’m thinking about dropping out of school for a year.
2. **Interviewer:** (silence)
3. **Interviewee:** I’m just not interested in my business classes and my grades are suffering.

Encourage interviewees to continue speaking by employing semi-verbal phrases.

1. **Interviewee:** I can’t seem to do anything right.
2. **Interviewer:** Uh huh.
3. **Interviewee:** I really try to follow the rules, but the residence hall staff is always on my case about something.

Be aware of your **nonverbal behaviors** when reacting and responding in a highly nondirective approach. Your tone of voice, speaking rate, gestures, and facial expressions must communicate interest and empathy.



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■ Review the interviewee’s file prior to the interview so you can devote full attention during the interview.

Holding an interviewee's hands or a simple touch when appropriate may reassure a person and express caring and understanding. On the other hand, rolling your eyes, raising an eyebrow, crossing your arms, and sitting forward may signal disapproval or disbelief. Ruth Purtilo identifies five kinds of smiles, each of which may send a negative message: I know something you don't know; poor, poor you; don't tell me that; I'm smarter than you; and I don't like you either.²² Prolonged silence may become awkward for both parties. If an interviewee seems unable to phrase a response or go it alone, employ an active response.

Questions may serve as highly nondirective responses, including silent, nudging, and clearinghouse probes. Restate or repeat an interviewee's question or statement instead of providing answers or volunteering information, ideas, evaluations, or solutions. Urge the person to elaborate or come up with ideas.

You may *return* a question rather than answer it to encourage the interviewee to analyze problems and select from among possible solutions. A return question looks like this:

Use questions that encourage the interviewee to formulate answers and solutions.

1. **Interviewee:** Should I file a complaint with OSHA about this compacter without a guard?
2. **Interviewer:** What do you think?

Do not continue to push a decision back if you detect that the individual has insufficient information or is confused, misinformed, genuinely undecided, or unable to make a choice.

Invite the interviewee to discuss a problem or idea.

1. **Interviewee:** I don't think I can handle the stress of this job much longer.
2. **Interviewer:** Care to talk about it?

An invitational question is appropriate when a person is *willing* or *interested* in discussing, explaining, or revealing. Do not intrude with demanding questions. Ask "Tell me about it" or "Such as?" Avoid a *why* question that may communicate criticism or impatience.

Reflective and mirror questions *clarify* and *verify* responses and statements. They must not lead a person toward a preferred answer.

1. **Interviewee:** I can't seem to get back on track since spring break?
2. **Interviewer:** Are you saying this is different from last year?

Begin reflective questions with phrases such as: "Is it accurate to say . . . ?" "I feel you are saying . . . ?" "If I understand what you're saying, you're . . . ?" and "Let me see if I understand what you're saying . . . ?" Listen carefully and make a concerted verbal and nonverbal effort to avoid leading the interviewee.

Use questions to determine what a person is and is not saying.

Be an informer rather than a persuader.

Nondirective Reactions and Responses

Nondirective reactions and responses inform and encourage with no imposition of either intended.

1. **Interviewee:** What are my options with a major in communication?
2. **Interviewer:** We have four options in the communication department. They are strategic communication, organizational communication, interpersonal communication, and mass communication.

Be specific in answers. If you do not have the information, say so and promise to get it or refer the interviewee to a better-qualified source. Encourage and reassure the interviewee by noting that certain feelings, reactions, or symptoms are normal and to be expected.

1. **Interviewee:** Ever since I got that bad performance review a few months ago, I tend to second guess myself before making any major decision. I keep thinking about what will happen if I make one or two wrong ones before the next review.
2. **Interviewer:** I had that same experience when I came here about nine years ago. I thought I was under a microscope all the time and was afraid to make a mistake. You simply have to use your training and instincts to make decisions while realizing that all of us around here make mistakes from time to time.

A thoughtless comment or two can damage a relationship.

There are quick ways to lose the trust and respect of an interviewee facing a difficult situation. These include unrealistic assurances such as, “There’s nothing to worry about,” “I’m sure everything will be just fine,” or “Everything works for the best.” Do not preach to the person about “old days” comments such as, “You think you have it tough? When I was your age, I had to . . .” or “When we were first married, we faced . . .” Avoid clichés “like the plague.”

Every cloud has a silver lining.

We all have to go sometime.

It’s always darkest before the dawn.

No pain, no gain.

Do not fall into the *we* trap. Think of when you experienced common *we’isms* from counselors, teachers, health care providers, parents, and others.

How are *we* doing this afternoon?

We can handle it.

Let’s take it one day at a time.

Are *we* ready for the exam?

Have you felt like shouting, “What do you mean *we*? I’m the one taking the test (getting the shot, undergoing therapy, overcoming grief)!”

Directive responses advise and evaluate but do not dictate.

Directive Reactions and Responses

Directive reactions and responses go beyond encouragement and information to mild advice and evaluations or judgments. In the following interchange, the interviewer supports the interviewee’s ideas and urges action:

1. **Interviewee:** I've never been good at English, so I'm struggling with writing assignments this semester.
2. **Interviewer:** Lots of students relate these concerns. Why don't you go to the English Writing Lab to get some help with your writing assignments?

A directive response may mildly question the interviewee's comments or ideas. Be tactful and cautious.

1. **Interviewee:** My supervisor is talking about scheduling me to work on Sundays, and that would make it impossible for me to attend worship services.
2. **Interviewee:** All employers are required to make reasonable accommodations for people to practice their religious beliefs. Why don't you talk to your supervisor about your concerns?

The interviewer may provide information and personal preference when asked.

1. **Interviewee:** If you were me, what would you do?
2. **Interviewer:** I would get my GED first and then consider taking courses at the community college.

Mild directive reactions and responses may challenge an interviewee's actions, ideas, or judgments, or urge the person to pursue a specific course or to accept information or ideas. Employ directive responses only when nondirective responses do not work.

Highly Directive Reactions and Responses

Reserve **highly directive reactions** and responses for special circumstances. You replace suggestions and mild advice with ultimatums and strong advice. The following are highly directive responses and reactions:

Exhaust all less directive means first.

1. **Interviewee:** I can stop using prescription pain killers on my own; I don't need to talk to a shrink.
2. **Interviewer:** And how long have you tried this without kicking this addiction?
3. **Interviewee:** About five months.
4. **Interviewer:** You've proven you cannot do it on your own. I'll give you a name and help you make an appointment with an excellent therapist who works with people just like you who want to break their addictions but have failed.

Highly directive responses are most appropriate for simple behavioral problems and least appropriate for complex ones based on long-time habits or firmly held beliefs and attitudes. Be a helper, not a dictator. The change or solution must come from the interviewee.

Interviewees who receive positive feedback comply more with the interviewer's requests and recommendations, return more often for counseling, and arrive earlier. They are more likely to implement interviewer recommendations when there is a good match between the recommendation and the problem, the recommendation is not too difficult to implement, and the recommendation is built on the interviewee's strengths.

The Closing

Involve the interviewee as an active participant in the closing.

Review the verbal and nonverbal leave-taking actions discussed in Chapter 4. Determine which techniques are most appropriate for each interaction. Avoid making interviewees feel they have imposed on you or they are at the end of an assembly line. Progress made during interviews may be lost along with the relationships you have tried to foster. Be sure interviewees know when and why the closing is commencing. Do not ask new questions or address new topics. Leave the door open for future contacts.

Evaluate the Interview

Review all you did and did not do and accomplish.

Think carefully and critically about each counseling interview. Perceptive analysis will improve your helping interactions with others. Be realistic. They are interactions between complex human beings, at least one of whom has a problem and may not know it, want to admit it, or desire to do what it takes to resolve the problem. Do not expect to have met all expectations or complete an interview with a neat solution. Be content with having stirred thought and enabled the interviewee to discuss a problem and express feelings.

How prepared were you for this interaction?

As you review the counseling interview, ask yourself: How adequately did I review the interviewee and the interviewee's problem beforehand? How conducive were the location and climate to openness and disclosure beyond Level 1? How appropriate were my directive and nondirective responses? How skillful were my questions in quality and quantity? How insightfully did I listen? How effectively did I help the interviewee gain insights into problems and make decisions? Did I agree or disagree too readily? What did I do to enhance the likelihood of interviewee compliance with suggested actions?

Your perceptions of how the interview went and how the interviewee reacted may be exaggerated or incorrect. You may be surprised by your successes and your failures in attempts to help others. Some of each are short-lived.

The Telephone Interview

Many counseling interviews take place over the telephone, perhaps a cell phone while one or both parties are walking to class, driving to work, having dinner, working in an office, or relaxing after class or during a vacation. Crisis centers have used telephones effectively for years.

ON THE WEB

Selecting counseling approaches and responses most appropriate for a particular interviewee and problem may be critical to the outcome of the interview. Philosophies and practices differ among counselors and counseling agencies. Use the Internet to explore the interviewing approaches currently advocated and illustrated by researchers, practitioners, and agencies

when dealing with a variety of clients and problems. Useful sources are the Pamphlet Page (<http://uhs.uchicago.edu/scrs/vpc/virtulets.html>), the Counseling Center Village (<http://ub-counseling.buffalo.edu/ccv.html>), and Counseling and Psychological Services at Purdue University (<http://www.purdue.edu/caps>).

Telephone interviews are common because they are inexpensive, convenient, allow for anonymity (may be “safer” than a face-to-face interaction), can give one a sense of control (you can hang up at any time), and can take place over long distances and at any time of the day or night. Unfortunately, telephone interviews may come at very inconvenient times when a counselor is too busy to talk, is in a different time zone, or is counseling another person. This often happens during office hours. The telephone invites “multitasking” because a party can do other things while “listening” to you.

A study of telephone counseling revealed that respondents found “telephone counseling was helpful for both global and specific improvement and that they were satisfied with the counseling they received. Respondents also rated the counseling relationship and level of interpersonal influence similar to face-to-face counseling studies measuring the same attributes.”²³ There is an absence of visual contact with interviewees in telephone counseling interactions. Interviewers must overcome this absence by using their voices as substitutes for nonverbal cues, eye contact, gestures, physical appearance, clothes, and place.

Summary

You take part in a counseling interview each time you try to help a person gain insight into a physical, career, emotional, or social problem and discover ways to cope. The counseling interview is a highly sensitive interview because it usually occurs when a person feels incapable of handling a problem or a counselor decides that a helping session is needed.

Preparation enables you to determine how to listen, question, inform, explain, respond, and relate to each interviewee. No two interviews are identical because no two interviewees and situations are identical. Thus, there are many suggestions but few rules for selecting interview approaches, responses, questions, and structures. Above all, know when to recommend a professional counselor because a person’s problem is beyond your expertise to address. Do no harm.

Key Terms and Concepts

Client-centered approach	Directive reactions	Lay counselor
Cognitive phase	Expressed feelings	Make meaning questions
Compliance	Getting through questions	Sequential phase model
Curious probes	Highly directive reactions	
Directive approach	Nondirective approach	

Counseling Role-Playing Cases

Changing Jobs

The interviewee, Denise, is a recently divorced mother of four and has been working at a Macy’s department store for about five months. Her supervisor is very pleased with Denise’s work and has been training and assigning work to her that involves several parts

of the store including loading dock manager. Denise is very happy with her job and is enjoying the support of her supervisor and store manager. A neighbor approached her a few days ago with a possible position in the office of a small construction firm. The position pays much better than her position with Macy's and offers the possibility of full benefits. She is trying to decide if a considerable, immediate salary increase and benefits would outweigh the longer term potential with a large corporation such as Macy's.

She has decided to talk to her older brother Jack who has years of experience in large and small construction firms to see what he would suggest she do. They have always had a great relationship, and Denise values his opinion highly. The problem is her potential willingness to do whatever Jack suggests. Jack will have to be very careful in offering his advice. He must be a good listener rather than a problem solver and help Denise make what she believes is in her best interests and those of her children.

Dating and Religion

The interviewee is 24 years old and a graduate student at the University of South Dakota. She has been dating a classmate from South Dakota State University for several months, and both are beginning to get serious about a future together. She is Catholic and he is Jewish, and their religious faiths are very important to them. While neither sees religion as a major problem, neither of them is willing to change faiths or to commit themselves to raising future children in the other's religious tradition. They have talked about attending each other's worship services "on occasion."

The interviewee has decided to meet with a neighbor back home, Sheri Prohowsky, during Thanksgiving break to get some suggestions. Sheri is married with three children, and her husband is Jewish. She and her husband have seemed to work out their religious differences quite well with each remaining active in their church and temple. They have allowed their children to decide which faith tradition they will follow, if any.

A Case of Sexual Harassment

The interviewee, Marty, is a very attractive 34 year-old new car salesman at a large GMC dealer on the West Coast. He has been doing quite well and has been Sales Associate of the Month three times in the last year-and-a-half. He enjoys his position and has had a good working relationship with Sally, the sales manager, until the past few weeks. During that time, Sally has been asking him to go out with her, sending him suggestive e-mail messages, and touching him suggestively when they are alone. Marty is engaged, is not attracted to Sally, and has been trying not to be alone with her. He is hesitant to go to the dealer's owner because he does not want to jeopardize his position, and he fears that the owner will find a male claiming sexual harassment to be funny or ludicrous.

The interviewee has decided to go to the female pastor of his church, Elizabeth Zwier, who has dealt with sexual harassment issues within the church, the church school, and religious-based community organizations. The interviewer must be careful not to blame Marty directly or indirectly for Sally's advances. Doing so will end any chance she has to help him and to maintain their positive relationship.

A Child in a Foster Home

The interviewer is a newly sworn-in Child Advocate and has been assigned a case involving 10-year-old Joey Spitzer who was taken away from his mother two years ago because of her drug addiction problem that caused her to disappear on several occasions from the apartment she shared with her boyfriend and Joey. The interviewer has reviewed documents on the case and is meeting Joey and his foster parents for the first time.

Joey has never met his father and has now been in three foster homes, having been removed from the previous two because of altercations with the foster parents. A month ago he ran away from his third foster home and was found by police three days later. Things seem to be going better, and his foster parents, the owners of a large dairy farm, have tried to make him comfortable in a rural setting. Joey had never seen a dairy operation until moving in with this third set of foster parents, and he is fascinated by the machinery and computer-driven milking operation. The purpose of this interview is to get acquainted with Joey and to explain the relationship between Child Advocates and their assigned children. The interviewer is particularly interested in discovering how Joey feels about his living situation and foster parents.

