

**CRACKING
THE
MBA
ADMISSIONS
INTERVIEW AND GD**

The 10-KMAT Approach

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DHRUV NATH



Tata McGraw Hill Education Private Limited

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Tata McGraw Hill

Published by the Tata McGraw Hill Education Private Limited,
7 West Patel Nagar, New Delhi 110 008.

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This edition can be exported from India only by the publishers,
Tata McGraw Hill Education Private Limited.

ISBN (13): 978-0-07-015278-6

ISBN (10): 0-07-015278-0

Managing Director: *Ajay Shukla*

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Typeset at Le Studio Graphique, Guru Shivar, 12, Sector 14, Gurgaon 122 001, and
printed at Rashtriya Printers, M-135, Panchsheel Garden, Naveen Shahdara, Delhi 110 032

Cover Design: Kapil Gupta, Delhi

Cover Printer: Rashtriya Printers

RZLLCDDZRZQRB

Disclaimer: This book does not represent the admissions process followed by any particular B-school. It is based on the practices typically followed at several different B-schools in the country.

The views expressed by the author are personal.

Acknowledgements

*D*ear Reader,
Lots and lots of people have helped me in writing this book—and many of them don't even know it! Thanks are due to all of them. So, here goes ...

To our Director for being extremely supportive and encouraging, and for giving me the time and space to put this book together.

To my daughter Malvika, who has recently completed her MBA from a premier B-school. She has been a terrific help in putting this book together. Many of the ideas and thoughts in the book are based on her experiences in going through the admissions process. So, if this book helps you to get into a good B-school, you must thank her before you thank me!

To R Chandra Sekhar, Dipankar Das, Rita Sarkar and Sindhu Ullas, from Tata McGraw Hill Education for their support and understanding throughout the process, and for an extremely thorough and professional job in bringing out this book. A large part of the credit for this book must go to them and the rest of the team at Tata McGraw Hill.

To many, many colleagues at various B-schools across the country as well as abroad, with whom I have carried out endless debates—over endless cups of tea—on our experiences in the admissions process.

To my poor students, who were at the receiving end of my admission interviews. Hopefully, they have also learnt from the process.

To my parents, for supporting me in whatever I have done, always.

And finally, to my wife Rajni and my children, Malvika and Siddharth. When I left industry to join academics, I said to them, “Don’t worry, the money will be a lot less, but I will have much more time for all of you. They now turn around and ask me, “You made two commitments. We are happy that you’ve met one of them. We do have much less money now. But, what about the other one—where is the time you had promised?”

To my wife and children, I must say, “This book—along with several others that I have written—is where the time has gone!”

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Introduction



Dear Future Manager,
So you wish to pursue your MBA? From a great B-school? Well, then this book is for you.

Now, I assume that you want to maximise what you can get from this book. So, don't just rush through and read all the chapters right away. You must first understand what the book is trying to convey and how it can help you. What it covers, and equally important, what it doesn't. Most important, how you can get the best out of it. And for all this, start right here, in this very chapter.

How I Wrote This Book

For many years now, I have been a professor of management. In the process, I have met lots of bright young men and women who are keen to get admission into a good B-school. I also have lots of friends and colleagues who are teaching in different B-schools across the country. These friends have also met hundreds, perhaps thousands of similar youngsters who are keen to get admission into a B-school. And all of us have come to a very important conclusion: ***Most students are thoroughly unprepared for the Interview and Group Discussion (GD) rounds of the Admissions Process.***

In fact, students usually make major mistakes in these rounds. No, let me correct that statement—they make blunders. Real big ones. These students spend month after month preparing for their CAT, XAT, NMAT, or any of the dozen entrance exams

they take. But these very students are blissfully unaware of what is expected of them in the GD and interview.

Let me be a bit more specific. There are two basic questions to which most students have no answers. Namely:

1. What do B-schools, and therefore interview panels, look for in a prospective student?
2. Therefore, what do students need to do to improve their chances of getting selected?

And there is another, third question, which follows:

3. Is there a way in which a student can monitor his* own progress as he prepares for his interview and GD? And therefore, can he find out if he is actually improving? Better still, can he find out what specific areas he needs to focus on, and the actions he needs to take?

So, I started racking my brains to figure out whether there was a simple way to answer the above questions. And then one day, it hit me. Of course, there was a way out. *And that was by using the Ten KMATs!*

The Ten KMATs

So, what are the Ten KMATs? Well, as you would imagine, successful managers have certain common traits, such as leadership, communication skills, and perseverance. Obviously, at the time of admissions, a B-school looks for candidates who possess the maximum possible number of these traits, so that they can be groomed into good, potentially successful managers.

And when would the B-schools look for these traits? During the interview and GD, of course!

* For simplicity, right through this book I have used the word “he” to mean “he/she”.

As you might imagine, there are a great many of these traits that a good manager is expected to possess. Obviously it is humanly impossible to try and build up all of them. Fortunately, however, there are a few key ones which most B-schools and, therefore, most interview panels look for. And I call these the *Ten Key Managerial Traits*, or simply the *Ten KMATs*. These are as follows:

1. Leadership
2. Teamwork
3. Subject Knowledge
4. General Awareness
5. Thinking Ability
6. Communication
7. Perseverance
8. Stress Management
9. Maturity
10. Goal Orientation

Note that I haven't included 'Confidence' as one of the Ten KMATs. The reason for that is obvious—if you possess the other KMATs, confidence comes automatically, doesn't it? So confidence is a consequence of the others!

Another question: Are there only ten such KMATs? Are these the only traits that B-schools look for in a candidate?

Of course not. You must remember that I cannot possibly limit the traits that a professor on an interview panel might look for—and therefore the questions he would ask. For example, someone might try and figure out how sensitive you are to people, in order to analyse how it would impact your relationship with your subordinates. Someone else might look at how disciplined you are. A third professor might evaluate your ability to sell to a potential customer. As you can see, these are all extremely valid and legitimate traits. However, I realise that it is physically impossible for you to prepare for

all possible eventualities and every possible question. I also realise that you are short of time, under a lot of pressure, and wish to attempt several things simultaneously—your college exams, CAT preparation, filling in all those interminable admission forms and, of course, preparing for your interviews. And therefore, rather than attempting to do everything, it is important for you to focus on a few critical things. So, I spoke to several professors across different B-schools, to try and see if there were some common traits that figured again and again in their questions. And that helped me narrow down the list of traits to ten.

These are the Ten KMATs that you just saw. And that's the answer to my first question: "What do B-schools, and therefore interview panels, look for in a prospective student?" ***They look for the Ten KMATs!***

The Ten KMATs help you to focus on a few critical things that most B-schools look for in a candidate.

Using the Ten KMATs, What Should You Do To Prepare?

Now for the next question: "What do students need to do to improve their chances of getting selected?"

It actually seems very easy, doesn't it? Now that you know the Ten KMATs that B-schools look for, just practice and build them up.

Simple, isn't it?

But how? It's very easy to say that you need to build maturity, communication skills, or teamwork. But are there some specific actions that you can take, which help you build up these Ten KMATs? In such a manner that the panel of professors across the table find you suitable?

Well, actually you can. You need to follow a clear three-step process, as follows:

1. Understand the common blunders made in interviews and GDs.
2. Analyse what went wrong in each case, and what you need to do about it.
3. Do it over and over again, so that you get lots of practice.

So, let's start with Step 1. How do we understand the common blunders that people make?

The best way is to actually go through live interviews and see yourself making these blunders. But that's obviously not feasible. So, the next best option is to watch someone else going through an interview and making the blunder. Or even read about it. And that's the approach we will follow here.

Each chapter will take you through one interview or one GD, where the candidate makes a blunder (one of the common ones that most candidates make).

Then we go through Step 2, where we will analyse what happened—what went wrong, why it went wrong, what else could have gone wrong, what should have gone right, etc. And at the end of the analysis, you would know what to do, so that the interview goes off well.

Finally, we have Step 3, where we simply do it.

And then we will move to the next chapter where we look at another GD or interview, and consequently another blunder. Simple, isn't it?

And that, my friend, is how this book is organised!

How Do You Monitor Your Progress?

Ah! That's a good question. When you prepare for your CAT, you would take several practice CATs (or mock CATs, or whatever your coaching institute calls them). In each of these practice CATs, you get to know your percentile score, which tells you

where you stand and whether or not you are improving. You also get to know which component of CAT you are weak in, and, therefore, where you need to focus.

Wouldn't it be great if you had a similar method of monitoring your progress for the interview and GD?

And now for the good news. You do have such a way. And it is provided by—you've guessed it—the Ten KMATs.

Look at Table A. You would notice that it lists all the Ten KMATs. Now, as you go through this book, I will ask you to take part in practice GDs and interviews, over and over again. After your first practice GD, rate yourself on a scale of 1 to 10 on each KMAT, and fill in the first column, which says Week 1. Total up these marks in the column for 'Week 1' and you have your KMAT score out of 100.

Fill in Table A every week, and check your KMAT Score. Use this to identify areas for improvement.

After a week, you come to Week 2. Hopefully, you would have had a lot more practice and there would be an improvement in at least one or two of your individual KMAT scores. Fill in the second column and you have your KMAT score for Week 2. At a glance you can tell whether or not you have improved. Most importantly, you can also tell which individual KMATs you have improved in, and which you haven't.

As you go through this book, you would learn more and more. More importantly, you would go through a lot of practice. As you do this, *keep monitoring your KMAT score*, rather like your mock CAT score. You can check and see if there are some individual KMATs in which you are not improving. These are the KMATs where you need further practice. Further, there might be some KMATs where your score is inherently low—say 0, 1 or 2. Once again, these are KMATs that you need to focus on, or else they can pull your overall score down.

Table A: Monitor Your Progress

[illegible]

And how do you do this? Well, as I have mentioned earlier, each chapter specifies the KMATs which are covered in that chapter. In fact, I have made it simpler for you. At the end of the book, I have given you a KMAT Index, which lists all KMATs, and for each of them, the chapters in which it is covered. So for any KMAT that you need to build up, you know which chapters you need to repeat and practice.

One more suggestion: It is a good idea to record your practice GDs and interviews. Listen to the recordings later, to see what you really did. And to give yourself individual KMAT scores. Better still, let your friends give you these individual KMAT scores—hopefully these would be unbiased!

What This Book Does Not Cover—And Why

So my friends, we have spent a lot of time figuring out what the book talks about and how to use it. But it is equally important to understand what the book does not cover—and why. So here goes....

First of all, remember that I am focusing on major blunders that students make. So I am not going to tell you to brush your hair. I assume you have the common sense to do that anyway. Similarly, I assume you have the sense to be neatly and reasonably formally dressed, with your pants nicely creased and shoes polished. Actually, I had thought of putting in all this. But then the book would have spanned a few volumes, as follows: Vol. 1: Hairstyles for B-school admissions; Vol. 2: Clothes for B-school admissions; Vol. 3: Shoes, watches and other accessories for B-school admissions, etc.

I'm sure you get the idea. This is common sense, and I assume you have it. So I won't talk about it!

I'm equally sure you would be punctual and don't rush into the room where the interview is being held, half an hour late, gasping for breath. And that you would not be aggressive with your professors. Once again, I won't talk about such issues.

Many books suggest that you understand the personality of the interviewer and tackle the interview accordingly. As you can imagine, there are several kinds of interviewers. For instance, the bulldozer who just mows you down with his fixed opinions and loud voice, the egoist whose trip in life is to prove that he is right and the miserable worm sitting across the table is wrong, the 'Mr fond-of-my-own-voice', the 'Mr fault-finder', etc. Such books tell you to figure out the kind of person you are facing and to tackle the questions accordingly. So, your responses to the egoist are expected to be different from those to the fault-finder.

My friend, I could have written one additional volume on the subject, but you must remember that learning this is very, very difficult. It probably assumes you are a trained psychologist. And therefore, I would much rather have you focus on the questions and answers, than spend all your energy trying to figure out whether the person across the table was an egoist, or simply spoke too much.

Also remember that this book is not a *kunji*. Now, in case you are not aware of this cute term I need to digress for a moment. If you've studied Sanskrit in school, I'm sure you have come across *kunjis*. These are books written for people who do not understand the subject. More important, for people who do not *want* to understand the subject but simply want to mug up lots of possible answers. So, a typical *kunji* would have a hundred different essays on various topics, in the hope that the essay that you are asked to write in the exam is on one of those topics.

And since you are smart, I'm sure you are getting the drift. I could have given you thousands of questions that interviewers can ask you. Or hundreds of possible topics for a GD, with ten points in favour of each topic, and ten points against it. And if you were to mug up all these topics and points, you would just sail through your interview and GD. Right?

Wrong! What if the professors on the panel gave you a completely different topic for the GD? And what if they had the audacity to ask you questions which were not included in this list? In any case, how can you possibly mug up the answers to ten thousand different questions? And why should you, anyway?

So this book is not a *kunji*. I cannot possibly give you all possible questions, cases, or topics. And you can't mug them up anyway. This book is about major traits that B-schools look for, and major blunders that most candidates make. And it is, therefore, focused on those few high priority issues that you need to keep in mind before walking into the next B-school.

Finally....

And now, a few final tips before you swing into action.

First of all, you must remember that there are no fixed rules in this game. I can give you all possible tips and guidelines on tackling interviews, but ultimately it is the interviewer's prerogative to ask you whatever he wants to. I can only give you guidelines. You have to prepare on the basis of these guidelines, but at the same time be prepared for the unexpected. And as I have mentioned again and again in this book, practice helps you to do so.

Secondly, be positive. Even if your college marks aren't good, you could still have a great chance—because academics is only a small part of the selection process. Even if your English is not what they speak at Oxford, don't worry—it's communication they are looking for and not a British accent. People who are positive perform better in whatever they do.

And with that my friend, let me wish you all the best. I hope I am able to help you—as I've helped several other young B-school aspirants who have come to me asking for advice. Do give me feedback on this book, at dhruvn55@hotmail.com or dhruvn55@gmail.com. And I do hope to see you as a CEO soon!

