

**SHRI BANKATSWAMI MAHA VIDYALAYA,  
BEED**

**REMEDIAL COACHING CLASSES  
FOR SC/ST/OBC**

*&*

**MINORITY STUDENTS**

*Reference Study material for the Students*

*Subject: ENGLISH*

# Soft Skills

The term 'soft skills' refers to a four of skills and personal qualities that present-day employers look for and value in their employees. Soft skills relate to communication skills, both spoken and written, positive personality traits, social skills, personal attitudes, etc. In this sense, soft skills complement hard skills, which have to do the technical requirements of a job. Hence, you may have the right professional qualifications, be academically brilliant and perhaps even have the required work experience, but you will be successful in an organization only if you know, for example, how to work as part of a team or how to gear along with both your senior and junior colleagues. In other words, soft skills are all about how you deal with people. They are very important in the present-day professional context that requires constant interaction and communication. Thus, it is not surprising that very often, an interviewer talking to two different candidates with equally impressive academic records, decides in favour of the one who seems relaxed, open, friendly and well-adjusted. Of course, a neat and pleasing personal appearance also does make a positive impression in such situations.

While soft skills are acquired early in life and depend to a great extent on the environment in which you were brought up, they can be consciously learnt. The process could begin either by asking someone who knows you closely to decide whether you possess the soft skills concerned or through doing an honest self-appraisal. You can begin by looking at some of the soft skills recommended by behavioural training experts. See if you have most of these, and if you do not, try to develop them in the course of your work and interaction with others.

One of the most important soft skills that employers look for is communication skills, or proficiency in the use of language. This means

the ability to read, write and speak English (not necessarily the British standard variety) well enough to make communication possible. It is, however, not enough to know the mechanics of English-correct pronunciation, the right words and appropriate structures. You must also know, for example, when to use standard forms or colloquial expressions, how to use language in formal and informal situations and what tone to adopt in different situations. Oral communication skills include presentation, public speaking and telephone skills while written forms that you will need to master are reports, official letters and summaries. Computer skills are also a part of soft skills. The importance of being able to use basic word processing and presentation software as well as the Internet to get information within a short time and to send emails is a well-accepted fact today.

Listening skills come next in the list of soft skills. A good communicator, besides being a skilled speaker, needs to be a keen and interested listener. Most people fail to communicate because they do not listen to the views of others.

In order to win the respect and confidence of your employers and colleagues, it is important to develop the right work ethic. This involves the attitude or belief that any work that you undertake must be done with sincerity, diligence and a sense of commitment. There must be a strong desire to achieve excellence, build trust and develop the abilities of honesty and dependability. People who admit their mistakes and keep their promises are usually liked by those they work with.

Having a positive attitude towards your work and your colleagues is a sure way of finding professional satisfaction and happiness. It is therefore essential to develop a cheerful, optimistic, open and understanding attitude towards people, situations and your responsibilities at your workplace.

Self-confidence is another valuable quality. You must learn to believe in yourself, and understand your talents as well as your limitations so that you can judge for yourself what tasks you can accept and what you need to say 'no' to. Self-confidence also consists in not shying away from asking questions when you are not clear about something, the willingness to learn from your mistakes and the ability to take criticism in the right spirit, without feeling humiliated or hurt.

It is well known that courtesy and good interpersonal skills contribute as greatly to a person's success at his or her work-place as they do in the sphere of social interaction. Being polite to everybody at work - senior as well as junior colleagues, clients or visitors-is closely linked to your success at work. Courtesy consists not only in the habitual use of polite expressions such as 'please', 'thank you' and 'excuse me' but also the use of appropriate body language to reinforce verbal communication. For example, the words 'Thank you' said with a smile and in a warm tone has a different effect from being said in a cold or mechanical manner. Courtesy also means respecting other people and their opinions, and giving them their due worth.

Most of the work in any organization does not depend on one person alone, and so a soft skill of great importance is the capability for team work. This refers to the ability to see yourself as a member of group, with shared aims and responsibilities. It involves sharing your views and ideas with others in your team and discussing work with an aim to arrive at the best possible solutions, helping others do their work and also asking for help if you need it. Most importantly, in order to function effectively as a member of a team, you must learn to share praise as well as blame with others working with you.