Student Activities

1. Visit a crisis center in your community or on your campus. Talk with counselors about their training techniques and self-evaluations. Ask about the code of ethics they are expected to follow and what ethical issues they have encountered when taking crisis calls. Which approach, directive or nondirective, do they find most useful? What roles do questions play in the counseling interview? How do they maintain focus on the interviewee and the interviewee's problems? Observe how volunteer counselors handle telephone counseling. How does telephone counseling differ from face-to-face counseling?
2. Interview three different types of counselors, such as a marriage counselor, a student counselor, a financial counselor, or a legal counselor. How are their approaches and techniques similar and different? What kinds of training have they had? How much training do they consider essential? In their estimation, what makes a "successful" counselor?
3. Pick one of the counseling role-playing cases and develop a complete approach to the case, beginning with setting and furniture arrangement. How would you begin the interview? What questions would you ask? How much would you disclose about yourself—training, background, experiences, and so on? What kinds of reactions and responses would you use? What solution would you suggest? What would you do and not do to aid interviewee compliance? How would you close the interview?
4. Interview an experienced CASA/GAL (Court Appointed Special Advocate for children or Guardian Ad Litem). Explore the training that is required to become a CASA. What kinds of cases has this volunteer handled? Which have proven to be the most difficult? How do CASAs attempt to establish relationships with their assigned children? What may threaten the relationships they establish? How do they communicate with different-age children? How do they adapt to children from cultures very different from their own? What is the most important skill they have learned about counseling?

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Each health care interview serves a variety of purposes.

Some of you are preparing for careers in health care as nurses, nurse practitioners, physicians, and therapists, but all of you will take part in health care interviews with varying degrees of seriousness (routine checkups, illnesses, diseases, accidents, severe pain, and life-threatening situations) throughout your life spans. The growing emphasis on preventive medicine is increasing both the frequency of these interviews and your long-term relationships with a wide range of health care professionals. Not only is the health care interview arguably the most sensitive of interviews, but it is often the most complex because it involves getting information to make accurate diagnoses of physical or mental problems, giving information about how to take medications and follow regimens, and persuading the patient about the necessity to follow recommendations as prescribed.

The objectives of this chapter are to introduce you to the ethical responsibilities of the health care interviewer, the growing emphasis on patient-centered care (PCC), ways to create a collaborative relationship in the health care interview, the critical role of patient perceptions of the interviewer's communication and competence, the principles of gathering and giving information, and ways to counsel and persuade to reach agreements and motivate the interviewee to comply with prescribed courses of action.

Ethics and the Health Care Interview

Ethics and the health care interview are intertwined.

Both parties involved in health care interviews must be aware that “Ethical issues are involved in most, if not all, decisions that relate to the goals, design, implementation, and evaluation of any health care intervention.” And “these ethical issues are often implicit and embedded in subtle decision-making processes, and their delineation requires an assessment of unintended impacts.”¹ As with all human interactions, it is often difficult to create and apply a single code of ethics to complex health care interventions and assessments that pertain to specific individuals with specific needs, problems, and abilities in specific situations, and with specific health care providers who may range from licensed practical nurses and emergency medical technicians, to highly trained specialists in practices such as neurology, oncology, and psychiatry. Fortunately, health care associations provide us with a core of ethical principles or standards appropriate for health care interviews.²

Do no harm.

The centuries old adage of *do good* and *do no harm* is considered the “foremost ethical maxim for health care providers and includes physiological, psychological, social, and cultural aspects of harm” and good.³ Unfortunately, the intention to do good may

result in harm. For example, recommended physical activities or medications may result in injuries or complications. To do good while avoiding harm, includes such principles as being competent as a health care provider, remaining within your area of competence, communicating truthfully, assuming responsibility for individual and professional actions, and reporting health care professionals who appear to be deficient in character or competence. “Truthful communication also requires that all relevant information should be provided, as indicated by the ethical standard of *completeness*” and accuracy.⁴

Health care providers must *respect the rights and dignity* of each patient. The U.S. public policy and medical ethics recognize that “access to quality emergency care is an individual right that should be available to all who seek it.”⁵ The vulnerability of patients is a fundamental concern. Vicki Lachman, a clinical professor and director in Advanced Practice Nursing writes, “The nurse attends to the vulnerability of the patient, principally because the patient’s needs have the potential to create dependency.”⁶ Health care providers must safeguard the patient’s rights of *confidences* and *privacy*, and “disclose confidential information only with the consent of the patient or when required by an overriding duty such as the duty to protect others or to obey the law.”⁷

Respect the rights and dignity of every patient.

Health care providers must *respect diversity* of patients and avoid any act that excludes, segregates, or demeans the dignity of the patient. They must provide “services based on human need, with respect for human dignity, unrestricted by consideration of nationality, race, creed, color, ethnic origin, gender, age, sexual orientation, or socioeconomic status.”⁸ There may be inherent problems with meeting this standard. For instance, “the obligations to promote people’s health by encouraging them to adopt health promoting behaviors may conflict with the obligation to respect their autonomy.”⁹ People “have an intrinsic right to make decisions for themselves,” and “health care providers may come from different ethnic groups, whose values and life circumstances differ from those” of their patients.¹⁰ The solution may be a “culturally-centered” approach that provides “marginalized groups with opportunities to engage in critical dialogues and have their voices heard by their own community.”¹¹

Health care providers must maintain *appropriate boundaries* in the provider-patient relationship. For instance, “The Principles of Medical Ethics” of the American Psychiatric Association state that “the provider must be ever vigilant about the impact that his or her conduct has upon the boundaries of the doctor-patient relationship.”¹² “The inherent inequality in the doctor-patient relationship may lead to exploitation of the patient.”

Patient-Centered Care (PCC)

Patient-centered care is both new and very old.

The relationship between health care provider and patient is critical to the effectiveness of every health care interview when health care providers and patients prefer a collaborative partnership and a mutual participation in health care. The emphasis in twenty-first century health care commonly called patient-centered care (PCC) is on patients and providers as “co-agents in a problem-solving context.”¹³ The American Medical Association claims that “The patient-physician relationship is of greatest benefit to patients when they bring medical problems to the attention of their physicians in

a timely fashion, provide information about their medical condition to the best of their ability, and work with their physician in a mutually respectful alliance.”¹⁴

Other advocates of co-agency contend that when patients are more actively involved as partners, rather than passive bystanders, they are more satisfied with their care, receive more information and support, are more committed to treatment regimens and managing health issues, have a stronger sense of control over their health, and experience better health.¹⁵

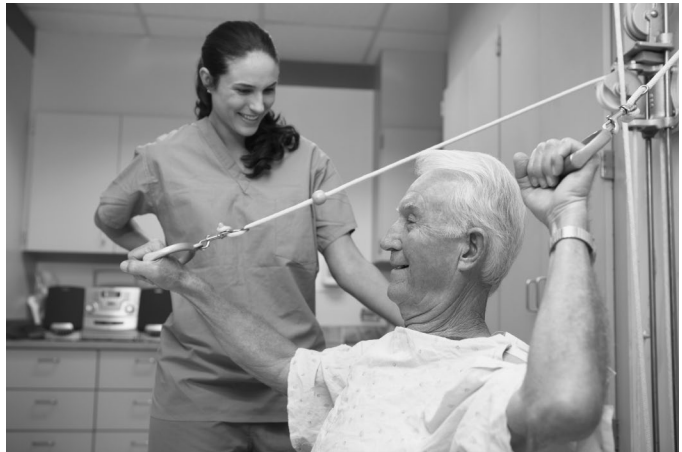
A reciprocal relationship is key.

Patient-centered health care will continue to advance in the United States if both parties share control and actively seek to reduce *relational distance*. While both parties in health care interviews are unique in some ways, they share perceptions, needs, values, beliefs, attitudes, and experiences. Both must strive to maintain dignity, privacy, self-respect, and comfort. The goal of each health care interaction is to “develop a reciprocal relationship, where the exchange of information, identification of problems, and development of solutions is an interactive process.”¹⁶ Establishing a collaborative relationship ensures “that health decisions respect patient’s wants, needs, and preferences” and that patients have the information and support to make effective decisions to take part in their health care.¹⁷ How patients perceive their relationships with providers influence the roles they play in interviews.

Both parties must strive to reduce relational distance.

Reducing the relational distance between interview parties is central to patient-centered care, but neither party should rush this relationship too quickly. Each party must strive to know and understand one another because mutual understanding reduces relational distance. Both parties enhance the relationship by being relaxed and confident, showing interest in one another as unique persons, maintaining objectivity, being sincere and honest, treating one another with respect, paying attention to verbal and nonverbal messages, remaining flexible, and maintaining appropriate degrees of control.

Although the PCC relationship is ideal, providers and patients continue to believe that the burden to make this relationship work rests on providers.¹⁸ Studies also indicate that a significant percentage of patients expect providers to be in charge, to use controlling language, and to make final decisions. If providers do not meet these expectations, patients are dissatisfied with interactions, frustrated, confused, and even angry because the providers did not behave as expected. They are less likely to follow the provider’s recommendations.¹⁹



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■ *The development of positive relationships between health care providers and receivers is essential for effective communication and health care.*

The health care provider's "ability to be flexible and adaptable is extremely important in medical encounters."²⁰

Sharing Control

Both parties must share control.

Although sharing control is essential in patient-centered interviews, tradition tilts control toward the health care provider who is highly trained, speaks in scientific terms and acronyms, is clothed in a suit or uniform, selects the timing and setting, structures the interview, and is taught to be emotionally uninvolved. It is not surprising, then, that providers often reassert their authority when patients challenge their knowledge or diagnosis. For instance, a study discovered that when patients (particularly males) present findings from Internet searches, providers may dismiss this research because they feel "loss of control" and see this challenge as "face threatening."²¹

Patients must be active and responsive.

The tilting of control in the health care interview is not solely the fault of the provider. The patient may see every health problem as a crisis, have little medical knowledge of or be misinformed about health problems, see the environment as threatening, and prefer a "paternalistic model of health care."²² On the other hand, it is difficult to see yourself as a true collaborator when you are in pain, highly medicated, and sitting nude on a cold table. A patient may appear to be compliant while employing subtle control strategies, such as changing topics, asking numerous questions, giving short, unrevealing answers, withholding vital information, or talking incessantly. Some patients may demonstrate relational power through silence rather than conversational dominance or agree with a provider during an interview and then ignore prescriptions, regimens, and advice afterward.

Both parties must negotiate and share control "as partners striving for a common goal."²³ Providers must develop positive relational climates by showing interest in the patient's lifestyle, nonmedical concerns, and overall well-being. Supportive talk that includes statements of reassurance, support, and empathy demonstrates interpersonal sensitivity and sincere interest in the patient as a person. Empathy is "an essential element of the physician-patient relationship," and a showing of empathy increases patient satisfaction and reduces time and expense. "Empathy is not just something that is 'given' from physician to patient. Instead, a transactional communication perspective informs us that the physician and patient mutually influence each other during the interaction."²⁴ While some patients provide repeated opportunities for empathic responses, others provide little or none. When patients do so, physicians have "a clear tendency for acknowledging, pursuing, and confirming patients' empathic opportunities." This is a positive trend in physician-patient interactions.

It takes two to form an effective relationship.

The provider must encourage the patient to express ideas, expectations, fears, and feelings about the medical problem and value the patient's expertise. The goal is to treat one another as equals. The patient must come to the interview well informed about the health problem and ready to provide detailed information as honestly and accurately as possible, express concerns, respond effectively to the provider's questions, and state opinions, suggestions, and preferences.

Appreciating Diversity

While we understand intuitively that patients from other cultures experience and react differently in health care interviews, few of us acknowledge that health care providers

also experience stress and anxiety when interacting with patients of different cultures. Research indicates that provider's perceptions of patients are influenced significantly by cultural and ethnic differences.²⁵

Gender

Age and sex influence communication and treatment.

Women are more concerned about health than men and more verbal during interactions. This may be a learned difference because more health care information in the media is aimed at women than men. Women spend more communication time with providers and are more active communicators during these visits, but their providers take their concerns less seriously. On the other hand, male patients tend to be more domineering than females regardless of the gender of the provider.²⁶ A by-product of more females entering the fields of obstetrics and gynecology is the significant percentage of women patients choosing female physicians. This has led male physicians to work on improving their interpersonal communication skills.²⁷ Research reveals that greater patient-centeredness by both male and female physicians lead to a "stronger positive effect on satisfaction and evaluations for male than for female physicians."²⁸ Patients do not see this as evidence of clinical competence for female physicians but merely as "expected female behavior."

Age

Age is a major factor as life expectancy increases and the baby boomer generation reaches retirement age. Older patients are more reluctant to "challenge the physician's authority" than younger patients, often with good reason. Providers who are mostly under 55 are "significantly less egalitarian, less patient, and less respectful with older patients," perhaps reflecting society's attitudes toward "aging" and the wisdom of our elders. Providers are "less likely to raise psychological issues with" older patients.²⁹ If a patient is incapacitated, often because of age, it may be wise to involve a surrogate (spouse or child) or a health care proxy who may have important information to share with the physician and be able to collaborate about the patient's care.³⁰ Young patients are more comfortable with "bothering" health care providers with questions and challenges because they are less awed by authorities and credentials.

Culture

Health communication differs in the global village.

Cultural differences may affect health care interviews in a variety of ways and require providers to adapt their approaches and communication styles. African-American and Puerto Rican patients have indicated that their race, ethnicity, and lower economic status impacted negatively on their information seeking (particularly HIV-related information) and health care.³¹ Patients of a lower social class may be openly reluctant to challenge physicians so they attempt to control the relationship.³² Arab cultures practice close proximity and kissing among men; both actions may be seen as offensive in American or European health care interactions. Native American and Asian cultures prize nonverbal communication, while American and German cultures prize verbal communication. Hispanics value interpersonal behaviors such as smiling, eye contact, patience, and "formal greetings, introductions, and farewells. These friendly behaviors lead them to feel better understood and to view information as more believable and

accurate.”³³ Medical philosophies differ among countries, and these differences might pose problems for nonnative health care providers and patients:³⁴

- French physicians tend to discount statistics and emphasize logic.
- German physicians tend to be authoritarian romantics.
- English physicians tend to be paternalistic.
- American physicians tend to be aggressive and want to “do something.”