Let's Meet the Candidates



So now you have read the introductory chapter, where I've said that I would be taking you through several Group Discussions (GDs) and interviews. But before I do that, I must introduce you to the candidates who are participating in these GDs and interviews. These are three young friends who happen to live in Mumbai. But of course, they could easily have been living in Delhi, or Bangalore, or even Erode!

The first of our young friends is smart young Sivasubramaniam Rabindranath Yusuf M. CATwala. His friends call him Catty, which is what we will also call him. And oh, I almost forgot—formally he is known as Mr CATwala. Catty has done his BE (Hons.) in Electronics from one of the National Institutes of Technology. Which one, did you say? Well, it doesn't really matter, so we'll let that question pass....

Our second friend is Q. Ashok. Another smart young man, a B.Com (Hons.) from Bombay University and a whiz with numbers. His friends call him Quanti.

Then of course, we have the young lady in the group. Verunita Bose, who has done her BA (Hons.) in History from Sophia College. Verunita is considered to be a topper in all Humanities-oriented subjects, especially English. It was even rumored that she had topped the verbal section of CAT in her entire lane in Mulund (a colony in Mumbai, where she lives). But of course, this has never been verified. And given her strengths and interests, you can well imagine what her friends call her.

That's right—she is called Verbi.

And then we have another, not so young man. Guru, who is four years senior to the other three and has an MBA from one of the top B-schools in the country. He is now working with a multinational. I have tried to find out Guru's real name, but haven't been able to. Anyway, it doesn't really matter to us. But what does matter is that Guru is extremely smart, very knowledgeable, and our three young friends look up to him for advice.

By the way, all three friends have secured a decent CAT score and have, therefore, qualified for loads and loads of GDs and interviews. And believe it or not, they have all qualified for the same GDs and interviews. On the same day! Unfortunately, for some strange reason, none of them has had any success, at least in the first few B-schools. But every time they messed up an interview or a GD, they spoke to Guru, tried to figure out what went wrong, worked on their weaknesses, and tried all over again.

Now since you've bought this book, you are obviously interested in learning all about preparing for B-school interviews and GDs. And what better way to learn, than by looking at the experiences of Catty, Quanti, and Verbi? Along with Guru's expert advice, of course.

So, this book is about the experiences of these three friends, and their Guru. And how they learnt to crack B-school GDs and interviews. And, therefore made a start in the fascinating world of management. And....

But, hang on! I'm jumping the gun as usual. Why don't we start from the beginning?

Just turn the page and let's meet them—in their first ever GD!

Part I

The Group Discussion *(GD)*



Build up Your General Awareness



*KMATs Covered: General Awareness,
Thinking Ability*

The Group Discussion

Catty walked into the B-school with awe written all over his face. This was his first ever visit to a B-school. He had visited enough colleges, cricket grounds, movie halls, and even a circus—but this was the first B-school ever.

Suddenly, things which did not normally happen to him, started happening. His legs began to shake. His stomach felt as though he had swallowed a decent helping of glue, and that too of an unbranded and not very palatable variety. And worst of all, he had forgotten the name of his just-before-current girlfriend. Yes sir, Catty was very, very nervous.

Somehow, he managed to pull through the registration process and waited, fortified by endless cups of coffee, till his name was announced for the GD. In a daze, he walked into the room where the GD was to be held. And that's where he got his first shock.

There were two ogres sitting at the table at the end of the room.

Actually, they were two extremely pleasant professors. But, to Catty, they appeared remarkably like ogres who had just

been charged with the task of cutting him into small, succulent pieces, and finally eating him up.

There were a total of eight candidates in the room, and they all looked extremely smart and knowledgeable. One of the professors announced that the GD would last for 15 minutes. He added that the topic was, 'Is the global fuel shortage causing a food shortage?' Finally, he mentioned that the candidates had two minutes to prepare and jot down their thoughts, after which the GD would start.

Catty's heart sank. Global fuel shortage? He was vaguely aware of his father grumbling about rising petrol prices, but he had been too busy with the CAT to bother. And global food shortage? Every time he had passed the supermarket on his way home, he had seen shelves stocked with eatables of all varieties—and lots of people buying them. Where was the food shortage? In a daze, he waited for the GD to begin, hoping to get some ideas from what the others had to say.

And then the GD began. Fortunately, it was a group of young men and women with reasonable voices (I am referring to the volume of the voices). And they were willing to listen to each other. Catty realised with horror that they were well-informed. Phrases such as 'biofuel' and 'food grain getting converted to ethanol' were bandied around as easily as he spoke about Barista and Café Coffee Day. Desperately, Catty tried to intervene by saying, "Yes, biofuels like petroleum are a good idea. Saudi Arabia is the world leader in the area, and they have huge reserves of biofuels."

The discussion stopped for a moment, as the others tried to figure out what Catty had just said, and whether he was serious. But that was only momentary. And then they were off again, going into the government's policy of insisting on diesel blended with ethanol....

Since the time he had narrowly lost a three-legged race to a team of girls in Class III at the Annual Sports Day in school,

Catty had never been so disheartened. The rest of the GD just went by, and Catty could only wait for the end. The end came, as it was meant to, and all the youngsters including our friend Catty trooped out.

If you are an intelligent reader (which I'm sure you are), you would have guessed by now that this was the end of Catty's presence in this B-school. He wasn't short-listed for the interview, and was politely told that there were several candidates in the fray, and therefore several deserving ones got left out, so he should not worry, because there would be several opportunities in life, and anyway, every interview was a learning experience, so Catty should view it positively and learn from it, since....

"Don't worry, you'll make it somewhere," they told him cheerily. But it was anything but a cheery Catty who trudged out of the campus and morosely took an auto home.

The Analysis

That evening, Catty was sitting in his favorite Barista outlet, dolefully sipping a cup of coffee. Thanks to the day's events, the coffee tasted like liquid rubber. But Catty was past caring. Since he hadn't yet started drinking, coffee seemed to be the only way to drown his considerable sorrows.

He was just beginning to realize that his sorrows were unreasonably stubborn and refused to drown, when in walked his old friends Quanti and Verbi. Now, both Quanti and Verbi had been to the same B-school interview as Catty, but their GDs had been scheduled at a different time, so they had not met after the GD. Catty looked up, and noticed that both of them were looking as downcast as Catty himself.

"What happened?" Catty asked.

"I had a GD on the Indo-US nuclear deal", said Quanti.

“The IPL cricket tournament,” wailed Verbi. “It’s not fair. I have absolutely no interest in cricket. Now, if only they had asked me about Roger Federer...”

Surprisingly, even though all three friends had performed badly in their GDs, the mood lifted somewhat. Because each realized that there were others in the same, leaky boat. And the mood lifted even more when Guru walked in. Now why would that happen, you might ask. Well, it was simply because Guru was a senior who had already been through an MBA from a prized B-school. And was now working. Guru had already been through what our three friends were going through right now, and hopefully, he had the answers!

After the mandatory coffee was ordered, they told Guru what had happened. Guru nodded knowingly and took off, “Look, it is obvious that all of you were unprepared for the GD. All three topics are ‘hot’ topics of the day.* Remember, managers are expected to be aware of what is happening around them, and the issues you were asked to discuss are very, very ‘happening’.”

“Let me take some examples. You should know what happened in the Tata Corus deal and the Mittal Arcelor deal. The nuclear deal is critical to India and to its relationship with the USA, and it has been in the news for months now. So you must know what it is all about. If the Union Budget is presented in the days before your interview, you must be broadly aware of what it contains. You are not expected to be an expert on these subjects—but a level of awareness is vital.”

“But there’s so much to read. We can’t possibly know everything. And, in any case, we have all been preparing

* Some of these topics were in the news when this book was written. Similarly, you need to be aware of topics that are current, when you are preparing for your interviews.

full-time for our CAT exam. How do we get the time to do this?” asked Catty.

“You’re right. So if there is a new tax introduced in Columbia, sure, you aren’t expected to know anything about it. Or, if there are floods in Alaska! Or, a change of government in the northern province of Mongolia. But, I’m sure you would agree that the IPL cricket tournament is highly relevant to us today. And so is the nuclear deal! And the whole focus on using renewable energy sources, such as biofuels, since the world is bound to run out of petroleum some day! So be aware of key happenings, especially major current events.”

Guru paused, sipped his coffee, and continued, “That was the ‘what.’ And now for the ‘how’. Tell me, did you study non-stop for your CAT? Twenty-four hours a day?”

“Well, not quite. Obviously we had to sleep at night—or rather in the mornings. And we took breaks for meals. And sometimes we were simply exhausted, so we just took a break anyway. But those were breaks—we didn’t even want to think about our MBA preparation. How could we use that time to read up on current affairs?,” asked Verbi, the most stressed out of all.

Guru smiled. It was the knowing smile of a person who knew he had the answer. “Catty, you like to watch ‘Car and Bike’ shows on TV, don’t you?”

Catty’s eyes gleamed. Even his ears gleamed, if that were possible! He was fascinated by cars, and even during the high-pressure CAT days, he had made it a point to watch every program on cars.

“You watch these programs because you are interested in them. Watching them makes you relax. It’s a break from CAT, isn’t it?” asked Guru.

“So now let me tell you something about the nuclear deal. See if you are interested. But first, more coffee!”

Over coffee, Guru proceeded to tell his young friends all about the Indo-US nuclear deal. The fact that there was a power shortage in India and that nuclear power was a possible solution; about the relationship between the USA and India, which had started building up over the past few years, and which could suddenly jump to another plane with this deal; about how the deal had become a prestige issue for the government of India. About....

But hold on, dear reader. I could go on and on. But you must remember that this book is not about the Indo-US nuclear deal. It's about helping you prepare for your B-school admissions. So, just come with me, quietly peep into Barista and take a look at what is happening. Quietly—we don't want to disturb our young friends, do we? Can you see how they are hanging on to every word? The interest in their eyes? It's almost as though they were listening to a fascinating story!

As usual, Catty was the first to react, "Guru, this sounds more and more like a Frederick Forsythe novel. And he's one of my favourite authors."

Guru put down his cup of coffee and took a deep, satisfied breath. His job was done. "That's it, Catty. Each of these topics is actually a fascinating story. The global fuel shortage is every bit as dramatic. And so is the issue of biofuels. And the global warming problem, which can lead to cities on the coast getting submerged (At this point, Catty and gang almost panicked. After all, they lived in Mumbai). Once you start reading up on a topic or listening to it, the interest starts building up. And then you want to read more. You want to listen to news items on the subject." And here Guru paused dramatically for effect. ***"Because these are no longer facts that you need to mug up for some silly interview. This is now a fascinating story, and every new bit of information adds to the story."***

“So when we read a piece in the newspapers about biofuels, we are not cramming for our MBA. We are actually getting to know one more chapter in our story.”

“And, therefore, this is our break from CAT.”

“Absolutely,” gushed Guru. And you’ll find that most topics are equally fascinating when you actually get deep into them. So, read the newspaper in your breaks—dailies as well as business newspapers. Read magazines that talk about current happenings. Listen to the news. It’s a good idea to have a discussion on one of these topics at the dining table with your family every night, or whenever possible. Your parents and elder brothers and sisters could add to the story. Look for people around you who can add to the story—sometimes a neighbour can give you lots of interesting stuff!”

“Of course, you must remember that this process takes time. You cannot start these stories just a week before your interview. But because they are stories, you can actually start them a year earlier—maybe even before you have started studying for the CAT!”

Spend time reading and discussing topics of current interest. You will find that each of them becomes a fascinating story. And reading these stories gives you a break from your preparation for CAT.

Guru was not finished yet. He continued, “There’s one more thing you must know. At times, you may have a completely different format for the GD. Some B-schools give you a newspaper article about some current topic and then ask you to discuss it. Others simply ask you to make an extempore presentation on a given topic. But no matter what the format, once you are aware of what is going on around you, it always helps.”

Quanti had one more question. “Guru, in spite of all this, we might still end up in a GD where we do not know much about the subject. What do we do then?”

Guru nodded wisely. “Yes, that can happen. In such a situation, it is a good idea to listen carefully to the discussions for the first few minutes. Based on what you have heard, try and form your own opinion on the subject. And then share it. Your opinion need not be correct, or complete—but it shows the panel that you are thinking. But remember, you must add your own value—don’t just summarise what the others have said.”

And that was the end of discussion. The table now appeared far more cheerful than it was when our friends had walked in. Suddenly, the rubber in the coffee was gone and it actually tasted good. Guru had cracked the problem for our youngsters. It was therefore a beaming group that now said in unison, “ONE MORE ROUND OF COFFEE!”

What You Need To Do

And now, my friend, you need to get into action. Whatever you’ve learnt from our friends Guru, Catty and company is quite useless until you put it into practice. For this I have created a ‘Mini To Do List’ for each chapter, based on the learning in that particular chapter. Against each item in the list, I have also mentioned the KMAT that it is likely to help you in building up.

But that’s not all. At the end of the book, I have combined all these ‘Mini To Do Lists’ into one single *Complete To Do List*. You would also notice that I have left some space in this ‘Complete To Do List’. This is for things that you yourself have decided to do, in addition to what I’ve told you to.

So, what do you need to do? Simple. Just put up this ‘Complete To Do List’ on your soft board, or on the wall in your room where you can see it every day. And follow it. Some of the

items would be one-time actions. Many others would require lots and lots of practice. And that's exactly what you need to put in. Practice! Practice!! And more practice!!!

For the current chapter, this is our 'Mini To Do List':



MINI TO DO LIST

To Do	KMATs Covered
Build up general awareness through newspapers, magazines, TV news channels, etc. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discuss this with friends	General Awareness, Thinking Ability

Practice, Practice, Practice



*KMATs Covered: Leadership, Teamwork,
General Awareness, Thinking Ability,
Communication, Maturity*

The Group Discussion

Dear reader, before we move ahead with this chapter, I must pause and ask you a question: Have you started implementing what we have discussed in the previous chapter? And, have you checked your KMAT score? You must remember that you are competing for a B-school seat with many, many candidates. The only way to stay ahead of them is to put into practice what you are learning here, and to keep monitoring your progress through your KMAT score. So get into action fast....