Success at work is often closely linked to negotiation skills that you possess. While interacting with colleagues as well as with clients and outsiders

in an organisation, it becomes necessary to make people agree with your suggestions. Achieving this calls for the soft skills of discussing different alternatives as well as persuading and influencing others. This can best be done by learning to use the language best suited to perform communicative functions, such as expressing disagreement politely and persuading and steering people towards decisions that you want them to take. For example, instead of expressing your opinion about a suggestion made by a colleague with a blunt ‘You are wrong. We should...’, you could soften your disagreement by saying, ‘Don’t you think it would be better if we...’ The use of appropriate body language and tone is also a part of the skill of negotiating.

Self-discipline is just as important at work as it is in your personal life. Undoubtedly, the most effective form of discipline is that which comes from within you. Thus, it will help to make work a pleasure if you set and keep your own strict standards in matters of punctuality, quality of work and loyalty to your employers. Together with this, it is necessary for a person to be self-motivated at work. This is a trait that makes you do things without anybody else having to remind you or compel you to do them.

It is not always possible to have the same conditions for work environments and you will hence need to be adaptable. You will often be required to adjust to new situations and at such times must learn how best you can deal with them, sometimes using new methods that you think might work. A related quality that most employers value in the people who work for them is the ability to conform. The ability to accept and adopt unwritten norms of dress, speech and behavior at your workplace is one of the skills that will help you succeed there.

Remember that you can find ways of conforming to such codes without losing your individuality.

The ability to conform, however, needs to be balanced in a person by a right degree of assertiveness. This means that you must know how to stand up for your rights and state firmly what you believe in without being either passive or aggressive.

Everyone understands the significance of leadership qualities among soft skills. They involve the ability to take the initiative, to motivate and lead by example, to use reason rather than emotion to resolve conflicts, to take blame when things go wrong, to handle emergencies and unforeseen situations, and to display good organisation skills at work.

A prerequisite for doing well in your area of work is a desire for constant learning and self-improvement. You must remain alert and always ready to learn something new. Creativity is also a highly valued skill, and it will help you come up with innovative ideas and novel solutions.

Managing time contributes in no small measure to success at work. Learning to use your time wisely will help you work faster and better. It involves prioritising tasks to be completed in a day, delegating work and organizing work practices better. Managing your time well will help you stay on schedule and meet deadlines.

Unnecessary stress and anxiety will only have a negative effect on your work, and so it is important that you learn how to manage it. You can do this by consciously trying to analyse the reasons for your feeling stressed and also through careful time management and by making sure that you have a healthy diet, exercise and enough time to relax.

The ability to respond positively to feedback on your work, without either getting defensive without reason or accepting unfair criticism meekly, is a soft

skill that will help you make a place for yourself in any organisation. Similarly, when reviewing the work of others, it is important to be fair and objective, giving praise where it is due and expressing shortcomings clearly but without being offensive or hurtful.

Finally, to add one more to those outlined above, a much sought- after soft skill consists in multitasking. This ability will help you handle several tasks together at one time and also soft skills that contribute to the growth of people at work, which have not been described here, but reading this could help you make a beginning.

# Principles of Good Writing

To write well, you have to be able to write clearly and logically, and you cannot do this unless you can think clearly and logically too. If you cannot do this yet, you should train yourself to do it by taking particular problems and following them through, point by point, to a solution, without leaving anything out and without avoiding any difficulties that you meet.

At first, you may find clear, step-by-step thought very difficult. You may find that your mind continually wanders. But practice will improve your ability to think clearly and logically.

In order to increase your vocabulary and to improve your powers of expression, you should read widely and carefully, and keep a notebook in which to write down words and expressions that particularly strike you. Use a good dictionary to help you with the exact meanings and uses of words.

Always remember that regular and frequent practice is essential if you are to learn to write well. You learn to write by writing. It is no good waiting until you have an inspiration before you write. Even with the most famous writers, inspiration is rare. Writing is 99 per cent hard work and 1 per cent inspiration; so the sooner you get into the habit of disciplining yourself to write, the better.

If you keep your eyes and ears open, you will find plenty of things to write about around you. Often a little piece of conversation heard in the street can start you thinking along interesting new lines. Imagine that you are a stranger who is not familiar with the things that you see around you, and start from there.

Read the newspaper carefully. Every day there are examples of human joy and human tragedy in it which can give you ideas for articles, essays or short stories.



