

Interviews and Group Discussions

1. What are Interviews?

An interview is where the company is meeting the candidate for the first time. For an applicant, it's their first step into working society in seeing whether a company is right for them or not. For companies, it's an opportunity to gauge the applicants on whether or not the person would be right for the company. While the time is short, it's a crucial period of time for both parties to get to know each other.

2. Leading up to an interview (From registration until you leave the building)

① At Reception

You start being evaluated the moment you enter the building. At the reception, state your name, major, university, and that you are there for an interview. Speak clearly and show your eager attitude. However, also be mindful of your manners so you may leave a good impression.



② In the Waiting Area

While you wait, display your professionalism and avoid talking to others in a loud voice. Use the time to quietly go over your interview answers such as your reason for applying to a company, etc.

③ Entering the Interview Room

Knock on the door three times and enter quietly once you have heard a reply. Maintain a straight posture and once you enter the doorway, say 「失礼します」. Shut the door afterward and face the interviewers again to give a bow.

④ Introducing Yourself



Stand beside the chair (in Japan, the top senior authority sits furthest from the door, so you, as the youngest, need to sit closest to the door. If given the choice of where to sit, choose the seat closest to the door you entered) and greet the interviewers with a quick self-introduction (university, major, and name) and 「よろしくお願ひします」. If you are carrying a bag, place it beside the chair before introducing yourself.

⑤ Sitting Down

Wait until the interviewer asks you to take a seat with 「お掛けください」. Once you have been invited to sit, say 「失礼します」 before sitting. Maintain a straight posture and keep your hands on your knees. In Japanese society, males can sit with their legs slightly apart but females should sit with their knees together (?).



⑥ Leaving the Interview Room

After the interview is over, stand beside your chair and give your thanks with 「ありがとうございました」 and bow (remember to smile!). When you reach the door, face the interviewers again and say a final 「失礼します」 and bow before quietly leaving the room. You cannot relax just yet until you leave the building. As you leave, remember to thank the receptionist as well with 「ありがとうございました」.

3. What will I get asked during the interview?

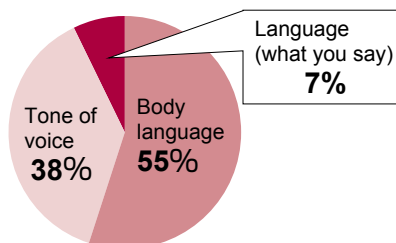
The two main things that a company wants to clarify during an interview are: ① why do you want to work for them and ② what kind of person you are.

In order to be able to answer these questions effectively, you need to have completed thorough research into the company / industry and also conducted a deep self-assessment. By doing both of these things, you should be able to confidently say what kind of person you are and exactly why you want to work at the company you are applying for.

What you will probably be asked at interviews

- | | |
|--|--|
| ◆ Why do you want to work for us? | ◆ 弊社を志望した理由は何ですか？
<small>へいしゃ しぼう りゆう なん</small> |
| ◆ Tell us about yourself / why should we hire you? | ◆ 自己PRをしてください。
<small>じこ</small> |
| ◆ What are your strengths and weaknesses? | ◆ あなたの長所と短所を教えてください。
<small>ちやうしょ たんしょ おし</small> |
| ◆ What are your biggest and most important experiences during university life? | ◆ あなたが大学時代にもっとも頑張ったことは何ですか？
<small>だいがくじだい がんば</small> |
| ◆ What is the biggest difficulty you've faced in your life so far? How did you overcome it and what did you learn from the experience? | ◆ 今までの人生の中で、一番辛かったことは何ですか？また、それをどうやって乗り越え、そこから何を学びましたか？
<small>いま じんせい いちばんつら</small> |
| ◆ Give an example of a current affairs that concerns you. | ◆ 最近気になる時事問題を挙げてください。
<small>さいきん き じ じ もんだい あ</small> |
| ◆ What do you hope to be 10 years from now and why? | ◆ 10年後のあなたを教えてください。
<small>ねんご おし</small> |
| ◆ What type of a university is APU? | ◆ APUとはどのような大学ですか？
<small>だいがく</small> |
| ◆ Why did you choose to study at APU? | ◆ なぜAPUを選んで入学したのですか？
<small>えら じやうがく</small> |

Overselling yourself or sucking up will not lead to good results. The key to success is being able to keep the conversation going and selling the “true you”.