And now to get back to Catty. Armed with advice from his mentor, Guru, it was a slightly less nervous Catty who walked into the next B-school for his GD. Even the ogres (the professors) inside the room looked a bit less threatening. And when they announced the topic, Catty could have jumped for joy. It was ‘The Indo-US Nuclear Deal.’

What a stroke of luck! Catty and gang had been reading up on this deal ever since the last GD, and to have the very same topic thrust into his lap was just too good to be true. Catty began to dream of the time when he would be a proud student at this B-school. Quite naturally, he was among the class toppers. And

then the big day came—the convocation, where he would get his degree. His name was announced and he walked up proudly to receive the degree from the chief guest. And then, the chief guest was hitting him on the head....

Catty woke up from his reverie to find the candidate next to him tapping him on the head and waking him up. The discussion had begun, and the first candidate was speaking. “The Indo-US nuclear deal is a major step in improving relations between the two largest democracies in the world. Ever since the cold war ended, India and the USA have been getting closer to each other, but this deal could be the breakthrough that would take relations to a higher level....”

And as the speaker paused for breath, a smart young lady next to him took over. “I agree with the earlier speaker. India needs nuclear energy for its rapidly growing power needs. And the USA needs India to counterbalance China. So, each side needs the other, and the nuclear deal is just the opportunity....”

Here, the first speaker intervened once again, “That’s right. And we must remember that if the nuclear deal goes through, it is a tremendous boost for companies in the USA who have expertise in the area, because they stand to gain billions of dollars of business....”

And, so, the discussion went on. But hold on. I can see that you, dear reader, are getting carried away. Please remember that your job right now is not to understand the Indo-US nuclear deal. There are many other books on the subject anyway. Your job is to observe our friend Catty and figure out what is happening to him.

That’s right. Catty heard the first speaker with rapt attention and felt very confident. He knew these facts. And then he heard the young lady and felt even more confident, because he knew those facts as well. And the next speaker, and the next, and the next,

Great. So Catty knew all the facts. But what was he doing? He wasn't participating in the discussions. He wasn't sharing what he knew. He wasn't adding any value. So, what if he knew everything there was to know about the nuclear deal?

Before he realised it, the GD was over, and Catty—the very same Catty who had almost jumped for joy when the topic was announced, and was already dreaming about the convocation—had hardly spoken two sentences in the entire GD. And even in those, he had merely stuttered and stammered. No contribution to the discussions at all.

As the candidates trooped out, Catty could feel the old symptoms (the legs shaking, the glue) coming back again. He glanced at the two ogres (yes, they were aggressive ogres once again) and dragged himself out. “I’ve messed it up again,” was his only unspoken thought.

Sure enough, he wasn't short listed for the interview round. And so the evening found poor young Catty once again sitting in Barista with a gloomy looking cup of liquid rubber (Barista still called it coffee) in his hand.

The Analysis

As expected, an equally gloomy looking Quanti and Verbi joined him soon. “Same as you,” they said, when Catty had described his GD. “Thanks to Guru’s advice, we knew enough about the topic, but couldn’t participate in the discussion,” they said collectively.

The youngsters were just bemoaning their fate, and why God kept doing this to such deserving candidates as them, when Guru walked in.

With a steaming cup of coffee in his hand, Guru started off. “So you had done your reading, and had also listened to the news and analysis? And you knew the topics that were being discussed, reasonably well?”

“That’s what makes it so terrible. We knew enough, but couldn’t say anything,” whined Catty.

“I’m not surprised,” said Guru.

The friends looked up. “What do you mean?”

“Exactly what I said. I’m not surprised.”

They looked at each other. “Why?”

But Guru was a coffee fiend. He needed replenishment. And with a fresh cup of coffee in his hand, he began to speak. “Catty, you knew enough about the topic that was being discussed. But had you actually spent time discussing it with someone? Or speaking on the topic?”

“No, of course not. But I had read up several articles on the subject,” Catty replied.

“Let me repeat this, because it is important,” said Guru. “You had learnt enough about the topic to carry you through the discussion. So you perhaps knew what to say and discuss. ***But had you actually practiced discussing it?***”

“Let me give you an analogy. Catty, you are fond of cricket. Now suppose you were gifted the ten best coaching manuals in the world, and you went through them from cover to cover. Would that make you a terrific batsman?”

“Of course not,” said Catty. “I would need to practice the strokes that were described in the manual. In the nets, in practice sessions, and finally in actual matches. Otherwise, it would just be theory....”

Suddenly his voice trailed off. Catty was a smart young man, and he was beginning to get the picture.

Guru was very fond of beaming. And he beamed once again. “That’s it. What you pick up from the coaching manual is knowledge. Theoretical knowledge. ***You need to put that knowledge into action by converting it into skills.*** Where you actually pick up the cricket bat and keep practicing each stroke till it is perfect.”

“So we had knowledge about different topics. But we did not have the skills to carry out a discussion using that knowledge,” finished Catty.

“Absolutely. And the only way to do that is to practice. Lots and lots and lots and lots of practice. Exactly like net practice in cricket.”

“Now to practice, I suggest you do two different things,” Guru carried on. “First of all, practice on your own. Just pick up a topic and quickly think of five things to say about it. And then say them in the form of a short presentation. Practice this repeatedly with different topics. Clearly, precisely, point by point. Don’t say too much. Don’t beat around the bush. Be brief. After a while, you’ll be able to face virtually any topic and quickly say a few things about it. This is what a GD requires.”

“And then you can take it a step further—think of five things in favour of the topic, and five things against it. For instance, if the topic is ‘The nuclear deal is in India’s interest’, think of five reasons why it is in India’s interest, and five reasons why it is not. You will then be able to project a balanced view in your GD—which is really what the panel is looking for!”

Pick up any topic of current interest. Think of five things in favour of the topic and five things against it. Then say them in the form of a short presentation. Practice this repeatedly with different topics.

This was good advice, and the three young friends nodded.

But Guru hadn’t finished yet. “This was practicing speaking on your own. The next step is to actually practice GDs. The three of you should get together every day, pick up one subject at a time, and go through a practice GD. Then pick up the next subject and so on. You cannot possibly practice going through GDs on all subjects, but once you’ve done a sufficient number,

you will get the hang of it—and then even for a new subject it's not too difficult."

"In fact, bring in other friends as well. For instance, other students who are attending the same coaching classes. Remember, your coaching class can give you lots of tips but they can give you one, two, or at the most three mock GDs. The rest you'll have to do on your own. And by the way, exactly the same applies to interviews as well—but that of course we'll discuss in a later chapter—and over a fresh cup of coffee."

Practice GDs with your friends. Record each GD and play it back. Analyse it to see how you can improve.

Catty had another question, "Guru, is there anything specific that we need to keep in mind, while going through our GDs—including our practice GDs?"

"Good question Catty. As you might imagine, the panel of professors is looking for candidates who are potentially good managers. Now, most good managers share a few common traits (These are our good old Ten KMATs). And, therefore, the panel would evaluate you on these traits. Now, there are several such traits that they can evaluate you on—such as Communication, General Awareness, Thinking Ability, etc. These are obvious and you would build these skills anyway when you practice."

"But, there are two additional skills which the GD brings out and which most people do not focus on. One of these is **Teamwork**. Let me explain. As you are aware, managers do not work alone. They work in teams—of subordinates, bosses, as well as peers. How you function in a team is vital to the success of any project you take up. For instance, do you listen to your colleagues, or do you simply go ahead with your own opinions? Do you relate what you are saying with what the others are saying, or are you on a trip of your own? Are you aggressive, which is a negative trait, or are you firm and assertive, which is

positive? When there is a conflict in the group, do you handle it with **maturity**, or do you get excited and perhaps even start shouting? Do you work towards a common solution for the group or do you simply talk?” “You see? Teamwork is a key trait for any manager, and the GD is a great place to check it out.”

“Next, if you have had enough practice GDs of this kind, you then start exhibiting **Leadership** as well. Do you take the others in the group along with you? Are you able to influence opinions? Does the discussion focus around the issues you have raised? These are the hallmarks of a leader, and that’s another trait the panel looks for.”

The three youngsters nodded once again. This was great learning. They were now itching to get to the next GD.

“By the way, whenever you practice, it is a good idea to record what you have said. After the GD is over, play it back and analyse it. And then figure out how you can improve next time. You’ll be surprised at the kinds of things you notice when you record and play back your own speech or discussion. Remember, you are your own best coach.”

Quanti had one last question. “Guru, we can practice going through mock GDs any number of times. But it’s still not the real thing. What we really need is practice in going through real GDs. In a B-school. That’s the only time we would practice under pressure.”

Guru beamed at him for the third time in the chapter—or was it the fourth? “Absolutely. You can practice batting in the nets any number of times. But the real thing is batting in a cricket match. Tell me, what’s the solution?”

“Well, I guess you need to play lots of matches.”

“That’s it. And it’s exactly the same with GDs and interviews. You need to go through lots of live GDs and interviews. In a real-world competitive environment. And so, even if you’ve done your thinking and have shortlisted only a small number of B-schools that you would want to join, you must apply to

several B-schools. So, even if you mess up your first couple of GDs or interviews, you still have enough others to fall back on.”

Apply to several B-schools. So, even if you mess up your first couple of GDs or interviews, you still have enough others to fall back on.

And with that Guru ordered another large cup of coffee. The discussion was over.

What You Need To Do

And now for our ‘Mini To Do List’ for this chapter, which reads as follows:



MINI TO DO LIST

To Do	KMATs Covered
Apply to several B-schools	
Practice GDs	Leadership,
• On your own	Teamwork,
□ Pick up a topic and think of five things in favour of the topic, and five things against it	General Awareness,
□ Make a short presentation on the topic	Thinking Ability,
• With friends	Communication,
□ Record the GD and then evaluate your performance against the Ten KMATs.	Maturity

Before we leave this chapter, I hope you've put up the 'Complete To Do List' on your wall. Keep looking at it. More importantly, FOLLOW IT. We'll meet soon. In the next chapter, of course!

The Nightmare GD: Aggressive Participants



*KMATs Covered: Leadership, Teamwork,
General Awareness, Thinking Ability, Communication,
Perseverance, Stress Management, Maturity*

The Group Discussion

Welcome back, my friend, to the next episode of ‘The Adventures of Catty and his friends’. Now, I’m sure you wouldn’t like me repeating it but have you practiced what we have discussed? If you haven’t, please shut the book and first practice. I forbid you from going ahead and reading this chapter without doing this. And I’m very strict about it. Otherwise, it’ll simply be interesting stories, which won’t help you at all.

But if you have been practicing, well then, read on....

And so we meet Catty once again, on his way to the next GD. He was feeling even less nervous this time—his legs were shaking less, the glue in this stomach had a flavour which was not too bad, etc. So, he walked into the room where the GD was to be held, and the ogres (the professors, if you remember) actually looked slightly pleasant.

The topic announced was, ‘Which comes first—A world-class economy or world-class infrastructure?’

Catty was delighted. He had read up lots and lots on the subject. And had discussed it with his father and with friends. The best part was that he had debated it with his younger sister

who was in class 6—and had won hands down. And, therefore, exuding confidence from every pore, our friend Catty was just raring to go.

The candidate on Catty's left began to speak. Or rather, shout. Catty winced at the sound—which was definitely 100 decibels, or even more. (Here, the technical reader would understand the term decibel perfectly. For the non-technical reader, let me simply define it as the logarithm of the volume of sound divided by a base level volume multiplied by 10. If you still don't understand, the candidate was shouting very loudly. And aggressively).

Catty and all the others in the room stared at him, forgetting to speak in the process.

And then someone on Catty's right butted in, with a decibel level that was remarkably similar to that of the first speaker. Even the aggression was the same. By the way, have you ever seen a tigress protecting her cubs against an enemy? Obviously you haven't, otherwise you would not be sitting and reading this book today. But I'm sure you can use your imagination. That is exactly what Catty felt like. Once again everyone stared at the new speaker. And then the first one interrupted the second one again....

Suddenly there was a shrill but equally loud voice in the picture. That of a young lady. And then there was complete chaos. All the three young people, each of whom God had bestowed with unique gift of a larynx that would certainly have competed strongly in the Olympics, were shrieking each other down, desperate to butt in and be heard.

And what about the others in the room? Well, they tried. But they simply couldn't match the steam engines in the room. Relentlessly, every attempt to inject a bit of sanity (and peace) into the discussion was met with a fresh barrage of decibels from one of our young debaters. And as expected, the debate ended—without reaching anywhere!

And what happened to poor Catty after this? Well, as expected, he wasn't shortlisted for the next round. Feeling that the whole world was against him, he quietly made his way home. And the evening found him sitting once again in Barista, waiting disconsolately for Guru and the others.

The Analysis

Guru heard Catty out and this time he sounded a bit philosophical. "Catty, unfortunately these things happen. There are people who are so-called 'professional GD participants'. Who firmly believe that the only way to make an impression on the panel is to shout, and shout, and shout, and when they are through, to shout even more. But, who actually end up messing up the GD for everyone—most of all, for themselves. Remember, the panel is looking at potential managers. Successful managers are not aggressive—they are balanced and mature. They don't shout. They are assertive, they make their points, but they also listen to others. They must work in teams, and engage everyone in the discussion. And as you can see, the tigers in your GD were just the opposite of what successful managers should be. Many panels would immediately knock out such people from the next round."

"That makes sense," said Catty, "but what about the others in the room? With such candidates, the others don't get a chance to speak, so they get knocked out as well."

"True," said Guru. "Such are the ironies of life. Unfortunately, there is no ideal solution to this problem. Just remember that no one in the panel expects you to talk right through the GD. They want you to listen and link up with what the others are saying. They want to find out what value you can add to the discussion, and how you put your point across. They try and assess how much of a team player you are. They expect you to be firm and assertive, but not aggressive. And as long as you make two or three relevant points, that's enough. Which is

why, in the previous chapter I had told you to practice taking up a topic, and then thinking of five things to say about it.”