Keep a notebook in which to put down things that you notice, or ideas that come to you when you are out walking, when you are reading a book or a magazine, or at any other time. Some people get idea in the bath, or when they wake up during the night. Unless they write these ideas down at once, they often forget them.

Try to develop a warm, human understanding of people, their problems, their joys and their sorrows, so that you are genuinely interested in everyone you meet and every incident you see. You will then find material for your work as a writer where before you could perhaps see nothing of interest.

To be a successful writer, you must write interestingly; but different kinds of people have different interests, and it is most unlikely that you will be able to appeal to all of them. You therefore have to know exactly what type of reader you are writing for, and exactly what kinds of things interest such a reader.

By carefully reading magazines which are written for particular kinds of readers (e.g. women's magazines, magazines for teenagers, magazines for sports lovers etc.), you can find out the things that interest particular types of readers.

Most people are interested in the present. Even when they read about the past or the future, it is the latter's connections with, or relevance to, the present that particularly interests them. You should therefore choose subjects of topical interest- the latest fashions in some particular field, problems which worry people nowadays, and so on. You should write about Christmas when people are making preparations for this festival, and about summer holidays when the summer is approaching.

As much as possible, choose subjects of which you have personal experience. You will be able to write on these much more convincingly and, with greater authority than on subjects about which you have only second-hand information.

Presentation is of very great importance in good writing. Your opening paragraph should arrest the reader's attention and show him what you are writing about and why. If you are going to give the reader some information, tell him what subject you are going to deal with. If you are going to argue in support of a particular point of view, say what this point of view is. There is no harm in startling the reader in this first paragraph by putting forward a new and apparently paradoxical point of view, provided you have convincing arguments to support it in the rest of what you write.

The main body of your piece of writing should collect together and present the ideas promised in the first paragraph, or give good arguments to support the view put forward there. You should come to the point at once, say what you promised to say, avoiding irrelevant material, and then finish.

Your last paragraph or sentence should bring what you have written to a neat, satisfying end, leaving the reader with a clear idea of what you have been saying.

To write interestingly, you must yourself be intensely interested in what you are writing, and you must convey this feeling of eagerness to your readers. You must also believe intensely in what you are writing, and convince your readers of your honesty. You cannot arouse their interest and sympathy unless they feel that you yourself are interested, and that you feel strongly about what you are saying.

Do not, however, force upon the reader those of your own private problems which few, if any, other people share. People are very interested in problems which they too face, or which they may easily have to face in the near future, but they do not want to read the personal complaining and protests of someone whom they consider a crank, or whom they suspect of being mentally unbalanced.

Do not strive to create an impression. Forget about yourself, think only of the reader, and write naturally, avoiding self-consciousness. If you have something interesting to write about and can express it clearly, simply and with the human touch, it is sure to appeal to some classes of readers. But if you deliberately try to copy a style which is not your own, this will quickly become obvious to the reader, he will feel that you are not sincere, and he will not go on reading what you have written. As you read more and more works written in a particular style, your own will gradually change; but this will be a natural process, and your new style will be yours, because it comes up from your unconscious, unlike a style which you are deliberately copying.

This does not mean that you should not cultivate vivid expression. If you train yourself to see and hear things keenly and responsively, as an artist or a musician does, you will be able to describe them vividly yet without artificiality.

It is best to write simply and in conversational tone. Clean, plain English is favoured these days, and an elaborate, decorated style is quite out of date. Avoid jargon (e.g. your letter to hand meaning ‘with reference to the letter which I have received from you’) and officialisms (e.g. Adam’s ale for ‘water’ and do one’s level best for ‘do the best one can’), rhetorical flourishes (e.g. This is a subject of great importance to many people nowadays, and therefore one which I feel I should discuss seriously and honestly. The reader knows whether he thinks it important or not; and he certainly does not need to be told that, if it is of great importance, it deserves to be discussed seriously and honestly), empty verbiage (e.g. I feel obliged to add that, doubtless, many people appreciate that it is a matter of the greatest importance that information about possible case of cruelty to children should be passed on to the appropriate authorities immediately, in which the first 20 words are empty verbiage) and

circumlocutions (e.g. I will cause investigations to be made with a view to ascertaining the information, instead of 'I will find out').

Prefer the concrete to the abstract word whenever possible; be definite, call a spade a spade, and avoid euphemisms. In Hitler's Germany, for example, the expression special treatment was used as a euphemism for torture and murder of the most savage kinds.