These differences affect communication roles and control sharing in medical interviews. Providers must be culturally sensitive to differences in reporting pain, understanding informed consent, using appropriate language, and disclosing information that may rely on cultural knowledge, modesty, and comfort. Alice Chen relates an instance when she was treating a Muslim woman and ordered an X-ray to assess for arthritis. A male X-ray technician wanted to lift up the horrified woman’s hijab so he could position the equipment properly. Chen referred her to a different facility with a notation that the patient needed a female technician.³⁵

Stereotypes

“Good” patients
get better
health care.

The perception of patients as childlike is revealed in condescending attitudes and baby talk with adults. Twenty percent of staff interactions in nursing homes may qualify as *baby talk*, a speech style common when speaking to infants that has a “slower rate, exaggerated intonation, elevated pitch and volume, greater repetition, and simpler vocabulary and grammar.”³⁶ Health care providers use *elderspeak* when addressing older adults. Examples include “Hi *sweetie*. It’s time for *our* exercise,” “Good girl. You ate all of your dinner,” and “Good morning *big guy*. Are *we* ready for *our* bath?” The results of such “inappropriately intimate and childish” baby talk and elderspeak are “decreased self-esteem, depression, withdrawal, and the assumption of dependent behaviors congruent with stereotypes of frail elders.”

The stereotypical *good patient* is cooperative, quiet, obedient, grateful, unaggressive, considerate, and dispassionate. *Good patients* tend to get better treatment than *bad patients*. Patients seen as lower class get more pessimistic diagnoses and prognoses. Overweight patients are deemed *less* likable, seductive, well educated, in need of help, or likely to benefit from help and *more* emotional, defensive, warm, and likely to have continuing problems.

Creating and Maintaining Trust

Trust is essential in health care interactions because they deal with intimate and sensitive personal information and must maximize self-disclosure. Trust comes about when both parties “see one another as legitimate agents of knowledge and perception.”³⁷ Breaches of confidentiality may lead to discrimination, economic devastation, social stigma, and destroyed trust, and any hope of building or maintaining a productive relationship. Breaches of confidentiality may be intentional or unintentional and occur in many places: elevators, hallways, cafeterias, providers’ offices, hospital rooms, cocktail parties, or over the telephone, particularly the ubiquitous cell phone. Maria Brann and Marifran Mattson relate an instance in which a patient

Confidentiality
and trust go
hand in hand.

tried to keep the reason for her appointment confidential by handing the provider a written note; the provider insisted that the patient read the note aloud. In another situation, a patient tried to answer confidential questions quietly; the provider proceeded to ask questions about her situation in a loud voice.³⁸ Common sense solutions include talking and answering questions in soft tones, exchanging information only with providers who have a need to know, and conducting interactions in private, audibly secure locations.

Providers and patients co-create trust.

Trust is established in the early minutes of interviews when both parties are determining if these are persons they can trust. It is further negotiated as both parties “enact behaviors” that construct “shared expectations of a trusting relationship.”³⁹ Spontaneous humor, for instance, can “facilitate positive patient–provider interactions” and “create a patient-centered environment” that affects “patients’ positive attitude and happiness.”⁴⁰ The results are positive perceptions of caregivers that enhance trustworthiness and lead to better health outcomes, increased compliance with providers’ advice, and fewer malpractice suits. Providers can enhance trust through supportive talk that increases patient participation in interviews and by eliciting full disclosure of information, clarifying information, and assessing social and psychological factors involved in illness.⁴¹

Skills training is the first step.

Communication is central to patient-centered care and to establishing a productive relationship between health care provider and patient. Observable communication skills, however, may not be sufficient to achieve either. Moira Stewart and her colleagues discovered that “The differences in interviewing skills may not be associated with patient responses. Physicians may learn to go through the motions of patient-centered interviewing without understanding what it means to be truly attentive and a responsive listener.”⁴² “Education about communication should go beyond skills training to a deeper understanding of what it means to be a responsive partner for the patient.” Patients expect health care providers to listen, ask questions to understand and clarify their problems and concerns, reply to their questions, and provide information that is clear and relatively free of technical jargon, and offer recommendations they can remember and follow correctly.⁴³

Opening the Interview

The opening of the health care interview has significant impact on the remainder of the interview. Neither party should approach it as routine.

The opening sets the tone for the entire interview.

Enhancing the Climate

The provider must create an atmosphere in which the patient feels free to express opinions, feelings, and attitudes. Both parties rely heavily on interviews to get and give information, but the start of the process is often taken for granted.

Location and setting promote collaborative interactions.

Select a comfortable, attractive, quiet, nonthreatening, and private location free of interruptions in which interactions will remain confidential. Check out a typical pediatrics area and one for adults of all ages and conditions. The first is designed thoughtfully in every detail (pictures, aquarium, toys, plants, books) for the young patient and parents to minimize fear and anxiety and maximize cooperation and communication. The second is likely to be a stark waiting room with a television and a few medical magazines. The

adult patient is then typically called to a treatment room, given a few perfunctory tests, asked to put on a hospital gown (open in the back and drafty), and then left alone for several minutes with an examining table, a variety of medical gadgets, and a few charts of the human's insides. This setting does not relieve anxiety and tension.

Establishing Rapport

Individualize your opening. In a study of provider–patient satisfaction, Mohan Dutta discovered that “open physician–patient communicative style is not the universal solution to patient needs. Instead, the fundamental message that emerges from this research is the need for tailoring the health care providers’ communicative styles depending on the needs of the patient.”⁴⁴

Use the opening to reduce apprehension.

Begin the interview with a pleasant greeting and by introducing yourself and position if you are unacquainted with the patient or family. If you address the patient by first name (Hi Sally) while you address yourself by title (I’m Dr. Percifield), you create a superior-to-subordinate relationship from the start. If you are acquainted with the patient, open with a personal greeting that acknowledges your relationship and encourages the patient to return the greeting and take an active part in the opening.

Neither rush nor drag out the opening.

Employ small talk, humor, or self-disclosure to relax the patient, show interest, increase trust, and enrich the relationship. This patient-centered approach enhances patient satisfaction. Reduce apprehension by carefully explaining procedures, being attentive and relaxed, treating patients as equals, and talking to them in their street clothes rather than hospital gowns. Rapport building and orientation are strengthened when the provider reviews the patient’s file before entering the examination room and begins on a personal and knowledgeable level. Neither rush nor prolong the opening unless trust is low because both parties prefer to get to the point after establishing a personal connection.

If a patient has been waiting for some time because you are behind schedule, apologize for the inconvenience and explain the reason for it. Emergency rooms are notorious for their waits of two hours or more, and patients become very impatient, particularly when they are in pain or bleeding from cuts. They often attribute these delays to uncaring neglect or incompetency. There are a number of ways to alleviate these feelings, if not the delays, including explaining the reasons for the delay, educating patients about health issues that should be treated through primary rather than emergency care, informing patients how health problems are prioritized, making patients feel occupied, moving patients to different locations so they do not feel forgotten, and showing concern and empathy for each patient.⁴⁵

Simple politeness and courtesy—treating people the way you want to be treated—can defuse an angry or impatient interviewee and show you value the person’s time and are sensitive to perceptions and needs. Judith Spiers addresses the relevance of *politeness theory* and how it can improve communication in the health care interaction.

Politeness breeds politeness.

Politeness is used primarily to ease social interaction by providing a ritualistic form of verbal interaction that cushions the stark nature of many interactions such as requests, commands, or questioning. Politeness provides a means for covering embarrassment, anger, or fear in situations in which it would not be to one’s advantage to show these emotions either as a reflection of one’s self or because of the reaction of the other.⁴⁶

This advice helps health care receivers “save face” in a threatening situation over which they have little control.

Perceptions of “time pressures and medical terminology influence patient participation and the development of rapport in medical encounters.”⁴⁷ When a provider consults more and uses little medical terminology, patients seek more information and believe they have established a good relationship with the health care provider.

Opening Questions

The opening questions health care providers ask and how quickly they ask them after an interview starts establish a good relationship, build and maintain rapport, and get adequate and insightful information.

When a patient initiates the medical interview without explanation, the provider may ask a **general inquiry** question such as, “What brings you in this afternoon?” “What seems to be the problem?” or “How can I help you today?” When a patient has given a reason when making an appointment or informed the provider’s nurse, the provider may ask a **confirmatory** question such as, “I understand you are having a severe migraine this morning?” “You’re having a problem with your right shoulder?” “Tell me about your pain you are experiencing today.” A second type of confirmatory question focuses on specific symptoms, such as, “Is the pain mainly on your left side?” “Does the dizziness usually occur when you bend over?” **General inquiry** questions elicit longer explanations of problems, including the most common or current symptoms. **Restrictive closed questions** initiate problem presentations and distinctively communicate “physicians’ readiness to initiate and enforce the initiation, of the next phase of the visit: information gathering.”⁴⁸

Some health care providers use electronic interviews with patients prior to face-to-face visits. Patients select from a list of medical complaints and then reply to a series of questions phrased in language they understand. When providers enter the treatment rooms for face-to-face interactions, both patient and provider are ready to begin the interview. One provider relates, “My total focus is on the patient, and it’s unusual for me to need to look at the computer.”⁴⁹

Orient the patient.

When providers initiate interviews, the opening questions may be open-ended such as, “How has your health been since we last met in June?” or closed such as, “Have you experienced any side-effects from the medication for your cholesterol?” What takes place after the opening questions depends on the specific reasons for the visit. If it is a routine checkup, the provider may orient the patient as to what will take place during the interview. If it is follow-up session, the provider may move to the body of the interview with a series of questions aimed at a specific problem or results of a previous treatment.

Getting Information

Significant portions of interview time seek information, so information exchange is a major component of competence in provider–patient interactions. This is not an easy task. Let us begin by identifying barriers to sharing information and then offer suggestions for gathering accurate information efficiently.

Barriers to Getting Information

Do not assume patients will provide accurate information.

Patient disclosure of information is absolutely essential in every health care interview. Interactions between care giver and patient must progress beyond Levels 1 and 2 to Level 3 in which the patient provides honest, accurate, relevant, and complete information. Unfortunately, there are many barriers to full patient disclosure.

Patients may be psychologically, physically, or emotionally unable to recall and articulate information accurately and completely. For example, patients may have poor memories because of psychological problems, health issues, accidents, or age. They may tell “little white lies” or try to camouflage real problems by making allegorical statements such as “It’s probably just growing pains.” “You know how teenagers are.” “That’s what happens when you get old.”⁵⁰ Frightened and anxious patients leave out significant parts of medical histories, and this may explain why mothers recall only about half of their children’s major illnesses.

Self-disclosure is central in the health care interview.

Patients may openly resist giving information to avoid criticism or lectures on weight gain, smoking, drinking too much alcohol, eating too many sweets, taking too many over the counter drugs, or not working out enough. Patients may feel uncomfortable or embarrassed during interactions dealing with sexual organs, sexual activities, and sexually transmitted diseases. They may withhold information to avoid receiving bad news regardless of the consequences, such as getting skin cancer for not using sun screen. They may fear that giving depressing information to others may negatively impact the support they will receive.⁵¹ Some patients try to assess the possible reactions of health care providers or outcomes to their sharing or disclosing of information prior to interviews. The more they are uncertain, the less information they will disclose.⁵² A constructive way for the patient to reduce anxiety about provider reaction is “to share a small piece of information to assess the receiver’s response,” sort of testing the waters before sharing fully disclosing.⁵³

Ask obviously relevant questions as soon as possible.

The means health care providers employ to get information often add to the barriers patients raise in exchanging information. The traditional history-taking portion of interviews is often longer than discussions of diagnostic and prognostic issues. The manner tends to be impersonal with many questions having little or nothing to do with the patient’s current problem or concern. Patients in great pain or psychological discomfort may become angry or numbed by endless, closed questions, what one researcher calls “negative weakening.” One of the authors witnessed this wearing down process while visiting a family member in a nursing home in Florida. An elderly, ill, confused, and angry patient had just been admitted to the same room as the author’s mother-in-law. Two medical personnel entered soon thereafter and began to ask a lengthy list of questions. Many would have taxed a medically fit person, and it did not take long before the patient was exhausted and obviously confused. The interview droned on, even though one of the questioners remarked to the other, “I don’t know why we don’t do this over two or three days. It’s not like she’s going anywhere.” The interview continued with diminishing returns.

Provider dominance deadens interactions.

A series of rapid-fire closed questions clearly sets the tone for the relationship: the provider is in charge, wants short answers, is in a hurry, and is not interested in explanations. One study revealed that 87 percent of questions were closed or moderately closed

and that 80 percent of answers provided only solicited information with no volunteering.⁵⁴ Providers control interactions through closed questions, content selection, and changing of topics. They routinely ask questions such as: Do you have regular bowel movements? Do you feel tired? Are you ever short of breath? Any chest pains? Providers should stop and think what answers to these routine questions really mean. What does *regular* mean? Who doesn't feel *tired*? Who hasn't been *short of breath* from time to time or experienced an occasional *chest pain*? What does a yes or no answer to any of these questions tell the health care provider?

**Explain
medical
terms and
procedures.**

Do not assume familiarity with medical *jargon* and *acronyms* that are useful for interactions with other medical professionals. One study discovered that 20 percent or more of respondents did not know the meaning of such common terms as abscess, sutures, tumor, and cervix, and the percentages escalated with more uncommon words such as edema and triglyceride. Persons over 65 are less knowledgeable than ones between 45 and 64, and more educated respondents are most familiar with medical terms.⁵⁵ Patients seldom ask for clarification or repetition of questions or terminology because they feel it is the provider's responsibility to know and explain terms.

Researchers are focusing on "health literacy" and its potentially adverse effects on information giving and processing. One study used structured interviews with patients and discovered that "lower health literacy predicted lower self-efficacy, which predicted feeling less well informed and less prepared, being more confused about the procedure and its hazards, and wanting more information about risks."⁵⁶ Similarly, Maria Dahm's research revealed that patients' impressions about medical terms in interviews aligned with guidelines that promoted use of lay language and more detailed explanations.⁵⁷ She discovered that, contrary to these guidelines, "physicians often sought to clarify (semitechnical) terms by adopting topic controlling strategies such as using closed questions or taking extended histories." These tactics limit "patients' opportunity to speak and therefore can have effects on partnership building and, in turn, on the patient-physician relationship."