“So, while some others in the GD might be shouting, you stand out because you speak only a few times. And whenever you do, you add value to the discussion.”

The panel tries to assess how much of a team player you are. They expect you to be firm and assertive, but not aggressive.

“However, it is not easy to make yourself heard in such an environment. I can give you a few tips, but once again you need to practice. For one, look for breaks in the discussion. In a fifteen-minute GD, which is fairly common, there will be breaks, where the steam engines pause to catch their breath. Intervene in the discussion during such breaks. Or, intervene loudly but once the others are listening to you, start speaking normally. Some people have even perfected a very interesting art. You might have noticed that everyone has something to say, and much of this is said in the first five minutes—or a bit more. After that, there is a lull in the discussion. And that is a good time to intervene.”

Look for breaks in the discussion to put your ideas across. Or wait till the others have exhausted their ideas and aggression, and then intervene with your thoughts.

“Let me share another interesting idea,” Guru went on. “Sometimes the topic chosen for the GD is such that it leads to strong, heated, one-sided opinions. For instance, child labour. Most participants would argue very strongly against such a topic, perhaps quoting figures from the UN or Human Rights reports, or even NGOs. And people get quite heated up talking about such a topic. Now amongst all the arguments against the topic (including yours), suppose you were to share a couple of points

in favour of the topic. As an example, consider a household with only one parent, who is an invalid and therefore cannot work. If the teenage child in this house is not allowed to work, the family would starve. And, therefore, there are situations where child labour might be condoned. In the midst of loud and aggressive arguments against child labour, this one argument favouring it, would make people listen to you. Perhaps even shout at you, but at least they would listen, and you would get noticed. And you would appear balanced and mature—looking at both sides of the picture!”

“Of course, you should not be sitting on the sidelines waiting patiently for the others to give you an opportunity. Believe me, they won’t. So, grab your chance whenever you get it, firmly but politely. And you will stand out in the mess!”

“By the way, the interesting thing is that such a GD is also a potential opportunity. If you are able to withstand this onslaught and still make your points, it speaks well of your stress management ability, as well as your perseverance. And of course, if in the process, the quieter ones in the group rally around you, it shows your leadership qualities. Not easy, I know, but even in such a mess, you do have opportunities.”

Guru had more to say, “Sometimes the faculty members on the panel intervene and moderate the discussion to give everyone a chance. Or, they give each person one minute at the end of the discussion to say his piece, or to summarize the discussions. And that’s your chance. But remember, there will always be some situations where, no matter what you do, nothing seems to work,” he finished on a rather sober note.

“But that means some GDs could be messed up because of something that’s not even our fault,” wailed Quanti.

Guru was philosophical. “That’s true. But that’s life, isn’t it? And by the way, that is one more reason for applying to several B-schools. Because if one or two GDs get messed up

for reasons beyond your control, you still have several others where (hopefully) the participants would be more sane....

And on that philosophical note, the coffee session ended!

What You Need To Do

Dear reader, if you notice carefully, there is nothing really to add to our 'Mini To Do List' from the last chapter, so I've just reproduced it here:



MINI TO DO LIST

To Do	KMATs Covered
Practice GDs	Leadership,
• On your own	Teamwork,
□ Pick up a topic and think of five things in favour of the topic and five things against it.	General Awareness,
□ Make a short presentation on the topic.	Thinking Ability,
• With friends	Communication,
□ Record the GD, and then evaluate your performance against the Ten KMATs.	Perseverance,
	Stress Management,
	Maturity

Meanwhile, keep practicing. And don't forget to monitor your KMAT score. We'll meet again in the next chapter.

Coping with Abstract Topics



*KMATs Covered: General Awareness,
Thinking Ability, Stress Management*

The Group Discussion

And so we meet Catty and his friends once again. By now, all the advice from Guru has sunk in and you can see the confidence pouring out of their ears. So, let's catch up with Catty as he walks into his next GD....

Catty was seated in the room when the topic was announced: 'We think, therefore we are'.

Pin drop silence!

In the five minutes that the young men and women got to prepare, people just gaped at each other. What had happened to the nuclear deal? Or Tata Corus? Or the problems in Singur and Nandigram in West Bengal? Or Ratan Tata's new Nano car? Or even the budget? What had happened to all those wonderful, wonderful topics—which were made even more wonderful by the fact that the candidates had read up on them and knew enough facts to argue!

However, Catty had an advantage over the others. He had Guru as his mentor. And, therefore, he had had enough practice in picking up a topic and thinking of five things to say about it. So, he bent over the neat, white sheet of paper in front of him, chewed ferociously on his pen for a minute (you see, that helped his thought process) and started writing....

Now, would you like to hear some good news? That's right, when the GD started, our friend Catty was the first off the blocks. If you don't understand that, let me tell you in plain English—he was the first to speak. And he said, “This topic can be looked at in different ways. Let me look at it in one such way. The topic appears to apply to human beings—perhaps as opposed to all other species. And it seems to focus on the human intellect, which sets us apart from animals. Humans have the ability to think, to analyse, to debate, to decide—all activities linked with thinking. And our very survival, growth and development, follow this thinking. As an example, look at the advancements in medical science. Human beings have found cures for a large number of diseases, and have, therefore, increased the longevity of the race because of this ability. My friends, I fully endorse the view.”

As Catty stopped speaking, you could almost hear the claps around the table. Even the ogres (the panel members—remember?) nodded appreciatively and made notes. This candidate must be considered for the next round. Gingerly, one or two people started adding their points of view, and then Catty took off again. Now I don't want to bore you with a full description—including full stops and commas—of what Catty said. That's not important. What is important is that our young friend was able to figure out many relevant things to say on the given topic and had actually said them.

And so the GD went on. Finally it got over, and Catty trooped out with others. For a change, the usual symptoms (the glue in his stomach, the shaking legs) had vanished. Instead, he was brimming with confidence. He smiled at the two professors—not ogres—and they smiled back. “This was good,” he said with a deep breath.

And now for the good news. As you might have guessed, this time Catty was shortlisted for the interview round. He almost jumped through the roof! “Me? Shortlisted? WOW!!!!”

was all he could say. He even beamed when they announced that the institute had declared a holiday in the afternoon, since India had qualified for the finals of the current 20-20 cricket tournament, and everyone wanted to go home and watch them play against Australia, and therefore, the interviews would be held the following day, so the candidates were requested to come back at 9 am the next day, but to be careful to be on time....

But Catty hardly heard all this. He couldn't wait till the evening. And this time he sat waiting in Barista with a cheery looking cup of excellent coffee—no liquid rubber this time—waiting for Guruji.

The Analysis

Dear reader, by now you know what's going to happen, don't you? That's right, as Verbi and Quanti trooped in, they were beaming as well. Because they too had qualified for the interview round. And since they had all gone to the same B-school, all interviews had been postponed to the following day.

When Guru came in, Catty told everyone his story. But by now he was an old hand at GDs, so he added his own analysis. "I realise that sometimes the topic is extremely abstract. And I find it useful to link it to something practical. That way, I can talk about the practical stuff."

"Absolutely correct," said Guru, "It is very easy to keep beating around the bush if you are given an abstract topic. And, therefore, get lost. Link it to something realistic, and you'll find it much easier to think of something concrete to say...."

If you get an abstract topic, try and link it to something realistic. This will help you think of concrete ideas to put across.

Guru wanted to say more, but he couldn't because at that moment a highly excited Verbi butted in. "Guru, that's exactly

what I did today. Our topic was, ‘We only live twice’. I said that one possible interpretation of this topic was that everyone goes through at least one major crisis in life, which changes his attitude, his thinking, and his approach towards life. Some people get a heart attack, some fail in a major exam, some lose a friend. This changed approach towards life effectively gives you a second life. And, therefore, everyone has two lives.”

“And Guru, it worked,” Verbi almost shouted, “I qualified for the interview.”

A smiling Guru then said, “By now you can also figure out which of the managerial traits the panel is testing when they give you such a vague topic.”

Catty was the first to answer, “Absolutely. They’re checking our thinking ability. And perhaps also our ability to handle stress, which the vague topic obviously creates.”

Guru nodded. And as usual, he had the last word, “And now, since all of you have qualified for the interview tomorrow, let’s celebrate. I have a huge LCD TV at home. Let’s go home and watch the cricket match together!”

What You Need To Do

If you’ve read this chapter carefully, you would have noticed that what you need to do is exactly the same as in the previous chapter. Except for one small thing. In the previous chapter, I had asked you to practice GDs—both on your own and with friends. Just make sure that you add some abstract topics. For completeness, I’ve reproduced the same ‘Mini To Do List’ below with the abstract topics added on.

Here's the list:



MINI TO DO LIST

To Do	KMATs Covered
Practice GDs	General Awareness,
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● On your own <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Pick up a topic and think of five things in favour of the topic and five things against it □ Make a short presentation on the topic ● With friends <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Record the GD and then evaluate your performance against the Ten KMATs. ● Include abstract topics 	Thinking Ability, Stress Management

And that's all we have on the subject of GDs. Practice what you've learnt and record your GDs. And of course, come back in time for the next chapter, where we'll look at our first interview!

Part II

The Interview



Fill in Your Forms Carefully



KMATs Covered: Maturity

The Interview

And now, dear reader, having successfully waded through the Group Discussion process, we watch Catty walking into his first interview with a certain quiet confidence. His GD had been good, and the professors had looked at him and nodded appreciatively. Even the other candidates had been impressed.

He entered the room where the interview was to be held, and one of the professors looked up. “Ah, Mr CATwala,” said the professor, “Come and sit down.”

Now here I must digress for a moment to share something extremely important with you. You see, the word “Ah” can mean any one of several things, depending on the context, and the way in which it is said. For instance, it could be a student who has just understood a tough concept after hours and hours of trying. It could be a sales manager acknowledging the noble efforts of his young sales executive in attempting to meet his sales targets. It could be even be the Nobel Prize Committee which has just got additional data which clearly determines who gets this year’s prize.

But the one that Catty heard was different. It sounded more like the “Ah” of a judge who had got one final critical piece of evidence that the prisoner groveling in front of him was guilty

as hell and deserved to be hanged, so why wait. Let's get it over with.

Catty was a shrewd observer of human nature, and he sensed the tone of the "Ah" as he sat down.

"Mr CATwala, did you fill up this application form personally?" one of the professors asked, in a tone that seemed unnecessarily aggressive.

This was ominous. "Y-y-yes Sir, I filled it up myself."

"I see," was the somewhat curt answer, as the professor scanned the form in front of him. "You gave your Class 12 Board Examinations in 2004. So how did you finish your Class 10 Board Examinations in 2003?"

Catty was shaken. "What was this?" He took one look at the dreaded application form. It was true. Catty's mind went back to the time he had sat down on the steps of this B-school, and hurriedly filled out the form along with his friends. It was the last day, and there was no choice—they had to fill it out right there and submit it.

"OK, so it was an error. What about this—you haven't answered this question at all—where we have asked you to explain why you want to join our B-school?"

Again Catty stared at the wretched application form. The professor was pointing to the back page of the four-page form, and there was one innocuous question there, which asked the candidate to explain briefly why he or she wanted to join this particular B-school. Catty remembered how he had quickly filled up the form, signed on the back page and run to submit it before the admissions office closed for the day. He must have missed out this question....

By now Catty realised that he was trapped. Anyway, the professor was willing to ask him one more question, "Please share with us your goals in life. Why do you want to do an MBA?"

Now this was a relief. Catty had been preparing the answer to this question. So he took off into the world of corporates and leadership, and the need for a top notch qualification which would be a stepping stone to the world....

But the professor was staring at his application form and looking puzzled. “This is not what you have written here,” he said almost angrily!

The wretched application form glared up at Catty. Sure enough, when he had filled up the form he was in a hurry, and he had filled up something completely different. Worse, he didn’t even remember what he had filled up on that fateful day on the steps of the B-school. Catty began to hate those steps. It was obvious that there was a deep-rooted conspiracy to prevent him from getting into this B-school, and the steps were at the centre of this conspiracy!

Dear reader, I’m sure you can imagine what happened next. Our young friend was politely shown the door. His first ever interview had come to a most inglorious end. As he walked out, Catty saw those dreaded steps once again. How he hated them! He wished he could break their bones or slash their wrists till they bled to death....

For a change, our friend went and sat in Café Coffee Day in the evening—after all, he couldn’t go to Barista every day. With a gloomy looking cup of liquid rubber (Café Coffee Day also called it coffee) in his hand.

The Analysis

When all four friends had arrived, Catty shared his experiences of the day. And then he realised that Verbi had similar errors in her form. And in Quanti’s case, the panel had bluntly asked him, “Why is your form so untidy—scratches all over the place. Shouldn’t you have been more careful instead of writing and then crossing out repeatedly?”

Having heard all this, Guru cleared his throat. Almost at a signal, all the three necks at the table turned to face him. And three pairs of ears waited to get some more *gyan*. So Guru proceeded to give them *gyan*, “You must realise that your application form is a very critical piece of paper, which tells the interviewers a lot about you. How careful you are, how meticulously you do your work, whether or not you are error-prone. Remember—they are looking for good managers, and good managers have one thing in common—they pay a great attention to detail. Good managers are expected to do complete jobs, instead of leaving loose ends for someone else to tie up. That shows maturity. And that’s why your form filled in completely and correctly is important to your panel!”

The three friends nodded in agreement.

“In fact, often the panel would look at your application form and decide how serious you are about applying to their B-school. A casually filled up form shows exactly that—a casual applicant—so why should they consider you seriously at all?”

This made sense, and Catty said so.

“It is also important to fill in the form early,” Guru carried on. “Don’t wait for the last day—by then you’ll be under time pressure, and mistakes would happen quite naturally. Also you must remember that courier and postal delays are quite common—so if you wait till the last minute, your form might not reach in time at all! And that’s a real disaster, isn’t it?”