Taken from Mehrabian's 7-38-55 Rule of Communication

* Even though you need to be yourself in selling the “true you,” you still have to make a good first impression in the time allotted. According to the Mehrabian Rule, 90% of a first impression is through tone of voice and body language. Your attitude and how you are dressed are therefore very important but is not the key to a successful interview. Based on how you answer the questions in conveying your communication skills, proactiveness, character, motivation, etc. will thus influence the outcome of the interview. Being able to balance all aspects when selling yourself will increase your chances of passing the interview.

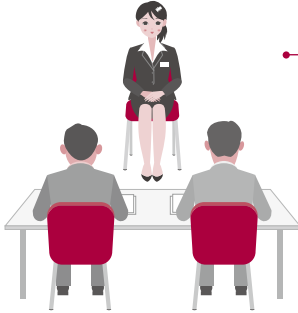
4. Interviewing Etiquette

1. Before the interview: Make sure to double-check where you are going and how you are getting there. Give yourself extra time to arrive before the start of the interview. Being late to an interview is unacceptable. If due to some unforeseen circumstances you are going to be late, you must contact the company to explain why you will be late and an estimated time of arrival. Even if you decide not to undergo the interview, you must contact the company beforehand. This is a matter of professionalism as failure to do so will leave a bad impression on the university, which would also affect other students and alumni affiliated with the university.
2. At the interview venue: The interview starts from the moment you enter the building and only ends once you leave the building. Your professional behavior will be constantly be checked by company staff so make sure to always be polite and mindful of your actions.
3. During the interview: There is a saying that you always start and end with a greeting. The first impression that you leave with the first greeting often decides the outcome of the interview. Being able to give a greeting with energy, giving clear answers while looking at the interviewer straight at the eye, etc. will thus leave a positive impression. Being nervous is a given, and you will make mistakes and stumble, so allowing yourself to calm down with a 「すみません」 to the interviewers and then focusing on conveying what you want to say will help you overcome.
4. After the interview: Do not lose focus and maintain your professionalism until you reach the nearest station. Do not go straight outside and light a cigarette or get on your phone to talk with friends as you may still be noticed by the company then as well.

Advice from APU alumni

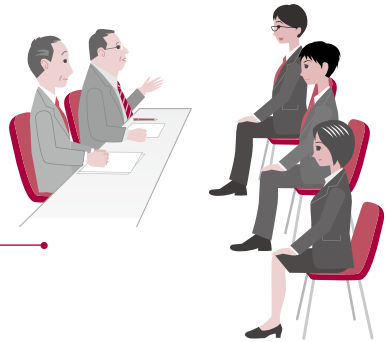
[Interviewing Tips]	[Preparing for an Interview]
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Don't ever be late. ● Remember that you are being judged from the moment you walk in the building to the moment you leave. Be polite and courteous at all times. ● Emphasize and expand on the keywords and main points you have made in your rirekisho and ES. ● Act naturally. Look at the other person in the eyes when talking. Smile. Be mindful of the volume of your voice. And most of all, be confident. ● Try not to talk too fast. ● Give clear responses to questions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Practice answers in front of someone to make sure you aren't talking for too long and that you are easy to understand. ● Read your rirekisho and Entry Sheets out loud over and over again. ● Start your answer by stating the take-aways. ● Study and practice your Japanese so you can use polite and honorific terms correctly and naturally.

5. Types of Interviews



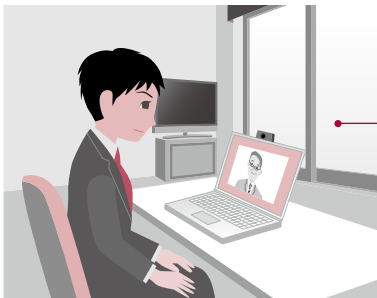
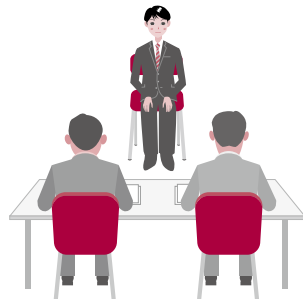
The most common interview used to learn more about an individual. Practice your answers beforehand in regards to your reasons for applying to a company, what your strengths/weaknesses are, etc., so you may answer with ease and confidence when it comes up in the interview itself.

A group of applicants is placed together and each take turns to answer the same questions. The purpose of this type of interview is to compare applicants against each other. Therefore, you do not receive much time to talk. It's ok if you have the same answer as your fellow applicant as long as you are able to still stand out as an individual. How you behave while others are talking is also important and judged! Therefore, stay focused even when others are speaking during the interview.