Improving Information Getting

The key to improving information getting in health care interviews is to find ways to foster exchanges that create a collaborative effort. Health care providers can improve patient disclosure and honesty by using their first names during openings, being friendly, not appearing to be in a hurry, and promoting turn-taking so patients feel freer to ask questions, provide details, and react to information they receive. Nonverbal cues such as pauses, eye contact, and head nods and verbal signals invite interactions rather than monologues. Be careful of verbal routines such as "Okay?" "Right?" and "Uh-huh" that patients see as false cues that invite agreement rather than questions or competing notions.

**Encourage
turn-taking.**

Patients who play active roles in medical interviews provide more details about their symptoms and medical history, get more thorough answers to their questions, and prompt health care providers to volunteer more information and use "supportive utterances." Donald Cegala and his colleagues believe that high patient participation "helps the physician to understand more accurately the patient's goals, interests, and concerns,

thus allowing the physician to better align his or her communication with the patient's agenda."⁵⁸

Ask and Answer Questions

Use a funnel sequence that begins with open questions to communicate interest, encourage lengthy, revealing responses, and show trust in the patient as a collaborator to provide important information, including information you might not think to ask for. Ask open questions that are free of interviewer bias and invite rather than demand answers, give patients a greater feeling of control, and demonstrate the provider's listening skills.

Use an inverted funnel sequence cautiously because closed questions asked early in an interview may set a superior-to-subordinate tone and communicate the provider's desire for brief answers and to maintain control. Patients will give short answers that reveal little information and hide fears, feelings, and symptoms. Patients may be unable or unwilling to respond appropriately to open-ended questions that come later.

Listen carefully for hidden as well as obvious requests and responses. Is there evidence of confusion, hesitation, apprehension, or uncertainty? Patients should prepare lists of questions prior to interviews so they can think about concerns without the pressure of interactions with providers. Do not hesitate to ask the other party to repeat or rephrase an unclear question. You cannot reply sufficiently if you do not understand what is being asked. Dr. Nancy Jasper, a clinical professor at Columbia University illustrates the need to probe into answers, particularly when patients are "fudging with the truth."

I always ask my patients whether they smoke. . . . A lot of women will say, "No but I am a social smoker." And I say, "You'll have to define that for me because I have no idea what that means." They'll say they only smoke on the weekends. But you start to uncover more when you ask: "How many cigarettes do you smoke in a week?"⁵⁹

Both parties must listen carefully to understand what one another is really saying before proceeding.

Tell Stories

What patients want most is an opportunity to tell their stories, and these narratives are "essential to the diagnostic process" and the most efficient approach to eliciting necessary information.⁶⁰ Gary Kreps and Barbara Thornton write,

Stories are used by consumers of health care to explain to their doctors or nurses what their ailments are and how they feel about these health problems. . . . By listening to the stories a person tells about his or her health condition, the provider can learn a great deal about the person's cultural orientation, health belief system, and psychological orientation toward the condition.⁶¹

Susan Eggly writes that both parties must cocreate the illness narrative so they can influence one another and shape the narrative as it is told.⁶² She identifies three types of stories: "narratives that emerge through the co-constructed chronology of key events, the co-constructed repetition and elaboration of key events, and the co-constructed

The funnel sequence gives a sense of sharing control.

Vary listening approaches.

Encourage storytelling and listen.

interpretation of the meaning of key events.” Collaboration in storytelling is important because patients routinely omit valuable information from narratives they think is unimportant, do not feel safe in revealing, or assume the provider would not be interested. Roter and Hall write, “From the patient perspective . . . the opportunity to relate the illness narrative and reflect on experience, perspective, and interpretation of symptoms and circumstances may hold therapeutic value, and, consequently, patients’ disclosure, especially in the psychological realm, can be viewed as an indicator of the visit’s patient-centered focus.”⁶³

The less you talk, the more you may say.

Avoid interruptions during narratives, especially when patients become overwhelmed with emotion. The success of the interview may be due to the number of words the provider does *not say* or the numbers of questions *not asked*. Some researchers use the phrase “empathic opportunity terminator” to identify interactions that redirect interviews and cut off further revelations of patients’ emotional concerns.⁶⁴ In the first interaction below, the physician changes the subject.

Patient: I’m in the process of retiring . . .

Physician: You are?

Patient: Yeah. I’ll be 73 in February.

Physician: How’s your back?

In this interaction, the physician retreats to an earlier, less emotional concern.

Patient: And right now I’m real nauseous and sick. I lost 10 pounds in six days.

Physician: Okay. You lost 10 pounds.

Patient: And I’m getting, and I’m getting worse. I’m not getting any better.

Physician: Okay . . . and right now you are not able to eat anything, you said?

Older patients give significantly longer presentations and narratives than younger patients, but they do not reveal more current symptoms. They do offer more information about a symptom, “engage in more painful self-disclosure,” and disclose more about seemingly irrelevant matters such as family finances.⁶⁵ Be patient and probe for relevant specifics and explanations. “It is particularly critical to understand how communication processes change and how older adults communicate their concerns and feelings.”⁶⁶ When older patients discuss a loss in later life, they shift “from a primarily factual mode (what the loss was, how the loss occurred, etc.) to a focus on the impact of this loss on their lives (e.g., handling new tasks and expressions of emotions).”

Listen, Observe, and Talk

Be patient and persistent.

Be patient and use nudging probes to encourage patients to continue with narratives or answers. Avoid irritating interjections such as *right*, *fine*, *okay*, and *good*. Avoid guessing games. Ask, “When does your back hurt?” not “Does it hurt when you first get up? When you stand a lot? When you sit for a while?” Avoid double-barreled questions such as “And in your family, has there been high blood pressure or strokes?”

Diabetes or cancer?” Employ reflective and mirror questions to check for accuracy and understanding. Listen for important clues in answers, what patients are suggesting or implying verbally and nonverbally. Make it clear to parents, spouses, relatives, or friends present that the patient must answer questions if physically and mentally able to do so.

Use leading questions with caution.

Leading questions such as “You’re staying on your diet, aren’t you?” signal that you want agreement, a yes answer, and that is likely what you will get even if it is false. Annette Harres discusses the importance of “tag questions” to elicit information, summarize and confirm information, express empathy, and provide positive feedback.⁶⁷ “You can bend your knee, can’t you?” “You’ve been here before, haven’t you?” “I’m sure it’s been a very difficult adjustment since your husband Paul died.”

Addressing the Language Barrier

Health care professionals have long recognized that **communication** breakdowns are the most common cause of **health errors**, and this problem is exacerbated by an estimated “95 million people” who “do not have the fundamental literacy skills in English to understand even the most basic” health information such as how and when to take medication.⁶⁸ Nearly half of this number have little or no command of the English language. The misinterpretation of a single word, such as “irritate,” may lead to delayed care and medical errors. Latino patients who prefer to speak Spanish rather than English “experience higher levels of decision dissatisfaction and decision regret than those from other cultural and ethnic groups.”⁶⁹

Providers have tried a variety of solutions, some successful and some not. For example, family and friends may speak the patient’s native language or be more fluent in English, but they may not repeat all of a provider’s questions or explanations or be able to translate or explain medical terms accurately into the patient’s native language or at the patient’s level of understanding.⁷⁰ Children as interpreters pose problems because their command of the parents’ native language may be minimal, “their understanding of medical concepts tends to be simplistic at best,” and “parents can be embarrassed or reluctant to disclose important symptoms and details to their child.”⁷¹ Providers have used professional interpreters “to encourage provider–patient rapport, to read patients’ nonverbal behaviors, and to help patients seek or express information,” but the provider’s medical specialty such as mental health, gynecology, and oncology may require translators with specialized knowledge and training. “It is a common practice to avoid repeated use of the same interpreter to avoid patient–interpreter bonding,” but some providers prefer the same interpreter to “increase interpreters’ familiarity with patients’ medical history and their ability to anticipate and facilitate the provider’s agenda.”⁷²

Successful programs have included comprehensive interpreter services in a language such as Spanish, creation of a course to teach Spanish to health care professionals, and use of specific phrases in Spanish to assess acute pain. They are limited, of course, to a single language. Some large medical facilities include a number of interpreters who are fluent in languages they encounter most often. A national system of interpreters fluent in many languages and trained in health care, similar to the one operated by the Australian government on a 24/7 basis, would be ideal.

Giving Information

Patients remember little and follow less.

Giving sufficient information that is insightful, accurate, and memorable is critical to the success of every health care interview because it addresses the patient's health concerns and problems. The process seems deceptively simple. One party gives information to another party. Unfortunately, patients have exceptional difficulty recalling information shared during health care interviews. Research indicates that 40 to 80 percent of medical information is forgotten immediately and that half of that information is remembered incorrectly. Patients who remembered the most had received only two items of information.⁷³ Unfortunately, patients often must process and remember several pieces of important information with which they are unfamiliar, and this information may pertain to a number of different problems they are encountering.⁷⁴

Causes for Loss and Distortion of Information

There are three root causes for failure to give and to recall information accurately: medical providers, patients, and ineffective transmission methods.

Provider Problems

Both parties contribute to loss and distortion.

Health care providers place greater emphasis on information getting than giving even though the strongest predictor of patient satisfaction is how much information is given for a condition and treatment. In a typical 20-minute interview, less than 2 minutes is devoted to information giving. Providers may be reluctant to provide information because they do not want to get involved, fear patients' reactions, feel they (particularly nonphysicians) are not allowed to give information, or fear giving incorrect information. Nurses, for instance, are often uncertain about what a physician wants the patient to know or has told the patient.

Beware of faulty assumptions.

Providers underestimate the patient's need or desire for information and overestimate the amount of information they give. On the other hand, patients cite insufficient information as a major failure of health care and are turning to the Internet in rapidly increasing numbers. A study of cancer patients revealed that barely over 50 percent of those who wanted a *quantitative* prognosis got one and over 60 percent of those who did not want a *qualitative* prognosis got one.⁷⁵ Providers often assume patients understand what they tell them, including subtle recommendations and information laced with medical jargon and acronyms. Metaphors such as "We're turning a corner," "There's light at the end of the tunnel," and "The Central Hospital family is here to help" require patients to complete the implied comparison, and the result may be confusion and anxiety rather than comfort and reassurance. Providers give more information and elaborate explanations to educated, older, and female patients.

As patients turn increasingly to the Internet for information, health care professionals are disturbed that 72 percent of patients believe all or most of what they read on the Internet, regardless of source. This is particularly true for so-called seeker patients with higher educations and incomes, who are younger, and who are actively involved in interpersonal networks. They are "health conscious" and like the active "involvement in the processing of information."⁷⁶ It is less true for nonseeker patients who are older, have less education, and come from low income groups. They "intentionally avoid information that may cause them anxiety or stress."⁷⁷

Patient Problems

Patients may hear what they want to hear.

Patients often exaggerate their abilities to recall information accurately and completely without taking notes or using aids and, if they cannot recall information they assume is a simple task, they may be too embarrassed to admit they cannot do so. On the other hand, they may protect themselves from unpleasant experiences by refusing to listen or interpreting information and instructions according to their personalities. For instance, if a provider says, “You have six months to a year to live,” a pessimist may tell friends, “I have less than six months to live,” while an optimist may relate cheerfully, “The doctor says I might live for years.”

Use acronyms cautiously.

Patients do not understand or comprehend information because they are untrained or inexperienced in medical situations. They can be confused by conflicting reports, studies, and the media. For instance, in the fall of 2009, the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force recommended that women over 40 should undergo screening mammography only every two years instead of the traditional every-year testing. This created a major controversy among health professionals and organizations with many stating their conflicting opinions through the media. Such controversies pose particular problems for older patients who have less knowledge and understanding of medical situations and greater difficulties in giving information.⁷⁸ Patients are bombarded with unfamiliar acronyms (IV, EKG, D & C) and jargon (adhesions, contusions, nodules, cysts, benign tumors). The names of pharmaceuticals are nearly impossible to pronounce, let alone understand. Hagihara, Tarumi, and Nobutomo investigated the common phenomenon in which physicians’ and patients’ understanding and evaluation of medical test results and diagnoses differ markedly. They recommend “To avoid either a failure on the part of the patient to understand the explanation, or a patient misunderstanding the physician’s explanation, physicians should pay more attention both to the topic under discussion and to their patients’ questions and attitudes.”⁷⁹

Authority and setting may stifle collaboration.

The aura of authority may inhibit patients from seeking clarification or explanation. A woman who did not understand what *nodule* meant did not ask questions “because they all seem so busy, I really did not want to be a nuisance . . . and anyway she [nurse] behaved as though she expected me to know and I did not want to upset her.”⁸⁰ The hope for a favorable prognosis leads patients to oversimplify complex situations or misinterpret information. Others are afraid they will appear stupid if they ask questions about words, explanations, problems, or procedures. For a variety of reasons, “patients routinely pass up, or actively ‘withhold,’ an opportunity to” ask about “the nature of the illness, its relative seriousness or the course it is likely to follow.”⁸¹

A little knowledge can be dangerous.