Fill in each application form carefully and completely, well before the last date. Keep a photocopy of the form before submitting it.

The friends nodded glumly.

“Finally, it is a good idea to take a photocopy of the blank form and fill it in. Once you are clear about what goes into it, you can copy the details onto the original form and therefore

avoid scratches and cancellations. And of course, remember to take a photocopy of the filled up form before you submit it. You must keep a record of what you've said, and then go through it just before the interview. Project yourself as a good, careful and meticulous manager. And you're sure to create a good impression on the panel."

And with that, the session of *Guru gyan* was over. The four friends drained the last drops of coffee from their cups, and trooped out into the Mumbai night.

What You Need To Do

Aha, my friends. This time we have something in our 'Mini To Do List' for this chapter. Something which you need to do every time you apply to a new B-school. And it is all about the application form:



MINI TO DO LIST

To Do	KMATs Covered
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fill in each application form carefully and completely, well before the last date • Keep a photocopy of each filled-in form before submitting it. 	Maturity

Know Your Subject



*KMATs Covered: Subject Knowledge,
Thinking Ability, Maturity*

The Interview

Dear reader, I will now assume that all three of our friends have filled in their B-school application forms perfectly. So we can get directly into the interview process.

We join Catty as he sits in the waiting area, ahead of his next interview. And begins dreaming of the rosy, rosy future in front of him. The professors were sitting across the table, almost begging him to join their institute. And then he was placed and his employer was publicly praising him for having achieved his targets twice over—something no human being had done before. And, therefore, his organisation was earnestly requesting him to do them a huge favour and accept their offer of a visit to Switzerland, as a small token of their appreciation. He was at the airport complaining about the long queue at the check-in counter. And....

“Mr CATwala”, said the gruff, aggressive voice of the airline’s check-in agent at the airport.

Catty looked around. The airport was gone, and so was the agent. This was one of the assistants at the B-school announcing his interview. In a tone that could only be described as, “Come on, be quick. Let’s be done with it. I don’t have all day.” So, with a sigh that seemed to imply that the assistant did not

realise that he was speaking to the future chairman of one of the largest multinationals around, Catty put off his impending visit to Switzerland and walked into the room where the interview was to be held.

The two professors in the panel smiled at him. They seemed helpful, and that was a good sign. “So, Mr CATwala, you have done a BE in electronics. I see that you have attached a marksheet as well. Tell us what your strong subjects are—we’ll ask you questions on those.”

Catty beamed (he had learnt this from Guru). This was better than expected. “Sir, you can ask me questions on any of the subjects I have studied.”

“Are you sure?”

“Yes, sir. Any of the subjects that I have done in my BE.”

“OK. Let’s see.... Ah! Let’s start with physical electronics. You scored a ‘B’ in that subject, I notice. Tell me Mr CATwala, why do we use silicon and germanium as base materials for electronic devices? Why can’t we use, say, calcium?”

(Note for the reader: I realise that this has become a highly technical question, and unless you have a background in electronics, it is unlikely that you would know the answer. It is quite another matter that even if you did have a background in electronics, you might still not know the answer—but we’ll let that pass for the moment. You must remember that this is only an example. Don’t worry about this specific question—look at the broader issues involved.)

Now to get back to Catty. If you were to observe him carefully, you would notice that some of his bravado had disappeared. And, in spite of the air conditioning (or given the temperature in the room, should we say refrigeration!), he was perspiring ever so slightly. He thought for a few moments, and then decided to come clean, “I’m sorry sir, I don’t know. I do know that silicon is used, but I don’t know why.”

“But you said we could ask you questions on any of the subjects given here. We wanted to find out your strong subjects.”

“Sir, actually we studied this subject a long time ago, so I’ve forgotten the details.”

“I see. A long time ago.... In the first semester of your final year—which means a few months ago... I see!” And the two professors exchanged meaningful glances.

The professor’s voice was a bit less warm and enthusiastic as he continued, “OK, let’s give you another chance. Which of the other subjects would you like us to ask you questions on?”

“Any of the others, sir.”

“Are you sure?”

“Yes, sir,” but Catty was not so sure any more.

“OK. Let’s take this one—Electronic Circuit Design. Why would you use a common emitter amplifier, as against a common base amplifier?”

Catty was silent for a long while. “Sir, is it because common base amplifiers tend to consume more power?”

“Are you asking us, or are you telling us?”

“Sir, I’m not sure. Maybe... I think... Sir, I’m sorry, I don’t know the answer.” And Catty’s head began to swim. This was just terrible.

As you can imagine, the rest of the interview was a mere formality. A few more questions were asked, and for some reason or the other, Catty couldn’t answer them. Politely but firmly, the two professors showed him out. And Catty was left standing outside the interview room, cursing himself for not having revised his subject.

The Analysis

In the evening Catty made his way to Café Coffee Day. The other three were waiting for him when he reached. A glance at Verbi and Quanti confirmed what he had thought—they

had also had a tough time. “Imagine,” Verbi almost shouted, “They actually asked me to analyse the rule of the Mughals and, therefore, suggest to our Prime Minister how he could run the country differently! How can that possibly be relevant to B-school admissions?” And she glared at the others, as if to say, “So there!”

Quanti had an equally interesting story. Just before him, there was a girl who had done her BSc in Zoology. She was asked to give her views on canines as a species and what pluses they had over felines (in case you’ve got lost somewhere, my friend, that’s dogs versus cats). “Now how the hell are canines and felines relevant to management?” Quanti wanted to know.

The others nodded their respective heads. Of course they agreed. And then exactly as in the earlier chapters, three young necks turned to Guru. What would he say now?

Guru did not disappoint them. “You must remember that the panel is looking for potential managers. Managers are supposed to know whatever it is that they are supposed to know. So, for instance HR managers should know HR management well, marketing managers should know marketing management, IT managers must know IT management, and so on....”

“Now, at this stage, none of you is a manager—so you cannot possibly be expected to know any of these subjects. And, therefore, the panel tries to find out if you know *your* subject, even if it is completely irrelevant to the field of management. Because if you know your subject very well, there is a good chance that once you’ve studied management, you’ll know that as well. But if you’ve studied for your degree and haven’t learnt anything at all, then....”

“We are not likely to learn management from an MBA program either.” Understanding dawned on the three young necks. “So, that’s why they asked us questions on our subjects—electronics and history and zoology—even though these had absolutely no connection with management!”

Guru beamed again.

The panel tries to find out if you know your subject well, even if it is not relevant to management.

“But Guru, how can we possibly remember everything we studied in our course. I must have studied some 40 subjects in my engineering curriculum. I can’t possibly remember all that I did!” This of course was Catty.

“Sure, you’re not expected to. And that’s why the panel asked you to specify your strong subjects not once but twice. So that they could ask you questions on these subjects. And, by the way, knowing what you know well and what you do not, and admitting it, is a sign of maturity. But you simply said, “Ask me anything....”

Catty could have kicked himself. This was so obvious. “So we don’t need to remember everything. But we must identify some subjects that we are strong in, and these we must know really well. Probably revise them before the interviews begin. And when the panel asks us for our choice, we give one of these.”

Identify some subjects that you are strong in. You must know these really well.

That’s it. Of course, sometimes the panel does not give you a choice. Even so, once they find that you cannot answer their questions, they usually start exploring your strengths. If that still does not happen, bad luck. But remember, that’s why I told you to apply to several B-schools. Because luck is—and will always be—crucial.”

The three heads nodded again. But Guru hadn’t finished. “Of course, that doesn’t mean you can completely ignore subjects which are not your strengths. You must know at least

something about them. After all, you've cleared an exam in each of them, haven't you?"

The three heads nodded once more—for the last time in this chapter. Because with this statement, the current installment of Guru's *gyan* had come to an end!

What You Need To Do

Once again, we have something for our 'Mini To Do List.' Let's see what it looks like:



MINI TO DO LIST

To Do	KMATs Covered
Within your course, identify and revise the subjects you are strong in <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whenever you get an opportunity in the interview, put these across. 	Subject Knowledge, Thinking Ability, Maturity

Aha! So you thought you had left Engineering for good, hadn't you? Or History? Or Political Science? Or the Geography of Central Africa? And you had torn up your text books with glee, page by page. Buy them again, my friend. Or hunt for the pages and glue them together. Your subject is your strength. Make sure you know it thoroughly. And happy mugging till we meet again.

Don't Guess – Or if You Do, Tell the Panel



*KMATs Covered: Subject Knowledge,
Thinking Ability, Maturity*

The Interview

And now for a surprise: So far, we've been watching Catty in his interviews. For a change, let's now take a look at friend Quanti and see how he does in his interview. So, let's go live to the scene of action....

Quanti walked in, fingering his tie. Between you and me, the tie was perfectly OK, but Quanti was nervous. This was a prestigious B-school and Quanti was desperate to get in. His GD had been good and he had been shortlisted. But the interview was the key. And fingering his tie seemed to give him some comfort, so he continued to finger it.

Having got the introductions out of the way, one of the professors got down to business. "I see that you've done your B.Com. Let's ask you questions on the subject of balance sheets. Are profits a liability?"

Quanti was lost. (Note for the reader: Actually, this is a fairly basic concept in Accounts, but I expect that there would be at least some of you who have absolutely no background in accounting. So, I had to keep the question simple. In any case, my own background in accounting is also fairly elementary!) But he felt he had to give an answer. Attempting to sound

confident, he replied, “No Sir. Only if the company makes a loss. If it makes a profit, it is not a liability, but an asset.”

There was silence in the room. Even the lizard on the wall opposite him stopped and stared. How could anyone say something so silly!

“Are you sure?” the professor asked, perhaps a bit too aggressively.

Quanti was not, but he had to back his answer. “Yes, sir.”

The other professor was a kindly soul. “Young man, that’s completely wrong. Profits are treated as a liability because they belong to the shareholders of the company. And obviously, the shareholders are different from the company itself. So, the company owes the profits to the shareholders—and that’s why they become a liability.”

Quanti vaguely remembered the lecture on balance sheets when he and his friends had switched on his laptop in the back row of his class. After all, it was the India-Australia One-Day final and no stupid lecture was going to prevent them from following it live. Thanks to the Wi Fi in the class-room....

But there was no time to think, because the next question was on him. “When would the working capital of a company be negative?”

Once again, Quanti was stumped. But again, he attempted to sound confident. “Sir, that’s when a company has borrowed funds from bank for their working capital needs, but has defaulted on payments.”

The two professors looked at each other, and took a deep breath. Perfectly synchronized. No wait, that would not describe it. They took a de-e-e-e-e-e-e-e-e-e-p breath. Yes, that’s right. “Mr Ashok, you seem to be guessing every time. That will be all, thank you.”

The interview was over! And poor, hapless Quanti Ashok, accompanied by his friend, the lizard from the opposite wall, crawled out of the room together.

The Analysis

That evening, for a change, our three friends went to a movie to drown their sorrows. That's right, all three of them had messed up their interviews, and their sorrows were in desperate need of drowning. The movie was a light, entertaining comedy called 'Suicide Avenue', but of course that is beside the point. And as you might expect, by now young man Guru was right there with them.

Right through the movie, our friends kept thinking of the day gone by. And of the interviews that might have been. The suicides in the movie were all extremely moving and touching, and on any other day our friends would have been deeply moved and touched. But not today.

And so it was quite natural that in the interval, over the mandatory popcorn and coke, our friends went into their customary huddle. Along with Captain Guru. "Look, ladies and gentlemen," Guru began (the only lady present was Verbi, but it sounded impressive this way), "this is one of the basic rules of all interviews. Don't guess. This is so important that I'll repeat it loudly. **DON'T GUESS.**"

At this unnecessarily loud remark, everyone within ten feet turned to stare at Guru. But he wasn't bothered. "Guessing puts off the interviewer completely. He doesn't even want to consider you any more."

The three youngsters nodded their heads morosely.

"If you don't know the answer to a factual question, it's best to be honest. Interviewers appreciate honesty. It's a sign of maturity. Of course, if you don't know the answer to any of the questions they ask, you're in trouble anyway, but I hope that doesn't happen."

Once again the youngsters nodded morosely.

"And of course, never, NEVER, NEVER, NEVER try to fool the panel. If they catch you once, and there is a very bright chance that they will, that's the end of your interview."

Never try to fool the panel.

For the third time that evening, the three young friends nodded.

But Guru hadn't finished yet. "However, sometimes the interviewer is willing to let you guess, provided you tell him in advance. So, if you say that you don't know the answer, but are prepared to figure it out—which is another word for intelligent guessing—many interviewers would give you the opportunity. In fact, some even appreciate the fact that you are trying to think."

Don't guess. But if you want to, inform the panel first. Interviewers generally appreciate candidates who are willing to think.

"And remember, never panic. If you do not know the answer to a question, don't worry. Most candidates would not be able to answer all questions anyway. Hopefully you'll manage the next question. And in the worst case, you've applied to several B-schools, haven't you? So, there is always the next interview....

The three youngsters nodded one last time, and a keen observer would have noticed that their morosity had gone down (By the way, I'm not sure if there is such a word as morosity, but it seems rather apt, so I decided to risk it). Catty put it in a neat nutshell, "That's a good idea. ***If you know the answer, tell them. If you don't, tell them you don't, but are willing to think!***"

And with that, the spirits of our three friends were back to normal. The interval was over, and they ran into the hall, cheering lustily at every fresh suicide.

What You Need To Do

What do we have for our 'Mini To Do List' this time? Let's see:



MINI TO DO LIST

To Do	KMATs Covered
Don't guess. But if you want to, inform the panel first <ul style="list-style-type: none">• NEVER fool the panel	Subject Knowledge, Thinking Ability, Maturity

And it's now time to end this chapter. Bookmark this page, or fold it, or even tear out a corner so that you know where to get back. And I hope you are practicing what you've learnt, and are keeping track of your KMAT score....