Avoid stating the obvious: e.g. your readers do not want to be told that airplanes sometimes crash, or that children learn from their parents as well as from their teachers.

Use the same style throughout whatever you are writing. If you are writing formally, do not introduce slang expressions; and if you are writing in a conversational style, do not introduce literary or learned expressions. A mixture of style, such as the following, is absurd: 'In the absence, on home leave, of my boss, your application for sympathetic consideration of your claim to a pension has been pushed on to me. I have had no alternative but to give it the thumbs down, owing to the fact that your old man had ceased to be in the service of the company when he kicked the bucket.'

If, while you are writing, you cannot think of the right word at once, it is a good idea to put in another, or to leave a blank, so as not to interrupt your flow of thought. Then, when you have finished, you can go back and find exactly the right word for what you were trying to say.

In any case, read your work over critically after you have finished it, replacing weak, vague, inexact words by others which say just what you mean.

# Interview and Interviewing Skills

A job or an academic interview, as you know, is a formal meeting at which people are asked questions by one or a panel of interviewers to find out if they are suitable for a job or a course of study. Job interviews usually follow an application being sent by a candidate, in response to an advertisement or otherwise. Interviews for jobs could be walk-in, which means that the candidate, following instructions in an advertisement, goes directly with all relevant documents, such as a CV, certificates and testimonials to the place where an interview is conducted-sometimes after a preliminary screening over the telephone.

A good academic background is undoubtedly the most important factor in your being able to find a job of your choice or think furthering your educational goals. It is, however, just as important that you learn how to face an interview with ease and self-confidence. This is because it is at the interview that the prospective employer(s), for example, will be taking a final decision on selecting only some of the candidates from among the many with apparently the same degree of qualifications and capability. It is critical therefore that you must not only perform well with regard to your subject knowledge, but also that you conduct yourself appropriately and leave a positive impression on the interviewers. Remember that interviews are not only a test of your subject knowledge but are also a means for the people on the other side of the table to find out whether you have the qualities and attitudes they are looking for.

This section has been included in your textbook in order to help you perform well at interviews, and it suggests some useful techniques you can use to handle an interview. Also included are guidelines and tips for prospective interviewers to help them make the experience pleasant for the person being interviewed. Additionally, these will help the interviewers make the right choice in terms of their requirements.

Interviews have an internal structure that consists of a beginning, a middle and an end. The first part relates to preliminaries, such as greetings,

introduction and opening remarks of a general nature. The middle part involves the real exchange of questions and answers that will allow the people conducting the interview to assess the candidate. The concluding part consists of remarks that signal the end of the interviews, clarifications the interviewee may want to ask for, expression of thanks and leave-taking.

### **Preparing for an interview**

An interview calls for the same degree of planning and preparation that you will need for an examination. Some points you must bear in mind, for the days preceding the interview and for the day itself, are as follows:

- \* Brush up on the subject or area related to the interview and update yourself on recent developments. It also helps to get some information on the organisation and its activities/ products.
- \* Prepare answers to some questions you think the interviewers will ask. Some of these could be:
  - Tell us a little about yourself.
  - Why do you want to be with us?
  - Could you tell us why you want to change your job?
  - What are your strengths and weaknesses?
  - Would you be willing to travel?
  - How do you expect to contribute to the field/ institution?
- \* Arrange the papers and certificates that you may be asked to produce neatly in a folder. Check the interview call letter sent to you to see if there is anything you have missed.
- \* Wear something that is comfortable as well as appropriate for the occasion.
- \* Be comfortable early as this will give you time to familiarise yourself with your surroundings and to relax.
- \* Think positive, pleasant thoughts and try to regulate your breathing to remain calm.