Many of us rely on **lay theories** to communicate and interpret health problems. Common “theories” include: All *natural* products are healthful. If I no longer feel bad, I do not need to take my medicine. If a little of this medicine helps, a lot will do more good. If this medication helped me, it will help you. Radiation and chemicals are bad for you. Katherine Rowan and Michele Hoover write that “scientific notions that contradict these and other powerful lay theories are often difficult for patients to understand because patients’ own lay alternatives seem irrefutably commonsensical.”⁸²

Communication Problems

Some information is lost or distorted because of how it is given and how it is received. Providers may rely on a single medium, such as oral information giving, but research

**Avoid
information
overload.**

reveals that about one-third of patients remember oral diagnoses while 70 percent recall written diagnoses. Oral exchanges are often so brief and ambiguous that they are confusing or meaningless. A provider made this comment: “Now, Mr. Brown, you will find that for some weeks you will tire easily, but you must get plenty of exercise.” How long is “some weeks”; what does “tire easily” mean; and how much is “plenty of exercise”? Health care professionals routinely prescribe medications to be taken four times a day without telling the patient what that means: every six hours, every four hours with a maximum of four doses within 24 hours, or as needed, not to exceed four a day. Health care providers *overload* patients with data, details, and explanations far beyond their abilities to comprehend and recall. Ley discovered that within a few hours 82 percent of patients could recall two items of information, but the percentage dropped to 36 percent for three or four items, 12 percent for five or six items, and 3 percent for seven or more items.⁸³

Giving Information More Effectively

Perhaps the most effective means of helping patients to recall information and treatment recommendations is to develop relationships in which they play an active role in the health care interview. Remember that “medical decision making is much more than a cognitive process. It is also a social event, one defined by the nature of the communication and the relationship between the clinician and the patient/family.”⁸⁴ Give information that is relevant to this patient to aid patient recall of information and greater compliance with treatment recommendations. Nonverbal communication aids in giving information more effectively. When giving information orally, place vocal emphasis on important words, dates, figures, warnings, and instructions. This is a substitute for the underlining, bold lettering, highlighting, and italicizing you employ in printed materials to enhance recall and indicate what is most important. Speak slowly and enunciate clearly, particularly if English is a second language for the patient.

**An inquisitive
patient is an
informed
patient.**

If you detect patients adhering to one of the lay theories mentioned earlier, help them recognize this theory and its apparent reasonableness and show its fallacies and potentially dangerous results. Encourage patients to ask questions by building in pauses and inviting inquiries throughout the presentation. A silent patient may feel intimidated, hopelessly confused, or believe it is the provider’s responsibility to provide adequate and clear information. Ask patients to repeat or explain what you have said and look for distortions, missing pieces, and misunderstandings.

Avoid overloading patients with information. Discover what they know and proceed from that point. Eliminate unnecessary materials. Reduce explanations and information to common and simple terms. Define technical terms and procedures or translate them into words and experiences patients understand. Present information in two or more interviews instead of one lengthy interview. As a rule, provide only enough clearly relevant information to satisfy the patient and the situation.

Organize information systematically to aid recall. Present important instructions first so they do not get lost in reactions to a diagnosis. Repeat important items strategically two or more times during the interaction so they are highlighted and easy to recall. Repetition may involve other health care professionals. For example, it is common practice for a physician to order a prescription and explain what it is, what it is for, how it

should be taken, and its possible effects. A nurse may repeat this information before the patient leaves the facility. Then the pharmacist who fills the prescription may repeat this same information and note that it is printed on the label. The more repetitions the better.

Employ a variety of resources.

Use a variety of media, including pamphlets, leaflets, charts, pictures, slides, DVDs, the Internet, models, and recordings. Dentists, for example, use models of teeth and jaws to explain dental problems and DVDs to show the benefits of flossing and brushing frequently. Emergency medical technicians use mannequins to teach CPR. Never hand a pamphlet or leaflet to a patient and say, “This will answer all of your questions.” Patients say they are helpful but admit they seldom read them. Involve others in the process such as interpreters, family members, and friends to provide social support for the patient and prepare others to assist the patient in recalling information more thoroughly and accurately. Be aware, however, that you may be creating a **triadic** instead of a **dyadic** interaction in which the third party might interfere with and contradict the information and recommendations you are giving to the patient. In the worst case scenario, family members may use the patient to acquire pain killers for their use or to sell.⁸⁵

The telephone accounts for one-fourth of health care interviews.

The telephone, particularly with the widespread use of cell phones, accounts for nearly 25 percent of all patient–provider interactions. Nurse call centers that integrate assessment, advice, and appointment systems are increasing rapidly and have transitioned from “nurse advice” to “telephone risk assessment.” If nurses and other practitioners can satisfy patients and physicians that they are effective information conduits as part of a health care triad, the result will be timeliness, accuracy, quantity, and usefulness of information. Perceptions of accuracy and reliability—trust—are best when the telephone provider is seen as a reinforcer. The telephone provider must note time, date, information, and recommendations for the file and pass on information to other providers in the triad.

Videoconference technology, including the use of Skype, enables providers and patients to interact visually over long distances, faster, and with less expense and to involve specialists in other locations. For instance, physicians in New Jersey are using “telepsychiatry” to treat patients more quickly and to counter the national shortage of psychiatrists, particularly child psychiatrists. Patients and providers must be prepared to deal with the differences from face-to-face encounters. There are fewer nonverbal cues to signal when a question or piece of information is clearly understood or an answer or explanation is sufficient so the interviewer can proceed to other matters. Answers and explanations tend to be longer and the result is less turn-taking and meaningful interaction between parties.

Counseling and Persuading

Information giving does not ensure compliance.

Health care providers tend to be *task oriented* and expect patients to follow their recommendations because they have the authority, expertise, and training. Unfortunately, patient compliance has been notoriously low, as low as 20 percent for prescribed drugs and as high as 50 percent for long-term treatment plans. With these compliance problems and the ever-greater emphasis on treating the whole person, providers must also act as **counselors** to help patients understand and deal with problems and **persuaders** to convince patients to follow recommendations accurately and faithfully.



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■ *Health care professionals may spend little time talking with patients because they are task oriented rather than people oriented.*

Watch for hints and clues about real problems.

Providers may try to dodge unpleasant exchanges.

Health care providers may spend little time talking with patients because there are many tasks to perform and talking is thought to be a social rather than a medical activity. Predictably, providers fail to detect subtle clues and hints that a patient wants to talk about a different and more serious medical issue.

Providers may employ a variety of **blocking tactics** to avoid counseling and persuading. Researchers and practitioners have identified several common tactics.

Providers may attempt to dodge an issue by using humor, pursuing a less threatening line of conversation, providing minimal encouragement, denying the severity of the problem, pretending to have a lack of information, or rejecting the patient's source of information such as the Internet or popular magazines. On the other hand, providers may try to avoid an issue entirely by pretending not to hear a question or comment, ignoring a question or comment, changing the subject, becoming engrossed in a physical task, hiding behind hospital rules, passing the buck to another provider, or leaving the room. The nurse in the following exchange exhibits common blocking tactics.

Nurse: There you are, dear. Okay? (gives a tablet to the patient)

Patient: Thank you. Do you know, I can't feel anything at all with my fingers nowadays?

Nurse: Can't you? (minimal encouragement)

Patient: No, I go to pick up a knife and take my hand away and it's not there anymore.

Nurse: Oh, I broke my pencil! (walks away)

The patient desperately wants to talk to the nurse about a frightening and worsening condition, but the nurse is determined not to get involved or discuss the problem.

Effective Counseling and Persuading

Review the principles and guidelines presented in Chapters 10 and 11 that are relevant to the health care setting. Parties should plan for each interview with five relational factors

Barriers to Effective Counseling and Persuading

Patients may make the health care interaction difficult by remaining silent, withdrawing, or complaining about a physical problem rather than admitting a psychological one. One of our students reported that she had missed an examination and several class sessions because she had cancer. Only later did we learn through a third party that the student had long suffered from severe depression and suicidal tendencies. She felt it was more acceptable to have a physical than a mental problem. A provider may dismiss a patient with a diagnosis of stress, nerves, or overactive imagination.

in mind: empathy, trust, honesty, mutual respect, and caring. Source credibility has long been recognized as a key ingredient in the counseling and persuasion process. Paulsel, McCroskey, and Richmond discovered that “perceptions of physician, nurse, and support staff competence and caring were positively correlated with patients’ satisfaction with the care they received and their physician.”⁸⁶

Select an Appropriate Interviewing Approach

Tradition is not always best.

Providers have traditionally tried two approaches. The first is a paternalistic approach in which the provider assumes the patient will see the wisdom of advice provided and alter attitudes and behavior accordingly. The second is an advise and educate approach that explains the medical reasons why and hopes for the best. Neither approach has produced results beyond 50 percent compliance. Telling patients what to do when they do not want to do it does not motivate them to act, and repeating unwanted advice may alienate them and produce resistance. Deborah Grandinetti advises, “change isn’t an event; it’s a process.”⁸⁷

No approach is useful all of the time.

Select an approach that is collaborative and best suited to this patient at this time. Barbara Sharf and Suzanne Poirier use a theoretical framework that psychiatrists Szasz and Hollender developed to teach medical students how to select appropriate interview approaches.⁸⁸

- An active (directive approach) is recommended when a patient is passive and unable to participate.
- An advisory (nondirective) approach is recommended when a patient is compliant because of acute illness and thus not at full capacity.
- A mutual participation (combination directive–nondirective) is recommended when gathering data, solving problems, and managing an illness of a patient who can participate fully.

Work for a team effort.

Above all, health care providers must approach interviews as **collaborative efforts** in which they show mutual sensitivity and respect for patients’ concerns, reasons, and arguments. Lisa Mahler recommends that providers should “have patients voice their own reasons for change.” The patient—not the physician—must articulate reasons for making or not making—a change.⁸⁹ This collaborative effort promotes **self**-persuasion. When patients see their providers as participatory decision-makers and credible experts, they are more likely to seek advice and adhere to their providers’ recommendations.⁹⁰ Credibility is the key to agreement with medical advice. Patients usually have logical reasons for resisting recommendations and eventually for not complying with them. They perceive them to be time-consuming, embarrassing, painful, costly, ineffective, or have potentially dangerous side effects. Providers must rely on their credibility as participatory decision-makers and provide carefully supported arguments that show respect while effectively countering those of their patients.

Be Realistic in Expectations

Let patients set the pace of interactions, and realize that significant changes come about over time and in a series of stages. Do not try to rush the process or skip stages before the patient is ready to move ahead. Smokers, drinkers, drug users, and those overweight cannot and will not change in one giant step. The failure rate is steep for those who try. Shock tactics based on intense fear appeals may backfire. For instance, when

Humor is an effective facilitator.

a physician emphasized the danger of swallowing medication for a canker sore in a direct and dire manner, the patient did not get the medication filled. Another physician employed self-deprecating humor and a lighter tone when prescribing acne medication, and the patient filled it.⁹¹ Intense fear appeals may lead to patient denial or avoidance of regimens, medications, and checkups. These appeals “mainly scare those who are already scared” and do not produce “desired protective practices or norms.”⁹² Low or moderate fear appeals in conjunction with humor facilitates an open, personal, and caring interview climate; aids patients in losing their patient role; and enables both parties to convey thoughts and feelings in a nonthreatening and collaborative manner. Avoid insensitive humor that may embarrass, hurt, or mock the other party.

Encourage Interaction

Sharing and caring are essential.

Encourage patients to talk. If you share your experiences and feelings, the patient is more likely to confide in you. This promotes self-disclosure. Employ nonverbal communication to show that you care and want to listen. Listen with comprehension so that you understand what the patient is saying and implying. Listen with empathy so you can see the situation as the patient does. Do not ask too many questions. Question sequences such as the following encourage interviewees to talk about a problem and its seriousness.⁹³

Interviewer: If you developed a complication from smoking, say lung disease, do you think you would quit smoking?

Interviewee: Yes, I think so.

Interviewer: Do you want to wait until you get a complication to decide to change?

Interviewee: No, I don't think so.

Interviewer: Why wait?

Make each question count.

Use a range of responses and reactions (from highly nondirective to highly directive). Give advice only when the patient lacks information, is misinformed, does not react to less directive means, or challenges information and recommendations. Avoid blaming or judging that may create an adversarial relationship.

Consider Recommendations

Introduce recommendations when the patient is ready to listen and comply. Compliance with recommendations is low when patients have no symptoms (such as skin cancer), recommendations are preventive in nature (such as diabetes), or recommended regimens will last a long time (such as regular workouts).⁹⁴ Only 10 percent of providers report they are successful in “helping patients change any health-related” behavior.⁹⁵ Work collaboratively to create plans of action—and alternative options—in the context of each patient's life by acknowledging the patient's social, psychological, and financial constraints. Share the logic (good reasons) behind your recommendations. Encourage patients to create their own health narratives—to tell their own stories—so they assume accountability for the decisions being made during the interview. Identify short-term goals so long-term goals do not appear so daunting.

Collaborate to achieve incremental changes.

Present specific instructions and demonstrate how easy they are to follow. Express hope and recall challenges the patient has met in the past. The goals are to encourage

patients, give them hope, and provide good reasons for complying with *mutually* agreed upon recommendations. You may have to persuade the patient they will work, are doable, and are effective. You cannot resolve the patient's problem; only the patient can do that.

Closing the Interview

The closing must be a collaborative effort.

Be sure both parties are ready to close the health care interview. Research indicates that providers are most likely to initiate premature closings when they become **certain of their assumptions** about patients' symptoms, particularly when assessing the cause of pain. They are less likely to do so when they take time to explore patients' experiences and stories.⁹⁶ Listen to what patients may or may not be saying. Use clearinghouse probing questions to be sure you have discussed everything of importance. Patients may hold back information or concerns until the closing minutes of the interview. They may ask questions or make seemingly off-hand comments when providers are busy and paying less attention while writing out regimens, ordering prescriptions, and entering information into a computer. A significant patient health concern or problem may get lost in the total closing process.

Important questions and revelations occur during the closing.

Provide a thorough but not overwhelming summary. Be sure both parties "are on the same page" and understand completely and accurately what they have discussed, the information they have exchanged, and agreements they have reached together. Patients must have clear and accurate understanding of everything that has transpired during the interview and have realistic expectations of what providers can and cannot do. An effective strategy for assessing successful information exchange is to ask patients to explain important items in their own words. These may reveal confusions, misunderstandings, and counter-productive intentions.

Close interactions positively and productively while communicating empathy, trust, and care. The roles played by both parties will enhance or detract from their relationship and influence their next interactions, or whether there will be next interactions. Researchers have discovered that "Patients' post-visit satisfaction with physicians' communication is important because it is positively associated with objective measures of physicians' task proficiency, patients' adherence to medical recommendations, and patients' continuity of care."⁹⁷

Summary

The health care interview is common, difficult, and complex. Situations vary from routine to life-threatening and the perceptions of both parties influence the nature and success of interviews. For a health care interview to be successful, it must be a collaborative effort between provider and patient, and this requires a relationship based on high ethical standards, trust, respect, sharing of control, equality of treatment, and understanding. A collaborative and productive relationship will reduce the anxiety, fear, hostility, and reticence that often accompany health care interviews. Provider and patient must strive to be effective information getters, information givers, and counselor-persuaders.