Experienced Candidates: Know More than Just Your Job



*KMATs Covered: Subject Knowledge,
General Awareness, Thinking Ability*

The Interview

In this book, you have met four young friends so far—Catty, Verbi, Quanti, and, of course, Guru. Now I'm going to introduce you to one more friend—a young man named Software F. Engineer. I knew you would ask me what the initial 'F' in his name stands for, but I wasn't able to find out. My guess is that his parents fondly believed that he would grow up to be a cricketer, like some illustrious people with the same surname. But unfortunately, he chose to follow a more mundane career in software. Anyhow, this is not too relevant to our current discussions, so we'll skip it.

Quite naturally, this young gentleman was called Softy by his friends. And the reason why I was keen to get you to meet him is that he is the only person we have met so far, who has prior work experience. In fact, he has two years of experience with a software company. And for those of you who have experience, you might just want to hear Softy's story.

The story starts in our usual B-school interview. As you might expect, Softy had got through the GD round, and was facing the interview panel of two professors. So far so

good. Unfortunately for him however, one of the professors, Prof. MS Java, had worked in the software industry as well, before joining this B-school.

And so the interview started. Fortunately for Softy, early on in the interview he was asked what he was doing in the company he worked for, and he replied—quite truthfully—that he was working in the area of software testing. The panel asked him a few standard questions on the testing work he was doing, which Softy was able to answer. He began to feel quite smug. This was going really well.

And then Prof Java said, “Mr Engineer, what do you know about stress testing?” (Note for the reader: Don’t worry if you don’t understand this term. It’s only an example I’ve taken. Knowing or not knowing stress testing will not make any difference to your B-school prospects.)

This was a new one. Softy had not done anything in this area. He had not even heard the term. After all, his job did not require him to learn all kinds of terms. It required him to focus on his job. “Sorry sir, I’m not aware of it,” he replied.

“Not aware?” asked Prof Java with a bit of a start. But you’ve spent two years in testing, haven’t you?

“Yes sir. But I have never worked on stress testing.”

“And you did not attempt to read up what else was happening in your field?” This was said with just a wee bit of sarcasm.

The expression on Softy’s face became a little less smug. This was bad. He remained silent.

“Anyway, I’m sure you know at least something about the other aspects of software development. What tools do your teams use for analysis and design? Does your company use the Rational Unified Process? Do they create Use Case Diagrams?”

Softy was stumped. How on earth was he going to answer this question? His job was testing. Period. He did not get his salary for dabbling in what the other employees of the company

did. He got his salary for taking a program or code, and testing it for bugs.

“S-s-sir, I’m not sure. We don’t get involved in those aspects of software development. But sir, you can ask me any questions on the testing process that we use,” he ended brightly.

However, our friend Softy was feeling anything but bright. And his expression was far from smug.

“Well, you must be aware of the current crisis in US Financial companies and the impact on Indian software companies. What strategy is your company adopting to overcome this crisis?”

Once again, Softy was in a jam. He remembered a recent circular by his CEO, which spoke about the crisis. But he couldn’t be bothered about strategy. That was the job of the CEO and the other directors. After all, his job was testing.

“Well sir, I know that our organisation has taken some steps. But I’m not too sure what those steps are....”

“Well, can you suggest what you would do if you were running your company?”

“Sorry sir, I will need some time to think.”

Professor Java sighed and leaned back, rather like a judge who has taken an unpleasant decision. He turned to his colleague and asked, “Would you like to ask any questions?”

But the tone said it all. For all practical purposes, the interview was over, and Softy knew he had bungled it.

The Analysis

That evening, when our young friends met, they were joined by a sombre-looking Softy. Bit by bit, he related his experiences of the day. And then of course, our “Guru” took over....

“Softy, what you went through today is very, very common amongst experienced candidates. You know your job—you’ve been doing it sincerely, and you’ve been doing it for two years. But is that enough?”

“The panel was interviewing you to see if you had the potential to become a manager. And in this case they were checking your subject knowledge. The key question is, what’s your subject? Is it restricted to the job you have been doing, or is there more to it?”

“Let me tell you something about a manager’s job—and let’s take your own software industry. As a project manager, you will lead a team whose job is to develop a piece of software for a client. Right?” asked Guru.

“Right”, said Softy.

“And this team will need to do multiple things—analysis, design, programming, testing, etc. So, obviously, you need to understand what happens in each of these areas.”

“Yes, I can see that,” said Softy thoughtfully, while the others sipped their coffee and nodded.

“And sometimes you will be managing people who are doing things that you have never done. For example, you may manage a team of programmers who are using a programming language that is Greek to you. But you are still responsible for the project. And therefore....”

“I need to have at least some level of awareness of these programming languages. Even if I’m not an expert,” said Softy.

“Absolutely. Now let me take another example. You have gone to meet a key client, who is aware of the crisis in the software industry. He needs re-assurance that your company will survive the downturn. So, he wants to know from you what your company is doing about it. And what do you say? Can you say that your job is only to manage the project, and that strategy is the job of your directors? Do you realise what a poor impression that will make on this client?”

“So, not only do you need to understand what your team members are doing, you also need to have an awareness of what the rest of your organisation is doing. And when your

panel realised that you were not even interested in these other issues, they felt that you did not have the potential to be a manager. QED!”

Everyone nodded again. This was Guru at his professorial best.

“And by the way, when the panel asks you high level strategic questions, even if you don’t have the answer, they want to see if you are willing to think.”

If you are a working professional, you should be aware of what’s happening around you—your colleagues, other departments, your company, your competitors, etc.

Catty summarised it for everyone, “Know your job thoroughly. But also know what’s happening around you: in your department, in your company, in your industry. The problems, the issues, the concerns, and the competition. And keep thinking about what your organisation is doing, and what it could do. Prove that you have what it takes to be a great manager.”

And with that know-how in their respective heads, our young friends made their way out into the bright Mumbai night.

What You Need To Do

This time we have something in our ‘Mini To Do List’ for our readers with work experience:



MINI TO DO LIST

To Do	KMATs Covered
<p>If you are a working professional, build an awareness of what's happening around you—your colleagues, other departments, your company, competitors, the industry, etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Put yourself in the shoes of your management. What problems are they facing? What opportunities do they see? How would you tackle these?	<p>Subject Knowledge, General Awareness, Thinking Ability</p>

Know Your Achievements and Strengths



*KMATs Covered: Leadership, Teamwork,
Thinking Ability, Communication, Perseverance,
Stress Management, Maturity, Goal Orientation*

The Interview

Catty was somewhat more confident when he walked into the next interview. After all, he had got so much *gyan* from Guru! He just *had to* make it through this one.

The professors in the panel were very friendly. “Tell us something about yourself,” one of them said.

This was good. They were not going to grill him. So, Catty took off. He was born in Calcutta and did his early schooling there. His father worked with a multinational and his mother was a schoolteacher. And then his family shifted to a small place in the hills called Solan where his father took up farming. How he loved the life in that small hill town. And then he finished school and did his engineering from one of the National Institutes of Technology. And, of course, stayed in a hostel. And....

So, they chit-chatted about life in the hills. Then one of the professors said, “Tell us something about your college.”

“Sir, I was there for four years. The campus was located quite far away from town. It used to take us a long time to get

to the town so we seldom went there. But we had most facilities on campus—tennis courts, basketball, cricket, and even a small shopping centre—so we didn't really need to go into town too often...."

Again, a bit of chit-chat.

And then, "You have no experience. So, why do you think you would make a good manager?"

Catty had no clue. So he mumbled something about his good grades in college and the fact that he was interested in management. But it wasn't too convincing, and Catty could tell by the way the professors looked at each other.

"OK", said the professors and they switched to asking Catty questions on his subject.

A short while later, they shook hands. The interview was over and Catty walked out of the room. He thought the interview had gone off reasonably well but there was a vague doubt in his mind. No, he couldn't explain it, but the doubt persisted. And so an uncertain looking Catty waited for his usual post-interview session with his mentor, Guru.

The Analysis

Guru heard him out patiently. And then took a long sip of coffee (rather, in the manner of Sherlock Holmes taking a deep puff of his favorite pipe). "Catty, I have known you since you were a teenager. And I know for a fact that every year you used to organise a sports tournament in your neighborhood—in which all local teenagers participated."

Catty beamed. He was very proud of this. In fact, he was also able to get sponsorship from some of the 'senior uncles' in the neighborhood, to buy prizes. Once he had even got coverage for the event in the colony newspaper.

"So you've actually been a manager from a very young age; and a successful one too." And here Guru leaned forward and

dropped his voice to a whisper, ***“But did you tell that to your panel today?”***

There was dead silence. Knives and forks across the room stopped clattering—remember, this was Barista—as people craned their necks to hear more. Even the waiter serving them cocked an ear in their direction.

There was no answer from Catty. He was squirming in his seat. What an opportunity he had missed!

And then Guru continued, “I also remember that you had organised a literacy drive for mess workers in your college hostel. That’s another excellent example of management. Did you put that across? And of course, as the hostel sports secretary, you had organised several tournaments—cricket, football, and what have you. Did you speak about these?”

“And Verbi, you had got the neighborhood kids together to cut down noise pollution in your area. I remember it had actually come down, and you had one of the quietest neighborhoods in town. Did you mention that in your interview?”

Verbi was silent as well. “N-n-o Guru, I didn’t know that was important.”

Guru took a deep breath. And so did the waiter serving them. This was bad. “Look friends,” Guru began, “What is the panel looking for? They are trying to find out whether you have at least some of the traits that good managers possess (Our Ten KMATs). And you people have already demonstrated these traits when you were fifteen years old! So, why don’t you talk about it?”

The silence across the room was palpable.

But Guru hadn’t finished, “Most people have done significant things in their lives, which demonstrate, even if it is in a small way, their managerial capabilities. Some have organised carnivals and sports tournaments. Some have helped their parents in major financial matters such as investments or buying property. Some have organised food festivals in school.

The problem is that they do not realise the value of what they have done. And, therefore, they don't talk about it.

The others nodded. They were beginning to perk up. They had never thought of this—all of them already had managerial experience. Wow! As usual, Guru made it all look so simple.

Identify your major achievements in life, along with the KMATs or other strengths they demonstrate. Use opportunities in your interview to put these achievements across.

“Catty, you had several opportunities to talk about your past. But you went off into trivial things such as where you were born, where you lived, your early schooling, and so on.”

Catty was beginning to get the idea. But he still had a question, “What if the panel doesn't ask me to speak about myself?”

‘You're right, that could happen. But you should be on the lookout for opportunities. For instance, the panel might say, “Have you done anything in your life which proves that you can be a good manager?” Or, “Can you describe a difficult situation and tell us how you handled it?” Or even, “Why should we select you?”’

“Even a question such as ‘What are your key strengths?’ is an opportunity. Because you can always back all your strengths with examples, which show that you do indeed have those strengths. So for instance, if perseverance is your strength—and it's one of our Ten KMATs as well—isn't it great to back it up with an example of how you convinced unwilling mess-workers that being literate was important? Or if the ability to lead a team is your strength, back it up with a story about how you got kids in your neighbourhood to work together in a cleanliness drive. A strength sounds much more plausible if you have examples to back it.”

“And by the way, your achievement may not show great management—but it could still demonstrate your strengths. For instance, if you are a painter and have created several paintings, that’s certainly an achievement—and it shows skills, perseverance, patience, and the ability to learn.”

“So much for the ‘what’. Now, ‘how’ do you put all this into action? Actually, it’s a very simple exercise, which I’d like each one of you to do at home. Look back at your life and at your achievements. Then see if you have done things that show up one or more of our Ten KMATs. For instance, in organising tournaments Catty displayed leadership, teamwork, and maturity. In getting sponsorships, he probably demonstrated communication skills and perseverance. And, by the way, you might be able to demonstrate traits beyond our Ten KMATs as well—such as sensitivity towards people, or time management, which is great. After all, these are also important to managers, and you should use the Ten KMATs not as gospel truth, but as a set of guidelines.”

“You would then have identified a great set of achievements, each of which brings out your strengths. And then see where you can bring them in. For example, if the panel asks you whether you have demonstrated a specific trait such as leadership, or planning ability, or teamwork, you know which achievement to talk about.”

“Of course, you must not get carried away. The fact that you have organised friends to teach mess-workers, does not mean you are already an executive director-in-waiting! Such an attitude can anger your interview panel. So be humble, don’t overdo it. But, please, please **do use your past experience!**

“Now, one final, important thing. I have been asking you to practice GDs with your friends. In exactly the same way, you must go through practice interviews. Your friend can conduct an interview for you, and then you do the same for him. Or ask someone else to conduct the interview for you—maybe your

father, or a senior from college. Perhaps, someone who has been through a B-school. Remember, the more you practice, the more comfortable you will be with the real thing!”

The friends looked at each other. Guru had done it again and they were back to their usual perky self. Coffee and discussions over, they almost danced down the steps into the street.

What You Need To Do

Notice that this time the ‘Mini To Do List’ asks you to make a list of your achievements. For this, I’ve given you a table (Table 5) after the ‘Mini To Do List’, which you should fill up. By the way, read the next chapter before filling up the last column in this table. And, of course, you could cut out this table as well and put it up on your wall.



MINI TO DO LIST

To Do	KMATs Covered
Fill up Table 5, by making a list of your major achievements in life	Leadership, Teamwork, Thinking Ability, Communication,
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What KMATs or other strengths did you demonstrate? Use opportunities in your interview to put each of these achievements across. 	Perseverance, Stress Management, Maturity, Goal Orientation
Practice going through interviews with friends, seniors.	All

**Table 5:** My Achievements in Life

Fill up the first two columns right now, and the last column after reading the next chapter

	<i>Achievement</i>	<i>KMATs/Strengths demonstrated</i>	<i>What did I learn? How can I do it better? How can I do it in a different environment?</i>
1.			



	<i>Achievement</i>	<i>KMATs/Strengths demonstrated</i>	<i>What did I learn? How can I do it better? How can I do it in a different environment?</i>

Interview 6

Learn from Your Achievements



*KMATs Covered: Thinking Ability, Maturity,
Perseverance, Goal Orientation*

The Interview

Catty simply couldn't wait for the next interview. He had learnt his lesson from the earlier chapter, and had put together his past achievements. And he was all set to share them with the interview panel.