## **Facing an interview: techniques**

- \* Wait for your name to be announced, and knock or seek permission before you enter.
- \* Greet the people in the room formally, but in a pleasant manner.
- \* Do not sit down until you are asked to.
- \* Be conscious about making eye contact with the person speaking to you and of maintaining a proper and relaxed body posture and a steady tone of voice, which should not be either too loud or too soft.
- \* Remember not to interrupt the interviewer and allow him/ her to finish speaking before you answer a question or react to a statement or opinion.
- \* Listen carefully to the interviewer's questions and comments and speak clearly and at a moderate pace to avoid having any of them repeat themselves.
- \* Do not ask questions to impress, but only if they happen to be genuine, intelligent queries.
- \* Avoid repeating yourself, long silences, fillers, such as 'hmm...' 'er....', 'you know.....', and 'okay'.
- \* Avoid answering questions with just 'Yes' or 'No'. Even if the questions are actually yes-no questions, the interviewer will find it more satisfying if you add to or explain your reply briefly. Thus, in reply to 'Is your mother tongue Bengali ... ?', you could say, 'No, it's Punjabi. But I can speak Bengali fluently.'
- \* Do not feel embarrassed to say that you do not know the answer to a question. Use expressions such as 'I am afraid I don't know...' and 'I am sorry, but I am not really certain...'
- \* In case you do not hear a question you are asked or if you do not understand it, you could politely ask for it to be repeated or explained. For example:
  - I am sorry, but could you repeat the question, please.
  - I am afraid I'm not sure what you mean. Are you asking me if I.....?/Could you clarify the question, please.

- \* Express your opinions politely, not aggressively, using expressions such as ‘I think.....’, ‘I believe...’ and ‘In my opinion...’
- \* Do not get into arguments or speak negatively or criticise former teachers, colleagues or employers.
- \* Do not boast or display your knowledge, skills and experience, but if asked state your achievements simply and honestly.
- \* Wait for the interviewer to invite you to ask questions in case you have queries. In case this does not happen, wait until you sense that the interviewers are done before asking them politely if they could clarify something for you. Examples of the questions you may want to ask the interviewer are, ‘Could you tell me whether the position involves traveling, please’ and ‘could I know when I can expect to hear from you, please.’
- \* Wait for the interviewer to tell you that the interview has ended before you get up from your chair. Thank all the persons in the room before walking out of the door and closing it softly behind you.
- \* In case the interview is conducted over the telephone, most of the above points will still be relevant. In addition, be careful about regulating your voice, avoiding long silences and butting in before the interviewer has finished speaking. In fact, if the person at the other end of the line interrupts you, do not drown his or her voice by raising yours, but let the person speak. You can then continue with ‘As I was saying...’, etc.

### **Interviewing techniques**

The change from the situation when you were interviewed to that when you have to conduct one may not take very long, and it will therefore be useful to understand how to perform well as an interviewer in case you have to play the role. Further, the input will help you function well in situations when you may be called upon to interview an eminent person or a celebrity or someone closely connected to some important event or situation. The following tips are meant to help you conduct interviews- for jobs, for getting out details about the lives, experiences and work of famous people, such as sportspersons and actors.



- \* Prepare to conduct an interview by getting information on the candidate's educational as well as personal background, his/ her area of work, experience, etc.
- \* Be clear about the purpose for which the interview is conducted- to select a candidate for a position, to get expert opinion or to talk to a celebrity about his or her life and work.
- \* Always begin by greeting the interviewee politely and end the interview by thanking the person.
- \* Your tone and body language should be appropriate polite, friendly and interested, not critical, aggressive or intimidating.
- \* Use a variety of questions- yes-no as well as Q-word-to conduct an interview. Examples of the two kinds of questions are 'Are you willing to relocate to Nagpur?' and 'Where did you do your internship ?'.
- \* Another technique is to make a statement about some known aspect of the candidate's life an expert has been invited to share his/her views and knowledge, and follow this up with a question. For example:  
You were born into a family of poets and writers. What role did this play in your development as a sensitive and articulate human being ?
- \* While it is always important to be courteous, vary your approach slightly when conducting interviews of different kinds. Make an effort to put the interviewee at ease especially in a job interview. Interviews conducted to seek expert opinion are usually very formal while interviews with celebrities could sometimes be chatty and less formal.
- \* When interview dignitaries or persons in authority, it is appropriate to use less direct questions of the following kinds:  
If I may ask,....  
Could you now tell us about....., please.  
Would you mind telling the viewers...?  
If you don't mind, could you explain....., please.
- \* Except when you are conducting a radio or a television interview, it is useful to make quick, brief notes. This has to be done without disturbing the

interviewee or making him/her wait for the next question.

### Sample interviews

Read the sample interviews below and take turns to role-play them with a partner so that each of you gets a chance to play the interviewer and the interviewee.