Providers (from receptionist to physician) and patients (including families and friends) must realize that good communication is essential in health care interviews and that

communication skills do not come naturally or with experience. Skills require training and practice. Each party must learn how to listen as well as speak, understand as well as inform, commit to as well as seek resolutions to problems. Communication without commitment is fruitless. Both parties must follow through with agreements and prescribed regimens and medications.

Key Terms and Concepts

Assumptions	Elderspeak	Politeness theory
Baby talk	Face threatening	Relational distance
Blocking tactics	General inquiry questions	Self-persuasion
Climate	Information overload	Stereotypes
Co-agency	Jargon	Stories/narratives
Collaboration	Lay theories	Task oriented
Confirmatory questions	Patient-centered care	Trust
Counselors	Persuaders	

Health Care Role-Playing Cases

A Bicycle Accident

Gloria Tyler was riding her bicycle on campus after class heading back to her residence hall. When passing a parked car, the driver suddenly opened the car door and Gloria ran into the door and went over the handle bars onto the street. EMTs arrived within a few minutes after the driver called 911. Gloria is experiencing pain in her lower back and left arm that may be broken. The EMTs are asking her questions about the pain she is experiencing and the problem with her arm. A campus police officer has arrived and wants to ask questions about the cause of the accident. In essence, Gloria is taking part in two interviews simultaneously.

A Gunshot Victim

The patient was hunting rabbits with a friend, and the friend spun around trying to get a good shot at a rabbit. He didn't see his companion who was walking about 25 yards to his left. The patient's face was struck by at least a dozen shots, one in his left eye. While his wounds are being cleaned and the shot removed from his face before surgery on his eye, a nurse must get his medical history and determine if he is allergic to any medications or anesthesia. The patient is in a great deal of pain and wants to get on with the surgery.

A Possible Heart Attack

Kirk Abbott has been working long hours and most weekends for several weeks trying to meet a design problem for his company. Around 9:00 p.m. as he was trying to get home before his young children went to bed, he began to experience a pain in his jaw and pain down his left arm. There is a history of heart problems in his family. His father died of a heart attack at the age of 32, and his grandfather had major heart surgery in his early 40s. Kirk has driven himself to the emergency room of a nearby hospital.

An Annual Checkup

The patient, age 48, has scheduled an annual checkup with his long-time primary caregiver. They were college roommates and kept in touch as the patient became a well-known aeronautical engineer and the caregiver a widely recognized specialist in internal medicine. The patient's family has a history of heart problems; his father and two uncles died of heart attacks in their early fifties. The physician has been urging the patient to exercise more and lose weight for a number of years. The stress caused by the increasing difficulty of securing government grants for aerospace projects is beginning to take a toll on the patient.

Student Activities

1. Nurse practitioners are becoming common in health care, often seeing patients instead of physicians. Interview an experienced nurse practitioner and discuss how she establishes and maintains relationships with patients and other members of her health care organization: receptionists, technicians, nurses, and physicians. How does the nurse practitioner deal with patients who clearly expect to see a physician rather than a "nurse"? How does she deal with physicians who see her as encroaching on their turf?
2. Interview three different health care providers (e.g., an EMT, a nurse, a nurse practitioner, a physician, a surgeon, an optometrist) about the problems they encounter when giving information to patients. Which techniques have worked well and which have failed? How do they approach giving information to patients of different cultures, ages, genders, levels of education, and health status? What kinds of information tend to get lost or misinterpreted most often? Why does this happen?
3. Visit a pediatric ward of a hospital. Observe how child-life specialists address and interact with young patients. Talk with them about their training in communication with small children. What communication problems do they experience that are unique to different ages of children?
4. Your campus, like most in the United States, is likely to have students and families from many different countries. Visit the campus health center or a local hospital and discuss how they interact effectively with patients who speak little or no English. What types of interpreters have they used: family, hospital, volunteer, or telephone interpreters? Which do they use most often? What problems have they encountered with interpreters?

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GLOSSARY

Abrupt or curt: short and often rude responses or curtailing of interactions.

Accidental bias: when an interviewer unintentionally leads respondents to give answers they feel the interviewer wants them to give rather than their true feelings, attitudes, or beliefs.

Ad hominem: an effort to dodge an issue or challenge by discrediting the source that raised it.

Ad populum: an appeal to or on behalf of the majority.

Ambiguity: words to which interview parties may assign very different meanings.

Analysis: a careful examination of the nature and content of answers and impressions noted during an interview.

Appearance: how you look to the other party in the interview, including dress and physical appearance.

Applicant profile: the required knowledge, experiences, skills, and personal traits necessary to perform a job satisfactorily.

Application form: a form created by an organization to gather basic information about applicants, including their backgrounds, experiences, education, and career interests.

Appraisal perspective: the performance interview is seen as required, scheduled, superior-conducted and directed, adversarial, evaluative, and past-oriented.

Aptitude tests: tests that identify the abilities of a potential employee to predict how well and quickly the person will learn the tasks required of a position.

Arguing from accepted belief: argument based on an accepted belief, assumption, or proposition.

Arguing from analogy: argument based on common characteristics of two people, places, objects, proposals, or ideas shared.

Arguing from cause-effect: an argument that attempts to establish a causal relationship.

Arguing from condition: an argument based on the assertion that if something does or does not happen, something else will or will not happen.

Arguing from example: an argument based on a sampling of a given class of people, places, or things.

Arguing from facts: an argument based on a conclusion that best explains a body of facts.

Arguing from two choices: arguing that there are only two possible proposals or courses of action and then eliminating one of the choices.

Arrival: the point at which one interview party encounters the other to initiate an interview.

Assumptions: assuming that something is true or false, is intended or unintended, exists or does not exist, is desired or undesired, will or will not happen.

Atmosphere and setting: the environment in which an interview is taking place and whether it is conducive to effective communication between the two parties in the interview.

Attitude: relatively enduring combinations of beliefs that predispose people to respond in particular ways to persons, organizations, places, ideas, and issues.

At will: an employment situation in which either party may terminate the employment relationship at any time and for any reason.

Baby talk: speaking to elder patients as if they were infants, including slower rate, exaggerated intonation, and simpler vocabulary.

Balance or consistency theory: a theory based on the belief that human beings strive for a harmonious existence with self and others and experience psychological discomfort (dissonance) when they do not.

Bandwagon tactic: a tactic that urges a person to follow the crowd, to do what everyone else is doing.

Basic skills tests: tests that measure mathematics, measurement, reading, and spelling skills.

Behavior-based selection: selection based upon the behaviors desired in a position and behaviors exhibited by applicants.

Behavior-based selection technique: a selection technique that begins with a needs and position

analysis to determine which behaviors are essential for performing a particular job and proceeds to match applicants with this analysis.

Behaviorally anchored rating scale (BARS) model: a performance review model that identifies essential skills for a specific job and sets standards through a job analysis.

Belief: the trust or confidence placed in social, political, historic, economic, and religious claims.

Bipolar question: a question that limits the respondent to two polar choices such as yes or no, agree or disagree.

Birds of a feather syndrome: the selection of employees most similar to interviewers.

Blocking tactics: efforts of interviewers to avoid counseling or getting involved with interviewees, particularly in the health care setting.

Board interview: when two to five persons representing an organization may interview an applicant at the same time.

Bogardus Social Distance scales: questions that determine how respondents feel about social relationships and distances from them.

Bona fide occupational qualifications (BFOQ): requirements essential for performing a particular job.

Branding: when an applicant presents a carefully crafted image to potential employers through social media.

Broadcast interview: an interview that takes place live over radio or television or will be played all or in part at a later time.

Built-in bias: interviewer bias that is intentionally or unintentionally built into a schedule of questions.

Career/Job fairs: gatherings of organizations and companies, often at malls or on college campuses, during which job seekers may make contacts with representatives and gather information about employment opportunities.

Career objective: a brief, concise statement of a targeted career goal.

Case approach: when an applicant is placed into a carefully crafted situation that takes hours to study and resolve.

Catalytic coaching: a comprehensive, integrated performance management system based on a paradigm of development.

Cause-to-effect sequence: interview sequence that addresses causes and effects separately but relationally.

Central tendency: when interviewers refrain from assigning extreme ratings to facets of performance.

Chain or contingency strategy: a strategy that allows for preplanned secondary questions in survey interviews.

Chain format: when one recruiter for an organization converses with an applicant for several minutes and then passes the applicant along to another recruiter for the organization who probes into job skills, technical knowledge, or another area.

Chronological format résumé: a résumé that lists education, training, and experiences in chronological order.

Clearinghouse probe: a question designed to discover whether previous questions have uncovered everything of importance on a topic or issue.

Client-centered approach: a counseling approach that focuses on the client rather than content or situation.

Closed-minded or authoritarian interviewees: parties with unchangeable central beliefs who rely on trusted authorities when making decisions.

Closed question: a question that is narrow in focus and restricts the respondent's freedom to determine the amount and kind of information to offer.

Closing: the portion of an interview that brings it to an end.

Coaching: helping to improve performance rather than judging or criticizing performance.

Cognitive phase: the thinking and assessing phase of a counseling interview.

Cold calls: persuasive interview contacts made without an appointment or prior notice.

Collaboration: a mutual effort by both parties to inform, analyze, and resolve problems.

Collectivist culture: a culture that places high value on group image, group esteem, group reliance, group awareness, and group achievement.

Combination schedule: a question schedule that combines two schedules, such as highly scheduled and highly scheduled standardized.

Communication interactions: verbal and nonverbal exchanges that take place during interviews.

Comparison tactic: a person points out a few similarities between two places, people, or things and then draws conclusions from this superficial comparison.

Competitive rater: an interviewer who believes that no one can perform higher than his or her level of performance.

Complement: to complete, support, or repeat.

Complex interpersonal communication process: the assumption that one-to-one communication is simple is belied by the many variables that interact in this process.

Compliance: when an interviewee follows assessments and courses of action agreed to during a counseling interview.

Confirmatory questions: questions designed to verify understanding of an interviewee's (typically medical patients) concerns, problems, or statements.

Connotations: positive and negative meanings of words.

Consubstantiality: the effort to establish a substantial sameness or similarity between interviewer and interviewee.

Contrast principle: if a second item or choice is fairly different from the first, it seems more different than it actually is.

Control: the extent to which one or both interview parties directs an interview.

Convenience sample: a sample taken when and where it is most convenient for the interviewee.

Conversation: an unstructured interaction between two or more people with no predetermined purpose other than enjoyment of the process.

Counselors: those who help interviewees to gain insights into and to cope with problems.

Counter persuasion: persuasion aimed at an interviewee by a persuader's competitor or antagonist following a persuasive interview.

Cover letter: a letter an applicant sends to a prospective employer that expresses interest in and qualifications for a position.

Coverage bias: occurs when cell phone only users who are often younger or of low economic status are excluded from a survey sample.

Critical incident question: a question that asks applicants how they might resolve a current problem the recruiter's organization is facing.

Cross-sectional study: a study that determines what is known, thought, or felt during a narrow time span.

Culture: shared customs, norms, knowledge, attitudes, values, and traits of a racial, religious, social, or corporate group.

Curious question pitfall: a question that is irrelevant to the interview and satisfies only the interviewer's curiosity.

Defensive climate: a climate that appears threatening to one or both parties in an interview.

Determinate interviews: an interview designed to determine whether or not to make a job offer to an applicant.

Dialectical tensions: the result of conflicts over opposing needs and desires or between contrasting "voices" in an interview.

Dialogic listening: a means of focusing on ours rather than mine or yours to resolve a problem or task.

Diamond sequence: a question sequence that places two funnel sequences top to top.

Differentiation: an attempt through language to alter how a person sees reality by renaming it.

Directive approach: an interview in which the interviewer controls subject matter, length of answers, climate, and formality.

Directive reactions: when an interviewer reacts to a client with specific evaluations and advice.

Disclosure: the willingness and ability to reveal feelings, beliefs, attitudes, and information to another party.

Dishonesty: lying to or deceiving another interview party.

Don't ask, don't tell question pitfall: a question that delves into information or an emotional area that a respondent may be incapable of addressing because of social, psychological, or situational constraints.

Double-barreled question pitfall: a question that contains two or more questions.

Downward communication: an interview in which a superior in the organizational hierarchy is

attempting to interact as an interviewer with a subordinate in the hierarchy.

Dyadic: an interaction that involves two distinct parties.

EEO laws: state and federal laws that pertain to recruiting and reviewing the performance of employees.

EEO violation question pitfall: when an interviewer asks an unlawful question during a recruiting interview.

Elderspeak: speaking to elder patients as if they were children, including addressing them as sweeties, girl or boy, and honey and employing the collective pronoun *our* (e.g., “it’s time for our bath”).

Electronic interviews: interviews conducted over the telephone, through conference calls, by video talk-back, or over the Internet.

Electronically scanned résumé: a résumé designed in format and wording to be scanned electronically by recruiters.

E-mail interviews: interviews conducted through electronic e-mail rather than face-to-face.

Equal Employment Opportunity Commission: the agency assigned the task of overseeing and carrying out EEO laws.

Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) laws: laws that pertain to employment and performance review interviews.

Ethical issues: issues that focus on value judgments concerning degrees of right and wrong, goodness and badness, in human conduct.

Euphemism: the substitution of a better sounding word for a common one.

Evaluative interval scales: questions that ask respondents to make judgments about persons, places, things, or ideas.

Evaluative response question pitfall: when an interviewer expresses judgmental feelings about an answer that may bias or skew the next answer.

Evasive interviewee: an interviewee who evades questions and gives indirect answers.

Evidence: examples, stories, comparisons, testimony, and statistics that support a claim.

Exchanging: a sharing of roles, responsibilities, feelings, beliefs, motives, and information during an interview.

Expressed feelings: feelings an interviewee expresses overtly and openly during a counseling interaction.

Face-to-face interview: an interview in which both parties are present physically in the same space during an interview.

Face threatening: interview interactions in which questions and answers may threaten the power or credibility of the interviewer or the interviewee.

Failed departure: when an interview has come to a close and parties have taken leave of one another only to come in contact accidentally later, often with a degree of communicative awkwardness.