"Tell us something about yourself," said one of the faculty members in the panel. And Catty took off, "Sir, I spent my first few years in Calcutta, where my father worked with a multinational. Then my family shifted to a small place in the hills called Solan. Sir, one thing I would like to mention is that I have always been fond of sports, and, in fact, I used to organise sports tournaments in my neighbourhood, on a regular basis."

The professors were interested and they asked Catty to go on.

Pleased, Catty continued, "I organised an annual sports event for which I used to get sponsorship from some of the neighbours. Our prize money came out of this. I found this to be a great learning experience."

"Sounds good. What did you learn from this? Or, let me put the question differently, "Look back at your tournaments.

How could you have organised them better? Suppose you had to triple the number of events and spread the tournament over three days. Or get in five times the number of participants that you had. What would you do?”

Catty was stumped. These were indeed valid questions, but he hadn’t really thought about them. “Well, sir, I would have had to work much harder. And perhaps plan better.”

“Could you have done something radically different? Suppose you were to organise a tournament today. How would you use the experience gained over so many years, to organise it better?”

Again Catty was silent. “S-s-sir, I would need to think about this”, he said after a while, feeling sheepish.

The professors looked at each other. A meaningful look, as you would imagine. And then they went on, “OK, go on. What did you do in college apart from your studies?”

Catty took off again. “Sir, I was always interested in educating people who are not so fortunate. One of the things I did was to organise a literacy drive for the mess-workers in our college hostel. And....”

But the professor cut him short, “Great. How many students were involved?”

“Ten, sir.”

“OK. What did you learn from this? And, once again, how would you do it better? Suppose we asked you to put together a hundred-odd MBA students and organise a similar drive across the entire slum next to our campus. How would you do it?”

Once again Catty did not know what to say. “Well, sir, it is basically larger numbers. So, a lot more effort would be required....”

“But how would you manage a hundred students? And how would you schedule classes across the entire slum? You couldn’t possibly do it yourself—you would need others to help. How would you organise this?”

This was becoming tough. As long as Catty had to talk about his past achievements, things were fine, but these professors refused to let him do so. They were more interested in what he had learnt, how he would do things differently now, what changes would be required, etc.

“OK, let’s simplify your job. You need to do the same project as before, on the same scale, but now students are unwilling to be involved. How would you tackle this?”

“Sir, I guess I would have to work harder to convince them,” Catty finished lamely.

Once again the professors exchanged a look. A look that was obviously not favourable to Catty. And then there were a few routine questions, but Catty realised that the interview was, for all practical purposes, over.

Catty walked out feeling miserable. He had got enough opportunities to talk about his past. But it had not worked out. And our good friend Catty literally had to drag his feet into Café Coffee Day.

The Analysis

Guru was characteristically blunt, “Catty, you obviously realise that you have goofed up. And do you know why?”

“Yes, they wanted to see what I had learnt. And to see if I could use this learning to do things better. Maybe do them differently.”

“Catty let me first give you a bit of background. Today’s organisations face a large number of challenges. Competition is increasing by the day. Customers are getting more and more demanding and knowledgeable. Salaries and other costs are rising at a frightening pace. The global environment is changing faster and faster.”

Guru paused for a moment, “Now tell me, what are the implications of all this for any organisation?”

“Well, I guess organisations would need to respond to these changes,” said Catty and Quanti together.

“Absolutely. Let me take an example. Suppose you were working for a company that manufactured and sold television sets. And you had done a good job of selling them in Mumbai. Your next assignment was to sell them in Rajasthan—particularly the rural areas of Rajasthan. A different environment, different customers, and completely different spending power. So, you’ve got to change your entire approach.”

The young friends saw the logic of this. And Guru continued, “Now let’s assume you have a competitor who enters the market. With a similar product but priced lower. Your entire thinking needs to change, doesn’t it?”

“Or take a software company. Today they use one way of managing projects. But as you are aware, companies are increasingly moving towards letting employees work from home. So, the entire environment changes, because you cannot meet face to face any more, except in pre-scheduled meetings. You see? How you manage the project needs to change dramatically.”

“In other words, organisations in today’s world cannot remain static—otherwise they would simply die. They’ve got to learn from their past, and figure out better and better ways of doing the same thing—perhaps for a different customer, or for a larger project, or for a different product, or for a different environment. And this is true in all fields of management—whether it is finance, HR, production or anything else. Unless organisations learn, they are dead.”

Guru’s voice now dropped to a conspiratorial whisper, “And unless managers learn, they are dead as well. They must constantly learn and improve. The Japanese call this ***Kaizen***, or continuous improvement. That is exactly what your interview panel was trying to check today. The fact that you organised tournaments was great. But did you think about your work?

What was your key contribution? What did you learn from the experience? Could you do the same thing better? Could you do it on a larger scale? Could you do it when friends in the neighbourhood are not interested? That's what managers need to do—learn, learn, learn all the time, and do things better! And by the way, knowing where you could have done better, is a sign of maturity, isn't it?"

Next, it was Catty's turn, "Guru, I guess we need to sit down and take a look at our past and at our achievements. For each achievement, we should ask ourselves the following questions:

What did I do?

What did I learn?

How could I do it better? Or on a bigger scale? Or in a different environment?"

Identify the major things you have done in your life, and what you have learnt from them: How you would do them better, or on a bigger scale, or in a different environment, etc.

Guru was pleased with this thinking. "Attaboy Catty, you've really learnt this time. Remember to do this thinking. And you'll be able to walk into your interviews far better prepared than most other candidates."

As always, it sounded so simple when Guru spoke. And, as always, it gave our young friends confidence. The confidence to raise their respective mugs of coffee, click them together, and say, "CHEERS!"

What You Need To Do

Before we leave this chapter, let's look at our 'Mini To Do List'. You would notice that it's the same as the one in the previous chapter, except for one thing—how would you do it better, or on a bigger scale, or in a different environment etc.:



MINI TO DO LIST

To Do	KMATs Covered
Fill up Table 5 in the previous interview, by making a list of your major achievements in life <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What KMATs or other strengths did you demonstrate?• Use opportunities in your interview to put each of these achievements across.• How would you do it better, or on a bigger scale, or in a different environment, etc.	Thinking Ability, Maturity, Perseverance, Goal Orientation
Practice going through interviews with friends, seniors.	All

Know Your Weaknesses



KMATs Covered: Thinking Ability, Maturity

The Interview

So far we have been watching Catty, Verbi, and Quanti in action in their B-school admission interviews. Now it's time to meet another friend. And by the end of this chapter you will know why I wanted you to meet him.

His name is Haresh, but his friends call him 'Hero'. A very confident young man who has just completed his BA in economics from one of the top colleges in town. Hero has also been a member of the college basketball and debating teams. His friends rightly believe that if anyone can get into a B-school, he is Hero.

And, so, our story begins with our smart, confident young Hero strutting into the interview room with more than a hint of a swagger.

Formalities over, the interview began in real earnest. And Hero was able to answer most of the questions the panel put to him. Whether on his own subject, the state of the economy, or the future of business, Hero had the answers. And quite evidently the panel was pleased.

And then, almost as a formality, one of the professors asked him, "Haresh, your strengths are evident, but what are your weaknesses?"

“Weaknesses?” Haresh stopped short. He didn’t think he had any. All through his school and college life he had been an excellent student, a sportsman, and a debater. He was popular with his friends. How could he have weaknesses?

Haresh tried to avoid sounding arrogant. “Well sir, I don’t think I have any significant weaknesses...” he began.

“No weaknesses?” said the professor, perhaps a bit too loudly, and the lizard on the wall stopped in her tracks and cocked an ear to listen. “How could you not have weaknesses?”

“Yes sir, you’re right, but I have never really come across any weaknesses.” However, even as he said this, Hero realised that he didn’t sound convincing.

“Surely you have had some failures in your life. Everyone does. It’s human.”

“Sir, I can’t think of any major failures. Yes, in a couple of class tests, I had not done too well. But then I made up in the final exams. No sir, I can’t recall any major failures.”

“Do you realise Haresh, that this is your biggest weakness? Not knowing what your weaknesses are? And not even bothering to think about it?”

Haresh was now getting a bit cheesed off. “But sir, I have thought about it and I do not have any significant weakness. I’m sure of it.” He had now come to a stage where his ego had taken over.

The professor leaned back, rather in the manner of a judge who had taken a decision and didn’t want to waste any more time. “All right, Haresh, thank you!”

And the interview was over. Haresh felt it had gone well, but the last part had left a slightly bitter taste in the mouth. When he walked out, his customary swagger was back. But a keen observer of human nature would have noticed that the swagger seemed a bit uncertain.

Analysis

However, there was no uncertainty in the swagger when our Hero walked in to meet Guru, Catty and gang. He was back to his confident self, and to hell with the interview. What did these professors know anyway? How could they judge him?

Guru heard him out patiently. “Hero, you must remember that one of the prime jobs of any manager is to develop his team. And the first step in this is to figure out the strengths and weaknesses of each member of the team so that he can build on the strengths and work out ways to overcome the weaknesses. Right?”

“Agreed.”

Now, obviously, if you cannot figure out your own strengths and weaknesses—and you know yourself better than anyone else does—how can you possibly figure out the strengths and weaknesses of your team members? Remember, it is not a weakness to admit your weakness—it’s a strength—because then you can do something about it.”

“Yes, but I don’t think I have any weakness,” said Hero, and there was a hint of obstinacy in his tone.

Guru looked a bit resigned. He had faced this before. “Hero, there is no human being, alive or dead, who does not have weaknesses. You’re a human being too. So, you are bound to have some. Maybe you haven’t thought through this but that doesn’t mean the weaknesses don’t exist!”

Guru then turned to the others, “Was anyone else asked to describe his weaknesses?”

Quanti had. “I told them that sometimes I studied too hard, and therefore, lost out on enjoying life.”

Guru sighed. “That’s not really a weakness. When you say a thing like that, you give the impression that either you don’t know your weaknesses, or are trying to hide them.”

Guru was now at his professorial best. “OK, let’s play a little game (at the mention of the word game, the waiter stopped, and hung around; this was interesting—certainly not like his usual boring customers). There are five of us around this table. Each of us takes a slip of paper and writes down at least one strength and at least one weakness which apply to each of the others around the table. And please be honest—we are trying to help each other.”

There was a flurry of activity as the friends searched for pencils and paper. Finally, armed with little pencil stubs, and shreds of paper napkin to write on, they got into action. Deep in thought, with a faraway look in their eyes, and with furtive glances at each of their friends, one by one. As pencils were chewed out of shape, ideas started forming on the bright pink paper napkins.

And then they were all ready. At which point, Guru asked them to read out what they had written, one by one. And he also gave strict instructions that no one was to object—they were simply to listen.

Catty was the first to begin, and he started with feedback about Guru. “Guru, I like your logical thinking. And secondly, you make even complex subjects seem so easy.”

“OK, what about weaknesses?” said Guru.

Here Catty was hesitant. “Well, I’m not sure...”

“Catty, you must tell me. That’s a key part of this exercise!”

“Well, Guru, I’m not sure, but sometimes I get the feeling that you look down upon the other person. You, know, make him feel small.”

Guru was silent for a bit, while he digested this. “OK, let’s proceed. Now Catty, please give feedback to Quanti.”

And Catty gave feedback to Quanti, “Your logical skills are just terrific, Quanti. But under pressure you tend to get very

flustered. And it makes things very difficult for people working with you.”

Quanti mulled over this in silence.

Finally, Catty came to Hero.

“Hero, your strengths are obvious. You are extremely confident. Your communication skills are great. And I could go on.”

Hero looked pleased—although he was expecting this. Most people thought so about him. And then Catty continued, “But Hero, sometimes the confidence seems to turn into overconfidence. As though you already know everything. If I did not know you as a friend, I would even call it arrogance.” Catty seemed a bit embarrassed as he said the last bit.

“That’s not true...”, began Hero angrily. But here Guru intervened. “Hero, this may be utter nonsense. It is quite possible that you do not have this weakness at all. But for the moment, just hear Catty out.”

So, Hero sank back into his seat, while Catty continued, “The other thing is that you can be very impatient. And, therefore, at times it becomes a bit difficult to work with you.”

Once again Hero opened his mouth to object, but then caught Guru’s eye and decided against it.

Guru then spoke, “Well, we’ve had one round of feedback from Catty. Let’s get feedback from the others as well.”

So, the feedback continued, this time from Verbi. “Hero, I more or less agree with Catty. You have terrific confidence—so much so that you tend to give the other person confidence as well. And of course, your communication skills are great (once again, Hero permitted himself a quiet smile). But Hero, you always give the feeling that you know everything. And that the other person’s opinion does not even matter—because you are so clear in your mind. And even if you are wrong, you will not accept it.”

Once again Hero opened his mouth to object, but the waiter at that table would have told you that it was opened a bit less than earlier. And that was a sign that Hero was thinking.

And then Verbi told Quanti, “Quanti, you are an extremely reliable person—if you make a commitment, I know for a fact that you will meet it.”

Quanti swelled with pride at this comment. And then the weakness came out, “I agree with Catty. You tend to get highly nervous and hassled. So it probably takes you far more effort to do a thing than it actually requires.”

Again Quanti digested this in silence—what they were saying was true—only, he would not admit it.

Then it was Quanti’s turn. He was characteristically crisp. “Great communications skills, Hero. You could make a very successful leader, if only you listened to others. Over-confidence definitely. And very high impatience.”

By now Hero was shaken. Our confident young man had got the same feedback from three different friends. All of whom knew him well. Was it true? Was he really over-confident? Did he really refuse to listen to anyone else? Was he really so impatient? These were disturbing thoughts, and they kept going through our friend Hero’s mind.

And so the feedback continued till each of our friends had given feedback to everyone else around the table. And then Guru told them to sit quietly and absorb the inputs that had come in. So five friends sat around the table, even forgetting to order fresh coffee, as they mulled over the inputs each of them had got. Even the waiter—who understood what was going on—left them alone.