A group of applicants is assigned a set topic to discuss over an allotted period of time. You are judged on whether or not you are fit for the company based on how much you contribute to the group, your communication skills, your level of proactiveness, etc.

You give a presentation in front of interviewers based on a pre-set topic that you receive on the day of or prior. You are judged based on your problem analysis, logic, presentation skills, etc.



Similar to individual interviews but through video calls such as Skype. They eliminate transportation and accommodation costs in allowing the interviewer to see the applicant's face even if they are far away. As the location for the calls is not set, they usually occur at home. However, prior preparations are crucial in order for the interview to go smoothly, such as creating a quiet environment, checking your internet signal, etc.

[What are Group Discussions?]

Group discussion is a type of interview in which a group of students is set a topic to discuss and have to reach a conclusion within a set period of time. What companies look out for here is your “interpersonal skills” such as cooperativeness, leadership skills, communication abilities, as well as “individual skills” such as logical thinking and level of knowledge. Through observing your actions within a group, a company will pick out which applicants they would then want to work with.

(1) What are “interpersonal skills”?

- ◆ able to listen to and accept other’s opinions (particularly those that do not match your own)
 - ◆ refrain from making statements that are personal attacks on another person such as their character
 - ◆ able to take leadership in a situation when needed
 - ◆ able to build open communication, particularly with people that you are meeting for the first time
 - ◆ able to use proper honorific language
- (these skills come into play in your everyday life, such as when you are interacting with friends, family, classmates, professors, coworkers/customers at your part-time job/internships, etc.)

(2) What are “personal skills”?

- ◆ knowledgeable about general economics and business management
 - ◆ able to apply your university studies in real-life situations
 - ◆ can bring your individual ideas to any situation
 - ◆ able to structure your thoughts and arguments logically
 - ◆ able to understand and accommodate between differing opinions
 - ◆ able to identify challenges/issues and problem-solve
- (these skills are developed from thinking critically on the information you receive such as through books, news, magazines, etc. Always question and strive to learn more!)

Advice from APU alumni

[Group Discussion Advice]

- Make sure the ‘objective’ of the discussion is clear.
- Figure out your ‘role’ in the group and be flexible.
- Listen carefully to what others say, respond, and clearly state your own thoughts and ideas.
- Speak in a cheerful and polite manner.
- Pay attention to people in the group that aren’t saying much. Try to include them in the discussion.
- Share your knowledge with the entire group.
- Each group discussion is a once in a lifetime experience. Try to enjoy them.
- Try not to make yourself stand out for the wrong reasons.
- Don’t overdo it. Be yourself.
- Remember the importance of teamwork.
- Actively participate in the discussion.
- Make sure a conclusion is given within the allotted time frame.
- Try to arrive at a conclusion that the whole group is in agreement with.
- The small talk and chatter before the discussion starts is also important. Try to break the ice before discussion begins.

[Skype Interviews]

There are an increasing number of companies using Skype to conduct interviews. Skype interviews connect companies with applicants in distant locations and save on both travel time and money. However, Skype interviews often don’t specify a set location, and in many instances they are conducted from the applicant’s home. If you are faced with a Skype interview, make sure you take into account the following points.

Attire	Despite it being at home, it is still an interview. Take care of your appearance and dress in formal business attire.
Surroundings	Look around to see what will be visible on the camera. A messy room or strange posters on the wall will not make a good impression! Clean up well before the interview.
Lighting	If the room is too dark, the interviewer won’t be able to see your face properly. Make sure there is enough light and check with your camera before the interview is set to start.
Microphone / background sound	Check the volume level of the microphone and make sure there is no background noise. If there is noise interference, you will need to do some sound-proofing or change locations. If you have family or other people in the house, explain to them in advance that you having a Skype interview and ask that they be quiet during that time.
Camera / line of vision	Check the camera to make sure your face is clearly visible. Try not to look at the computer screen itself. Looking down at the screen and not at the camera (the interviewer’s line of vision), won’t give a good impression.
Mobile phone	Make sure you turn off your mobile phone before the interview starts. Even though you are at home, don’t get too relaxed!

- ※ If you use your computer for chat or messaging, make sure you turn notifications off before the interview.
- ※ If you can, we recommend having a practice run on Skype with a friend.