- a. Candidate :- Can I come in, please, ma'am.  
Manager :- Yes, please come in, Good morning.  
Candidate :- Good morning, ma'am.  
Assistant manager :- Please sit down.  
Candidate :- Thank you, sir.  
Manager :- Could you begin by telling us something about yourself, please.  
Candidate :- Ma'am, I belong to West Bengal, but I grew up in Nanded, where my father worked until he retired. I am married and have a baby daughter, who is a year old.  
Assistant manager :- I assume you speak both Bengali and Marathi. Am I right?  
Candidate :- Yes, sir, absolutely. I also speak Hindi.  
Manager :- Why do you want to join our company?  
Candidate :- You're one of the leading publishers of law books in the country. With my background and work experience, I hope to be able to contribute to the company and also find here the opportunity to grow further.  
Manager :- Actually, the vacancy we have is for Lucknow. Would you be open to the idea of being based there?

- Candidate :- Yes, ma'ma. I'm willing to relocate from Mumbai to any part of the country.
- Assitant :- Could you tell us what kind of salary manager you expect, please.
- Candidate :- I'am earning Rs.22,000 net in my present job, sir. I think anything a little over that should be all right.
- Manager :- Well, thank you, Mr.Shravan Kumar. Will be getting back to you in a week's time.
- Candidate :- Thank you.
- b. Interviewer :- Ms Tara, congratulations on winning the Young Talent award for this year.
- Actor :- Thank you.
- Inerviewer :- I understand Shakti is your second film. What was the first ?
- Actor :- I started in the industry with a small role in the Hindi film Tamanna.
- Inerviewer :- How did you find the opportunity to join the industry ?
- Actor :- It all began with a play I did in my final year at college. The director of Tamanna, Mr. Raj Shankar, happened to see me perform and asked me if I would be interested in acting in films.
- Inerviewer :- You did the role of a dancer in Shakti. Have you had training in classical dance ?
- Actor :- Yes. I learnt Bharatanatyam for twelve years.

Inerviewer :- That explains your grace and expertise in the dance sequences. Would you like to tell your fans about where you hope to go from here?

Actor :- I've just entered the film industry. I plan to work hard and perform a variety of roles. I also look forward to working with some of the most gifted artistes and directors in the country.

Inerviewer :- How important are fame and money to you as an actor ?

Actor :- They do have their place, I guess, as in other professions. But what I rate higher than everything else is the satisfaction of knowing that I've given my work and the people who believe in me the best of myself.

Inerviewer :- That's a beautiful thought to end with. Thank you, Ms Tara. You have our best wishes for a brilliant and fulfilling career in the industry.

Actor :- Thank you.

# Nonverbal Communication

Communication, or the act of conveying our thoughts to others, is not always spoken or written. There is a third kind of communication possible, nonverbal, which sometimes works alone and at other times accompanies verbal communication, particularly spoken, to support or supplement it. Nonverbal communication is the process of sending messages or expressing emotions or attitudes without using words and sentences. This form of communication consists of our appearance, body language and how we use our eyes and our voice. It differs sometimes from one culture to another, but it is largely universal in nature.

There are three main kinds of nonverbal communication that you should give attention to when speaking.

## **Body language**

Body language refers to the way we communicate through our facial expressions, gestures and movements, posture and eye contact. People you are speaking to- at an interview, meeting or presentation- will note your facial expressions and form their opinions about you. Look relaxed, calm and pleasant because this makes most people respond favorably to you and listen to what you are saying. If you are not careful, your facial expressions will show that you are tense, irritated or bored.

A gesture (pronounced/jes-cha/) is a movement of the hands, arms, head, etc., that expresses some meaning: e.g. nodding the head conveys agreement, shaking it disagreement, shrugging (or raising your shoulders and then lowering them) a lack of knowledge or interest. Fiddling with objects you are holding in your hands, for example pens or slides, distracts the audience and will take their

attention away from what you are saying. Similarly, standing with your arms folded in front of your body will tell the people you are talking to that you are nervous or not confident about yourself.

Moving about too much is also something that disturbs people who you are talking to. If you are sitting down, for example when you are being interviewed or when you are making a very informal laptop presentation before a small group of colleagues you work with closely, do not fidget (or make continuous small movements, pronounced /fij-it) in your chair, but sit back or lean forward slightly and move only as much as you would normally. Avoid sitting with crossed legs, which will send out negative signal; keep legs relaxed and a little apart, feet pointing towards the people you are talking to. Keep your hands loosely on your lap, on the armrests or by the equipment you are using. If you are making a presentation, avoid walking up and down because this will distract the audience. It is best to stand in one place except when you need to walk to the flip chart or write something on the whiteboard. When you are speaking, leave your hands by your sides, hold them lightly in front of you or rest one hand on the lectern, the projector by your side or do all these to avoid monotony for the audience.