False assumptions: assuming incorrectly that something is true or false, intended or unintended, exists or does not exist, desired or undesired, will or will not happen.

False closing: when verbal and nonverbal messages signal the closing of the interview is commencing but a party introduces a new topic or issue.

Feedback: verbal and nonverbal reactions of an interview party.

Feelings: emotions such as pride, fear, love, anger, and sympathy.

Fee-paid positions: when an organization retains a placement agency to locate qualified applicants and pays fees the agency would normally charge applicants.

Filter strategy: a question strategy that enables the interviewer to determine an interviewee’s knowledge of a topic.

First impression: the initial impression one makes on another as a result of appearance, dress, manner, and quality of communication.

Flexibility: the ability to adapt during interviews to unexpected exchanges, answers, information, or attitudes.

Focus group interviews: a small group of people (6 to 12) act as an interviewee party with a highly skilled interviewer who asks a carefully selected set of questions that focus on a specific topic.

Framing: how we use language to construct the way we see people, places, things, and objects.

Frequency interval scales: questions that ask respondents to select a number that most accurately reflects how often they do or don’t use or do something.

Functional résumé format: a résumé in which an applicant places experiences under headings that highlight qualifications for a position.

Funnel sequence: a question sequence that begins with a broad, open-ended question and proceeds with ever-more restricted questions.

Gender: how interview parties being female or male affects interview interactions.

General inquiry questions: an opening question that determines why an interviewee (often a medical patient) has initiated an interview.

Generic message: a persuasive message designed for a variety of audiences rather than a specific targeted audience.

Getting through questions: questions in counseling interviews designed to enable interviewees to manage their emotions.

Global relationships: relationships between parties from different countries and cultures.

Goal oriented: an interaction in which the interviewer is goal or task oriented rather than people oriented.

Ground rules: rules governing an interview agreed to by both parties.

Group interview: an interview in which there are multiple interviewers, such as several journalists at a press conference.

Guessing question pitfall: when a questioner attempts to guess information instead of asking for it.

Gunnysacking: the practice of storing up grievances before dumping them on an interviewee (often an employee) all at once.

Halo effect: when an interviewer gives favorable ratings to all job duties when an interviewee excels in only one.

Hasty generalization tactic: a person generalizes to a whole group of people, places, or things from only one or a few examples.

Highly closed questions: questions that can be answered with a single word or short phrase, most often a yes or no.

Highly directed reactions and responses: when an interviewer offers ultimatums and strong advice.

Highly nondirective reactions and responses: when an interviewer offers no information, assistance, or evaluations but encourages the interviewee to communicate, analyze, and be self-reliant.

Highly scheduled interview: a schedule in which the interviewer prepares all questions and their exact wording prior to an interview.

Highly scheduled standardized interview: a schedule in which the interviewer prepares all questions and their exact wording as well as answer options prior to an interview.

Historical critical incident question: a question that asks applicants how they would have resolved a problem the recruiter's organization faced in the past.

Honesty tests: tests designed to assess the ethics, honesty, and integrity of job applicants.

Hourglass sequence: a question sequence that begins with open questions, proceeds to closed questions, and ends with open questions.

Hyperpersonal revelations: highly personal (perhaps intimate) revelations of a person during an interview that reveals too much information.

Hypothetical question: a hypothetical but realistic question that asks respondents how they would handle a situation or problem.

Identification theory: a theory that persons persuade others by identifying with them in a variety of ways.

Idioms: expressions unique to a culture or nation likely to be misunderstood by a person from a different culture or nation.

Imagery: creating pictures or images in a person's mind through highly descriptive language.

Implicative approach: an approach that withholds an explicit statement of purpose or intent until the interviewee sees the implications and suggests a course of action.

Individualist culture: a culture that places high value on self-image, self-esteem, self-reliance, self-awareness, and individual achievement.

Induced compliance theory: a theory designed to change thinking, feeling, or acting by inducing others to engage in activities counter to their values, beliefs, or attitudes.

Inform: to provide information or knowledge to another party.

Information: stories, illustrations, comparisons, experiences, quotations, statistics, definitions, and explanations that apprise interview parties of problems, solutions, situations, and events.

Information-gathering interviews: interviews designed to obtain facts, opinions, data, feelings, attitudes, beliefs, reactions, advice, or feedback.

Information-giving interview: interviews designed to exchange data, knowledge, direction, instructions, orientation, clarification, or warnings.

Information overload: when interviewees are provided with more information than they can process or recall.

Informational probe: a question designed to obtain additional information when an answer appears to be superficial, vague, or ambiguous or to suggest a feeling or attitude.

Initiating the interview: the process by which an interview is arranged and started.

Inoculation theory: a theory based on the belief that it is often more effective to prevent undesired persuasion from occurring than trying damage control afterward.

Integrity interviews: interviews designed to assess the honesty and integrity of prospective employees.

Intelligent or educated interviewee: an interviewee with high levels of intelligence or informal and formal education.

Interactional: the exchanging or sharing of roles, responsibilities, feelings, beliefs, motives, and information.

Internet interview: an interview that takes place solely through the Internet.

Interpersonal communication process: a complex and often puzzling communication interaction with another party.

Interval scales: survey question scales that provide distances between measures.

Interview: an interactional communication process between two parties, at least one of whom has a predetermined and serious purpose, and involves the asking and answering of questions.

Interview evaluation: the formal or informal process of evaluating applicants following recruiting interviews.

Interview guide: a carefully structured outline of topics and subtopics to be covered during an interview.

Interview schedule: a list of questions an interviewer prepares prior to an interview.

Interviewee: the party who is not in basic control of the interaction, such as a respondent in a survey interview or an applicant in a recruiting interview.

Interviewer bias: when respondents give answers they feel questioners want them to give rather than express their true feelings, attitudes, or beliefs.

Inverted funnel sequence: a sequence that begins with closed questions and proceeds toward open questions.

Jargon: words that organizations or groups alter or create for specialized use.

Job/career fairs: gatherings of recruiters from a variety of organizations on college campuses or malls in which applicants can obtain information, make contacts, and take part in interviews.

Joblike situations: simulated job situations through questions or role playing that enable the recruiter to perceive how an applicant might act on the job.

Joint actions: when interview parties understand that what each does will impact the other and act in the other's party's interest.

Journalist's interview guide: a guide that focuses on who, what, when, where, how, and why.

Just cause: the fair and equitable treatment of each employee in a job class.

Key informant: a person who can supply information on situations, assist in selecting interviewees, and aid in securing interviewee cooperation.

Knowledge workers: workers that create and access information rather than manufacture products and are valued for their knowledge, ability to motivate others, and teamwork.

Language strategies: the strategic use of language in human interactions and expressions.

Law of recency: people tend to recall the last thing said or done in interviews.

Lay counselor: a person with little or no formal training in counseling.

Lay theories: commonsense theories patients hold about health care that often resist scientific notions and research findings.

Leading question: a question that suggests implicitly or explicitly the expected or desired answer.

Leading question strategy: a question strategy that enables interviewers to reduce the number of undecided and don't know responses in surveys.

Learning organization: an organization that places high value on knowledge, skills, competencies, opportunities for learning, and employees as intellectual capital.

Leave-taking: the effort to bring an interview to a close.

Length of service error: when an interviewer assumes that present performance is high because past performance was high.

Letters of recommendation: letters sent by references to prospective employers on behalf of persons applying for specific positions.

Level 1 interactions: interactions that are relatively safe and nonthreatening.

Level 2 interactions: interactions that require a moderate degree of trust and may be moderately threatening because of exchange of beliefs, attitudes, values, and positions on issues.

Level 3 interactions: interactions that require a great deal of trust because parties disclose fully their feelings, beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions on intimate and controversial topics.

Level of confidence: the mathematical probability that the survey is within an accepted margin of error.

Level of information: the amount and sophistication of information an interviewee has to offer.

Likert scale: interval scale questions that ask respondents to make judgments about persons, places, things, or ideas.

Listening: the deliberate process of receiving, understanding, evaluating, and retaining what is seen and heard.

Listening for comprehension: receiving, understanding, and remembering messages as accurately as possible.

Listening for empathy: a method of communicating an attitude of genuine concern, understanding, and involvement.

Listening for evaluation: a means of judging what is heard and observed.

Listening for resolution: a means of mutually resolving a problem or task.

Loaded question: a question with strong direction or dictation of the answer desired through the use of name calling or emotionally charged words.

Logical strategies: the development of arguments into apparently valid and acceptable patterns.

Longitudinal study: a study to determine trends in what is known, thought, or felt over a period of time.

Loose rater: an interviewer who is reluctant to point out weak areas and dwells on the average or better areas of performance.

Make meaning questions: questions in counseling interviews designed to determine what an interviewee is most concerned about in an interview.

Management by objectives (MBO) model: a performance review model that involves a manager and a subordinate in a mutual (50-50) setting of results-oriented goals rather than activities to be performed.

Margin of error: the degree of similarity between sample results and the results from a 100 percent count obtained in an identical manner.

Marginalized respondent: a respondent who is unlikely to be surveyed because of culture, demographics, or lack of a telephone or easily accessed telephone number or residential address.

Matching process: the process of matching an applicant with a specific position and organization.

Meaning making: actions and questions designed to evoke meaning.

Metaphorical questions: questions that include metaphors, such as "establishing a level playing field" or addressing a company as a "family."

Millennial generation: the generation born from the early 1980s to around 2004.

Mirror probe: a question that summarizes a series of answers to ensure accurate understanding and retention.

Moderately scheduled interview: a schedule in which the interviewer prepares all major questions with possible probing questions under each prior to an interview.

Motives: values such as security, belonging, freedom, ambition, and preservation of health.

Multisource feedback: feedback from a number of sources.

Mutual product: when the results of interviews depend upon the contributions of both parties.

Naming: the labeling of people, places, or things to make them appear different, to alter perceptions of reality.

Negative face: the desire to be free of imposition or intrusion.

Negative politeness: an effort to protect another person when negative face needs are threatened.

Negative selling: the attempt to persuade by attacking another or another's proposal rather than supporting yourself or your proposal.

Network tree: a listing of names, addresses, and telephone numbers of primary contacts who can provide leads for job openings and additional contacts.

Networking: creating a list of contacts for possible employment positions.

Neutral question: a question that allows a respondent to determine an answer with no overt direction or pressure from the questioner.

Neutralize: any effort to remove an obstacle to making a favorable impression or attaining a position, including recruiter questions that violate EEO laws.

Nexting: verbal and nonverbal signals from one party that it is time for the other party to enter into the interaction or to become silent.

Noise: anything that may interfere with the communication process, such as machinery, ringing telephones, doors opening and closing, others talking, traffic, and music.

Nominal scales: questions that provide mutually exclusive variables and ask respondents to pick or name the most appropriate.

Nondirective approach: an interview in which the interviewee controls subject matter, length of answers, climate, and formality.

Nondirective reaction: when an interviewer reacts to a client without giving advice or specific direction.

Non-probability sampling: when a survey taker does not know the chance each member of a population has of being interviewed.

Nonscheduled interview: an interview guide of topic and subtopics with no prepared questions prior to an interview.

Nontraditional forms: newer forms of interviewing such as focus groups, videoconferences, e-mail interviews, and virtual interviews.

Nonverbal closing actions: nonverbal actions that signal a closing is commencing, such as leaning forward, uncrossing legs, breaking eye contact, and offering to shake hands.

Nonverbal communication: nonverbal signals such as physical appearance, dress, eye contact, voice, touches, head nods, hand shakes, and posture.

Nonverbal interactions: nonverbal signals such as physical appearance, dress, eye contact, voice, touches, head nods, hand shakes, and posture.

Normative competence: when an interview party understands the parts each party will play in a relationship and develops workable rules and norms.

Normative influence: a person's beliefs of which behaviors important individuals or groups think are advisable or inadvisable to perform.

Nudging probe: a word or brief phrase that urges a respondent to continue answering.

Numerical interview scales: questions that ask respondents to select a range or level that accurately reflects an age, income level, educational level, and so on.

Observing: paying close attention to surroundings, people, dress, appearance, and nonverbal communication.

Off the record: information that cannot be reported following an interview.

Open question: a question that allows the respondent considerable freedom in determining the amount and kind of information to offer.

Open-to-closed pitfall: when a questioner asks an open question but changes it to a closed question before a respondent can reply.

Opening: the first minutes of an interview in which the interviewer attempts to establish rapport and orient the interviewee.

Opening question: the initial question during the body of an interview.

Opening techniques: verbal and nonverbal signals that establish rapport and orient the interviewee.

Order bias: possible influence on how interviewees respond due to the order of answer options in survey questions.

Ordinal scales: questions that ask respondents to rate or rank options in their implied relationship to one another.

Orientation: the portion of the opening in which the interviewer explains the purpose, length, and nature of the interview.

Outside forces: influential others such as family, friends, employers, and agencies who are not part of the interview but may affect one or both parties before, during, or after an interview.

Overt identification: an attempt to establish a “we are one and the same” perception.

Panel interview: when two to five persons representing an organization may interview an applicant at the same time.

Paper trail: written materials that allow the tracing of an individual or organization’s actions or opinions.

PAR method: when an applicant structures an answer by addressing an assigned problem or task, actions taken to solve the assigned problem or task, and the results or consequences of actions taken.

Party: the interviewer or interviewee side in an interview.

Patient-centered care (PCC): when a patient’s needs, preferences, and beliefs are respected at all times.

Percentage agencies: placement agencies whose fee for finding positions for clients is a specific percentage of the first year’s salary.

Perceptions: the ways people see and interpret themselves, other people, places, things, events, and nonverbal signals.

Personal interview: a survey interview that takes place face-to-face.

Personal space: an imaginary bubble around us that we consider almost as private as our body.

Personality tests: tests designed to assess the people skills of applicants.

Persuaders: interviewers who attempt to alter the ways interviewees think, feel, and/or act.

Persuasive interviews: an interview designed to change an interviewee’s way of thinking, feeling, and/or acting.

Phases of counseling interviews: a structural format for counseling interviews such as the sequential phase model developed by Hartsough, Echterling, and Zarle.

Pitchfork effect: when an interviewer gives negative ratings to all facets of performance because of a particular trait the interviewer dislikes in others.

Placement agency: an agency that provides services such as career counseling, résumé preparation, employer contacts, and interview opportunities for those seeking positions.

Placement interviews: interviews designed to assign employees to positions or to move them from one position or location to another.

Polarizing: the attempt to limit choices or positions to polar opposites.

Politeness theory: a theory that claims all humans want to be appreciated, approved, liked, honored, and protected.

Population: all persons able and qualified to respond in a particular survey.

Portfolio: a small and varied collection of an applicant’s best work.

Positive attention: attention that generates recruiter interest in an applicant.

Positive face: the desire to be appreciated, approved, liked, and honored.

Positive politeness: an effort to show concern by complimenting and using respectful forms of address.

Post hoc or scrambling cause-effect tactic: basing a cause-effect relationship on coincidence, a minor cause, or a single cause.

Power speech: words that express certainty, challenges, verbal aggression, and metaphors.

Powerless speech: words and nonfluencies that express apologies, disclaimers, excuses, and uncertainty.

Precision journalism: journalistic reports based on survey research data.

Predetermined: planned in advance of an interaction.

Press conference: a setting in which multiple interviewers interview one interviewee.

Pretest: the test of an interview schedule with a small sample of respondents prior to a survey to detect possible problems that might result during the survey.

Primary question: a question that introduces a topic or new area within a topic and can stand alone out of context.

Privacy: freedom from unwanted intrusion into or access to interview interactions.

Probability sampling: when a survey taker knows that each member of a population has a certain chance of being interviewed.

Probing: the attempt to discover additional information and understanding.

Probing question: a question that attempts to discover additional information following a primary or secondary question and cannot stand alone out of context.

Problems of the interviewee's behavior interviews: interviews designed to review, separate, correct, or counsel interviewees for their behavior.

Problems of the interviewer's behavior interviews: interviews designed to receive complaints, grievances, or suggestions concerning the interviewer's behavior.

Problem-solution sequence: an outline divided into problem and solution phases.

Problem-solving interviews: interviews designed to discuss mutually shared problems, receive suggestions for solutions, or implement solutions.

Process: a dynamic, continuing, ever-changing interaction of variables.

Prospecting: a systematic selection of interviewees who are good prospects for persuasive interviews.

Proximity: the physical distance between interview parties.

Psychological reactance theory: a theory based on the claim that people react negatively when someone threatens to restrict or does restrict a behavior they want to engage in.

Psychological strategies: strategies designed to create psychological discomfort—dissonance—to alter ways of thinking, feeling, and acting.

Purpose: the reason or goal for a party conducting or taking part in an interview.

Qualitative survey: a survey in which findings are presented in textual form, usually words.

Quantitative survey: a survey in which findings are presented in numerical form, such as percentages and frequencies.

Question: any statement or nonverbal act that invites an answer.

Question pitfall: a slight alteration of questions, often unintentional, that changes them from open to closed, primary to secondary, and neutral to leading.

Question sequence: the strategic interconnection of questions.

Quintamensional design sequence: a five-step sequence designed to assess the intensity of a respondent's opinions and attitudes.

Random digit dialing: a system that randomly generates telephone numbers in target area codes and prefix areas for selecting a survey sample.

Random sampling: selecting respondents randomly from a container, a list, or group.

Ranking ordinal scale: questions that ask respondents to rank options in their implied relationship to one another.

Rapport: a process of establishing and sustaining a relationship by creating feelings of goodwill and trust.

Rating ordinal scale: questions that ask respondents to rate options in their implied relationship to one another.

Real setting: an interview setting with all of its defects and problems.

Reasoning from accepted belief, assumption, or proposition: reasoning based on the assertion that a belief, assumption, or proposition is true and without question.

Reasoning from analogy: reasoning based on points of similarity that two people, places, or things have in common.

Reasoning from cause-effect: reasoning based on a causal relationship.

Reasoning from condition: reasoning based on the assertion that if something does or does not happen, something else will or will not happen.

Reasoning from example: reasoning based on a generalization about a whole class of people, places, or things from a sampling of the class.

Reasoning from facts: reasoning that offers a conclusion as the best explanation for available evidence.

Reasoning from sign: a claim that two or more variables are related so the presence or absence of one indicates the presence or absence of the other.

Recall: the ability of an interview party to remember and report accurately what took place during an interview, including agreements, information exchanged, attitudes, and climate.

Recency error: when an interviewer relies too heavily on the most recent events or performance levels.

Reciprocal concessions: the effort to instill a sense of obligation in another to make a concession after the other party has made one.

Recording: taking mental or physical note of what is taking place during an interview.

References: names of persons applicants give to prospective employers who can provide assessments of their qualifications for positions.

Reflective probe: a question that reflects the answer received to verify or clarify what the respondent intended to say.

Reinforce: strengthening or making stronger.

Rejection then retreat: the persuader retreats to a second or fall back option if the interviewee rejects the preferred proposal.

Relational: an interpersonal connection between two parties or persons.

Relational dimensions: critical dimensions such as similarity, inclusion, affection, and trust that determine the nature of relationships.

Relational distance: the closeness of the relationship between interview parties.

Relational history: the past, present, and future connections between two parties or persons.

Relational memory: what interview parties remember from previous encounters with one another.

Relational uncertainty: when either party is unaware of the degree of warmth, sharing of control, or level of trust that will exist during an interview.

Relationship: an interpersonal connection between parties that influences their interest in the outcome of the interview.

Reliability: the assurance that the same information can be collected in repeated interviews.

Repeat question strategy: a question strategy that enables the interviewer to determine interviewee consistency in responses on a topic.

Replicability: the ability to duplicate interviews regardless of interviewers, interviewees, and situations.

Report: a formal or informal recording of the information attained during an interview.

Reproducibility: the ability to duplicate interviews regardless of interviewer, interviewee, and situation.

Research: a careful search for background materials, information, facts, and theories pertaining to a subject, person, or organization.

Restatement probe: a question that restates all or part of the original question that remains unanswered.

Résumé: a brief accounting of an applicant's career goal, education, training, and experiences.

Résumé or application form question pitfall: asking a question that is already answered on the résumé or application form.

Reticent interviewee: an interviewee who seems unwilling or unable to talk and respond freely.

Role competence: the ability of an interview party to play the roles of interviewer and interviewee effectively.

Rule of reciprocity: instills in an interviewee a sense of obligation to repay in kind what another provides.

Sample point or block sampling: preassigned numbers and types of respondents are chosen from assigned geographical areas.

Sample size: the number of persons interviewed during a survey when the whole population is too large to interview.

Sampling principles: principles that create a sample that accurately represents the population under study.

Scannable résumé: a résumé designed specifically to be scanned effectively by electronic software used by recruiters.

- Scanning software:** computer software that enables recruiters to scan résumés electronically to reduce the time required to select applicants to be interviewed.
- Screening interviews:** interviews designed to select applicants for additional interviews.
- Selection interview:** an interview in which the purpose is to select a person for employment or membership within an organization.
- Self:** focus of the interviewee on the interviewee during a counseling interview.
- Self-analysis:** a careful, thorough, and insightful analysis of self an applicant conducts prior to taking part in interviews.
- Self-concept:** how a person perceives self physically, socially, and psychologically.
- Self-disclosure:** the willingness and ability to disclose information pertaining to oneself.
- Self-esteem:** positive and negative feelings a person has of self.
- Self-evident truth:** a claim that a question or issue is not arguable because it is settled by rule or fact.
- Self-fulfilling prophecy:** a prediction that comes true because a person expects or predicts it will be so.
- Self-identity:** how, what, and with whom people identify themselves.
- Self-persuasion:** a situation in which a persuader encourages a person to persuade self rather than being persuaded by another.
- Self-selection:** when respondents alone determine if they will be included in a survey sample.
- Seminar format:** an interview format in which one or more recruiters interview several applicants at the same time.
- Sequential phase model:** a counseling model that centers on four phases based on affective (emotional) and cognitive (thinking) functions.
- Sex:** the genders of interview parties.
- Shock-absorber phrases:** phrases that reduce the sting of critical questions.
- Shuffle strategy:** a question strategy that enables interviewers to avoid responses based on the order rather than the content of answer options.
- Silence:** the absence of vocal communication from one or both parties in an interview.
- Silent probe:** when an interviewer remains silent after an answer and may use nonverbal signals to encourage the respondent to continue answering.
- Similarity:** characteristics, experiences, interests, beliefs, attitudes, values, and expectations interview parties have in common.
- Situation:** a total interview context that includes events prior to and after, time, place, and surroundings.
- Situational schema:** a schema that includes all of the different types of interviews.
- Skip interval or random digit sample:** a sampling method in which every predetermined number on a list is selected, such as every 10th name in a directory.
- Skype:** a program that enables interviewers and interviewees to communicate instantly over the Internet by using a microphone and webcam.
- Slang:** unofficial jargon that groups use.
- Slogan or tabloid thinking:** a clever phrase that encapsulates a position, stand, or goal of a persuader.
- Social media:** blogs and Web sites such as My Space and Facebook that interviewers and interviewees use to interact socially with others.
- Sound-alikes:** words that sound alike but have different meanings.
- Space sequence:** an outline that arranges topics and subtopics according to spatial divisions such as left to right, north to south.
- Standard/learned principle:** principles people learn through life that automatically guide actions and decisions.
- STAR method:** when an applicant structures an answer in four parts by addressing the situation, the task, the action taken, and the results of this action.
- Status difference:** the difference in social or organizational hierarchy between interviewer and interviewee.
- Stealth marketing:** when a sales representative pretends to be a friendly, disinterested party rather than a sales representative.
- Strategic ambiguities:** the strategic use of words with multiple or vague meanings to avoid specific definitions or explanations.

Strategic answers: when interviewees answer questions to their advantage.

Stratified random sampling: a sampling method that selects the number of respondents according to their percentages in the target population.

Structure: a predetermined arrangement of parts or stages into a meaningful whole.

Supportive climate: a climate in which there is trust and respect between parties.

System: a degree of structure or organization that guides a planned interaction between two parties.

Table of random numbers: a sample of respondents selected by assigning each respondent a number and using a table of random numbers for picking a sample.

Talent or trait-based selection process: a recruiting interview in which all interviewer questions focus on specific talents or traits included in the applicant profile.

Talkative interviewee: an interviewee who gives overly long answers and talks too freely.

Task oriented: an interviewer who is more concerned with performing a task efficiently and effectively than in communicating effectively with an interviewee.

Team interview: when two to five persons representing an organization may interview an applicant at the same time.

Telephone interview: an interview that is conducted over the telephone rather than face-to-face.

Tell me everything question pitfall: an extremely open question with no restrictions or guidelines for the respondent.

Territorial markers: an imaginary bubble around us that we consider nearly as private as our body.

Territoriality: the physical and psychological space in which an interview takes place.

Test of job relatedness: effort to meet EEO laws by establishing legally defensible selection criteria, asking questions related to these criteria, asking the same questions of all applicants, being cautious when probing into answers, being cautious during informal chit-chat, focusing questions on what applicants can do, and steering applicants away from volunteering unlawful information.

The 360-degree approach: a performance review model that obtains as many views of a person's performance as possible from observers who interact with the person on a regular basis.

Thin entering wedge (domino effect or slippery slope) tactic: an argument that one decision, action, or law after another is leading inevitably toward some sort of danger.

Tight rater: an interviewer who believes that no one can perform at the necessary standards.

Time sequence: an outline that treats topics and subtopics in chronological order.

Too high, too low question pitfall: a question that asks for information that is beneath or above the interviewee's level of information or expertise.

Tongue-in-cheek test response: a pleasant, perhaps humorous response that sends a signal to a recruiter that he or she has asked an unlawful question.

Topical sequence: an outline sequence that follows the natural divisions of a topic or subtopic.

Traditional forms: standard types of interviews such as informational, survey, employment, performance review, counseling, and health care.

Traditional recruiter questions: common questions generations of recruiters have asked, such as where do you plan to be five years from now.

Transfer interviews: interviews designed to promote employees, to assign them to positions, or to move them from one position or location to another.

Transferring guilt: an effort to dodge an issue by turning the accuser, victim, or questioner into the guilty party.

Trial closing: the attempt to determine if an interviewee is ready to close an interview with an agreement of some sort.

Tunnel sequence: a series of similar questions that are either open or closed.

Tu quoque: an effort to dodge an issue or objection by revolving it upon the challenger or questioner.

Two parties: an interviewer and an interviewee party consisting of one or more persons with distinct roles and purposes such as getting and giving information, counseling and being counseled, persuading and being persuaded, recruiting and being recruited.

Undercover marketing: when a sales representative pretends to be a friendly, disinterested party rather than a sales representative. Also called stealth marketing.

Unintentional bipolar question pitfall: a question unintentionally designed to elicit a yes or no answer or a choice among two poles such as approve or disapprove when the interviewer desires a lengthy answer.

Unintentional leading question pitfall: a question unintentionally phrased to influence how an interviewee will answer a question.

Unipolar question: a question that has only one obvious or desired answer.

Universal performance interviewing model: a performance review that focuses on coaching by starting with positive behavior a manager wants the employee to maintain and then moving to behaviors that need to be corrected.

Unsanitized setting: a real-world interview setting with all of its problems, crises, interruptions, and unexpected happenings.

Upward communication: an interview in which a subordinate in an organizational hierarchy is attempting to interact as interviewer with a superior in the hierarchy.

Value judgments: each party must determine what is ethical according to personal and prevailing societal values in judging the degree of right and

wrong, goodness or badness in diverse situations and actions.

Values: fundamental beliefs about ideal states of existence and modes of behavior.

Verbal interactions: words (arbitrary connections of letters) that serve as symbols for people, places, things, events, beliefs, and feelings.

Videoconference: technology that enables interview parties to see and hear one another and to interact in real time.

Virtual interview: an electronic interview employed most often for practice and simulation.

Web survey: a survey that is conducted over the Internet rather than face-to-face or over the telephone.

Webinar: a presentation to an audience on the Web that may become an interview if it is a collaborative exchange between two parties who ask questions and provide answers to one another.

Yes (no) question pitfall: a question that has only one obvious answer.

Yes-but approach: an approach that begins with areas of agreement and approaches points of disagreement after goodwill and a supportive climate are established.

Yes-yes approach: the attempt to get another party in the habit of saying yes so agreements may continue.

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