Work continuously towards developing good posture (or the way in which you usually hold your back, neck and shoulders, or how you stand or sit, pronounced /pos-cha/) because it is not something that you can correct on the day of your interview, meeting or talk. Always sit and stand straight, with the head held high and the shoulders held back in line with your ears. However, take care that you hold yourself in a relaxed way so that you do not appear stiff, uncomfortable or tense.

You also need to maintain eye contact with the people who are listening to you, which means that you should look at your audience when speaking. Looking down continuously at your hands or at your script or notes will not

help you build a rapport (an ability to communicate well with others, pronounced / rapo/) with your audience. Unless you are answering someone's question, move your eyes continuously from one side of the audience to the other and from the front to the back. Avoiding eye contact or rubbing your eyes or closing them while speaking may all be seen as signs of your nervousness and lack of confidence and sincerity.

### **Voice**

Voice is also a non-verbal cue that affects communication. Learn to use your voice well if you want to be a good speaker. Some of the aspects that you must specially take care of when practicing your speaking skills are: loudness, clarity, speed, intonation, tone and pitch. By varying the pitch (level of voice), tone (a quality in the speaker's voice that tells the listener about his/her feelings and attitudes for example, satisfaction) or loudness of your voice, you can express range of emotions and attitudes.

- Speak clearly so that you can be understood. People listening to you will find it difficult to understand you if you don't pronounce words clearly.
- When making a presentation or a speech before a group of people, be louder than you would in a one-to-one conversation. If your talk is in a big room and if there is no microphone, you must project, or throw, your voice so that it reaches every part of the room.
- Speak at a moderate speed, neither too slow nor too fast; the audience will understand you and will not get bored.
- Use the right intonation patterns (sound changes produced by the rise and fall of the voice to show that you are asking a question, stating a fact, etc). Many educated English speakers in India and other South Asian countries do not do this because intonation is not a feature of languages in the region. However, learn and practice at least the two basic patterns so that you will be better understood if your audience includes people from

non-South Asian countries. These patterns are as follows. The voice falls from a high to a low level towards the end of a statement (e.g. I'm giving a presentation today?). The voice rises from a low to a high level in questions that need a yes-no answer (e.g. Are you giving a presentation today?).

- Find out how to stress (or say a syllable or a word with force) the words you will be using in your presentation or speech and practice saying them. Again, stressing words incorrectly may not really affect understanding among people of the region, whose languages stress all the syllables in a word uniformly. But there are some words in English that differ only in how they are stressed: for example, 'protest (noun) and pro.' test (verb). You must, however, learn to use stress in sentences to emphasise what you want:

The company is confident about the product. (even if the buyers are not)  
The company is confident about the product. (not the sales, perhaps)

- Maintain a neutral, friendly tone even when you are disagreeing with someone or being criticised.
- Pause where you think it is necessary for you to give the audience time to consider a point you made or to emphasise an important one.
- Sometimes even silence can be used effectively to convey a message for example, when the audience is making a lot of noise, and you want them to realise it and stop.

### **Appearance**

Finally, how we look tells the people we are speaking to a lot about our backgrounds and attitudes, particularly if they are people who do not know us. Our style of dressing, which consists of choice of cloths, colour and hairstyle, is a means of nonverbal communication that contributes in a small but important way to our success as communicators. This is because personal appearance



influences the attitudes and opinions of our audience towards us and causes them to form impressions about our capability. Further, knowing that we look neat and well dressed gives us a lot of self-confidence when we face an audience, however small.

Here are some general tips on personal appearance. You may find these useful, but remember that dressing appropriately an interview, a meeting, a presentation or simply for work or for social occasions is really a matter of using your common sense and judgement.

- \* Dress in clean, ironed clothes that are neither very formal (e.g.a three-piece suit) nor casual (e.g. jeans or T-shirt). To be sure that you are well dressed, do not wear clothes not appropriate for work.
- \* Make make-up and strong perfumes is distracting, and more importantly, inappropriate for work situations.