After a while Guru told the others, “Most people are able to figure out their strengths; but not their weaknesses. Sometimes, they do not know what their weaknesses are. Sometimes they do, but are reluctant to admit it. But you must remember, it

is extremely important to know your weaknesses—and every human being has enough of them.”

There was more silence, as a very pensive set of friends absorbed this. After a while, Guru continued, “Most people are able to figure out their weaknesses. Some require a bit of a push, of the kind you got today. Now once you have identified your weaknesses, figure out situations where this weakness caused a problem. For instance, if your weakness is that you tend to get nervous, was there a meeting or an interview that you bungled? Or if your weakness is that you get very angry, has this ever caused a problem with friends or other acquaintances?”

“But Guru, doesn’t that go against us?”

Guru smiled and said, “Not at all. Knowing your weaknesses is not a weakness. It is actually a strength. Put them across candidly. The panel appreciates this honesty. Since you are honest, it emphasises your strengths even more. But remember, as a potential manager, it is not just enough to know your weaknesses. You should have spent some time figuring out how to overcome them. So, if you are a nervous person when speaking in front of others, perhaps you might have decided to speak in public whenever you get an opportunity. That’s one way to overcome it. Remember, the panel members expect you to analyse situations and figure out solutions to them—and analysing your weaknesses is an excellent example of this.”

Identify your weaknesses. Knowing your weaknesses is not a weakness. It is a strength.

‘Of course, you don’t have to kill your chances in the process. So if you were to say, “Sir, I am a terrible scatterbrain, and I just cannot organise my work, or my papers,” obviously the panel is not likely to take you in. Or if you said that you were a habitual liar, or strongly allergic to any kind of hard

work. Be honest, but you don't have to ruin your chances in the process. I expect you to use your common sense.”

And with that, five thoughtful young friends, with their minds still on the feedback, walked slowly out into the street.

An Important Warning

Now that you have read this chapter, I must tell you something important. Many people get quite upset when someone else points out their weaknesses. And if more than one person points out the same weakness, it becomes even more upsetting. Therefore, you need to be careful before getting into this exercise.

IF YOU THINK YOU MAY HAVE A PROBLEM WITH THE ABOVE EXERCISE, DON'T DO IT. SIMPLY SPEND TIME THINKING ON YOUR OWN, AND IDENTIFY YOUR WEAKNESSES.

What You Need To Do

And now lets look at our familiar 'Mini To Do List':



MINI TO DO LIST

To Do	KMATs Covered
Identify your weaknesses— Use Table 7.	Thinking Ability, Maturity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be prepared to share them in the interview • What are you doing to overcome each weakness? 	

 **Table 7:** My Weaknesses

	<i>Weakness</i>	<i>Situations Where this Weakness Caused a Problem</i>	<i>What I am Doing to Overcome the Weakness</i>
1.			



	<i>Weakness</i>	<i>Situations Where this Weakness Caused a Problem</i>	<i>What I am Doing to Overcome the Weakness</i>

Don't Give Up



KMATs Covered: Thinking Ability, Perseverance, Stress Management, Maturity, Goal Orientation

The Interview

Right through this book, you have watched Catty and his friends making blunder after blunder in an attempt to get into a good B-school. And by now you are probably thinking that all blunders that could be made have already been made. Well, you're wrong, and in this chapter we see one more. So let's catch Catty as he walks into a brand new B-school.

The panel of professors was very friendly, and spent some time chatting with Catty to get him comfortable. They asked for his background and interests, which Catty duly supplied, based on all his learning from Guru. They realised that Catty had organised several sports tournaments as a youngster, and had learnt a lot from them. He was also clear about where he had gone wrong, and how he would organise these tournaments now. All in all, it was a good interview, and Catty was feeling decidedly perky. As a measure of his confidence, he even reached out and took a handful of *kajus* (cashew nuts) from the plate in front, when the professors offered it to him. Things were going well and Catty started believing he was already in.

Even the professors seemed to think he was a good candidate. And just as a formality, they asked him one final question. "Mr CATwala," said one of them, "You have been

through four years of engineering. Can you think of some ways in which engineering education in our country can be improved? Any break-through suggestions?" And the professor beamed at Catty, expecting some great new ideas.

Catty thought for a moment. "Well sir, I think they should have more labs—we did not get enough time to practice what we had learnt in class."

"Yes, but that's not a new idea—it is more of the same. Any new ideas? I'm sure you've thought about it."

Once again Catty thought about it. "Sir, right now I cannot think of anything else. Given some more time, I can probably come up with options."

The professors looked at each other—and we all know what that look meant. Yes, Catty's admission, which appeared to be a formality just a short while ago, was not so certain now. "OK, take some more time," the professor said and waited for him.

The silence was getting unbearable, and in spite of the air conditioning Catty was perspiring. Furtively, he wiped his face and shook his head, "No sir, I can't think of anything right now."

Both the professors took a deep breath. Perhaps they needed to change their opinion about this candidate. But they were kindly souls, and wanted to give Catty one more chance. "No problem. Let's take something else. Suppose we gave you a project where your job is to make your neighborhood environment-friendly. What would you do?" And the professor leaned back in anticipation.

Catty was stumped once again. He knew that environmental issues were a hot topic, but what could he possibly do? "Sir, I would need to educate my neighbours."

"But most of them are likely to be the kind who are not willing to get educated. And who do not care two hoots about the environment. These are people who spew out diesel fumes from their generator, guzzle electricity, and mess up the lane

with rubbish from their homes. I'm sure you have such people in your neighbourhood. So what do you do?"

Catty couldn't have agreed more. "Yes sir, we have several very self-opinionated people who do not listen to anyone. I'm not sure how to get them to agree to anything. I guess I will have to speak to them," he finished lamely. But even to himself, Catty's voice lacked conviction.

"Come on Mr CATwala, surely you can think of some ways to overcome this resistance. Can you create success stories? Can you create examples for others to follow?"

Catty thought of his neighbours—aggressive, hot headed, highly argumentative, and quite unwilling to listen to anyone else. How would they ever listen to a young college graduate like him? "Sir, I guess I will need to educate them."

"Be specific. Describe two things you would do."

For the nth time, Catty thought about the problem, but could not find a solution. "Sorry sir, I'm not able to come up with anything off-hand."

The professors took an even deeper breath. What a pity. Such a smart young man. They might still be able to take him, but it would have been so much easier had he tackled the last few questions better....

And that was the end of the interview. His perkiness decidedly lower, Catty walked slowly out of the room, wondering if he had done enough to get through.

Analysis

Catty was still looking and feeling uncertain, when he met the others and Guru in the evening. Even the fact that the others looked equally uncertain did not perk him up.

Slowly, the story came out. How Catty was asked real tough questions which he had never thought about. And how he was expected to have answers ready. Just like that! It was so unfair. Catty began to hate the whole tribe of professors....

Then Quanti and Verbi took over, and told much the same story. Given his background in commerce, Quanti had been asked to suggest modifications in the Budget which the finance minister had just presented. And Verbi had been asked for an alternative solution to caste-based reservation, which would still ensure good quality education for the underprivileged.

Listening to the three friends, Guru smiled. And it was the kind of smile which lifted the spirits of the three youngsters. Because in Guru's smile they saw a solution and, therefore, they saw hope.

Guru began to speak. "First of all, let's understand what the panel was looking for. As you know, the job of a manager is to get things done. Perhaps to launch a new product, or to recruit manpower for a new location, or to get funding for a major new project, or even to modify a product so as to take care of customer complaints."

"Now as you might imagine, these jobs are not easy. You would face multiple obstacles in doing them. For instance, in launching a new product—say a new brand of instant noodles—you would need to study competing products that already exist in the market. These could be noodles or even other instant food products. You would then need to conduct a survey to figure out whether or not customers were satisfied with the currently available instant products in the market. And what would make them switch to your new noodles. There would also be customers who did not buy noodles at all—how would you get these people to try out your noodles. Finally, you would also need to look at the kind of media that you might advertise in. Would it be local newspapers, hoardings, radio based jingles, or a combination? And so on...."

"Obviously, all this is not easy. You would face all kinds of problems and pressures in the process. Competition would go all out to ensure that you failed. Customers could have a lot of resistance to changing their existing habits. Your dealers might

be up against you because of the poor margins you give them. And above all, you've got to make sure the company earns a profit—in the face of spiraling costs. So you would need to constantly look for innovative ways to solve all these problems. Often, when you come up with a solution, a new problem would emerge. But you've got to keep on thinking and coming up with solutions. You cannot give up, no matter how tough the problems (which by the way, shows maturity). And remember, there are no readymade answers.”

Don't give up. Keep thinking of innovative solutions to problems the panel throws at you. Remember, they are looking for innovation and perseverance.

The three friends nodded slowly. This was beginning to make sense.

And then Guru continued, “Let's now take a look at the problem Catty was asked to tackle—where he had to make his neighbourhood environment-friendly. There are loads of possible solutions to this problem. For instance, you could organise a contest in the neighbourhood where a prize is given to the most environment friendly family. This prize could be given at the Neighbourhood Annual Day. The monetary value of the prize is not really important but what is important is the prestige and visibility attached to it. And then you could get a publicly known figure to distribute this prize, and perhaps get the event covered in the local newspaper.”

“Let's take it a step further”, Catty intervened, “You might organise this contest amongst school kids in the neighbourhood. They would then put pressure on their parents to fall in line.”

“Good idea,” said Verbi, “and maybe we could organise the screening of environment related films on our Annual Day, to make people aware of the damage they might be causing.”

Guru was delighted. “Excellent. As you can see, in these few minutes, we’ve come up with several solutions to the problem. Now the important thing is that each of them will have some flaws. And the panel is quite likely to point out these flaws. But then you have the other solutions. ***Importantly, the panel knows that you are thinking and persevering.***”

Catty and co. were beginning to get the drift. Their interview panels were evaluating their ability to think and to persevere; to keep coming up with newer and newer solutions in the face of newer and newer problems. In the process, they were also checking out their ability to manage stress. Suddenly their interviews made eminent sense.

“And we simply gave up,” they said in a chorus.

“Absolutely. Remember, the panel does not expect you to come up with miraculous solutions, which solve all problems at a stroke. If you could do that, you would become Chairmen or Managing Directors right away. But they do expect you to think, and to keep on thinking, coming up with newer and newer ideas, in the face of objections and problems. Every company wants managers who can think innovatively. And this is what the panel was looking for.”

The panel does not expect perfect solutions. Instead, they expect you to keep thinking and persevering.

“Now obviously this requires practice. And that’s fairly easy. The three of you could sit together and pick up some burning issue—such as the power shortage, or corruption in public life, or pollution, and try and figure out solutions. Every time you come up with a solution, try and kill it with a fresh problem. And then figure out a solution yet again. And by the way, this approach would help you with your GD as well,” said Guru.

The atmosphere around the table brightened visibly, as three young friends saw a solution to the problem they had faced. Once again Guru had supplied them with a solution to their problem. And it was a happy bunch that hopped and skipped down the steps, eagerly looking forward to the next interview.

What You Need To Do

And now it's time for our inevitable 'Mini To Do List', which reads as follows:



MINI TO DO LIST

To Do	KMATs Covered
Practice problem solving <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Get together in a group, and identify a problem of current relevance. Figure out solutions to the problem. Keep thinking and persevering.	Thinking Ability Perseverance, Stress Management, Maturity, Goal Orientation

Plan Your Future



*KMATs Covered: General Awareness,
Goal Orientation*

The Interview

Catty straightened his tie and mentally combed his hair as he prepared himself for the next interview. By now he was confident. After all, he had learnt so much from his past few interviews. And Guru had been right in saying that they needed to apply to several B-schools. So that by the time they got over the first few interviews, they would already have made their blunders, and learnt from them.

And this B-school really mattered. It was a great institute, ranked among the top 10 in the country. Catty and his friends were just dying to get in. So, with one last mental brush of his thatch of hair, he walked into the room.

The professors looked at him and asked him to sit down. Then followed a barrage of questions, which had, by now, become familiar to Catty. And he answered them with aplomb. Questions on his subject; questions on the Indo-US nuclear deal; questions about his past; his strengths and weaknesses, And Catty answered all of them with the confidence that can only come from weeks of preparation and lots of practice.

He was now feeling more and more certain that today was just his day. And then they came to the final question,

“Mr CATwala, what do you want to do in life? And how would an MBA help you?”

“Sir, I’d like to become a manager in a large, prestigious multinational, and an MBA will give me the knowledge and skills to do so. It’s almost an essential qualification today,” said Catty. This was a good answer and Catty was proud of it.

The professor persisted, “Can you be a bit more specific? Where do you see yourself ten years from now?”

“Sir, I would see myself in a senior management position, handling a country-level responsibility.”

“Young man, you must realize that this is all very well, but it’s also very vague. We would like a more specific answer. I’m sure you realise that.”

Catty was stumped. He was quiet for a bit.

“OK, let’s make it easier for you. You are aware that we have several streams of specialisation—finance, marketing, IT, human resources, etc. Are you clear about which stream you would like to take up and why?”

Catty was silent for a minute. He wanted to do an MBA. At this stage, what he did within the MBA was not really important. But he realised that an answer was expected. “Sir, I would like to take up marketing. Possibly join a multinational such as Hindustan Unilever or Nestle.”

“Why?” was the immediate response.

“Sir, it’s a good field to be in and offers a lot of scope for growth.”

“But that’s true of most fields in management, isn’t it?”

Catty was stumped. What could he say? He really didn’t know too much about a marketing career, except that many of his seniors had taken it up, and were doing well.

The professors were now getting a bit restless. “Are you aware of what a career in marketing involves? For instance, if you were to join a consumer product company, do you realise that they would probably post you in some far-off location for

at least a couple of years, where you would have to go around the countryside selling to local *kirana* shops and distributors?"

This was news to Catty. He had expected to be in a plush air-conditioned office. He had realised that it would take some years before he got a full time secretary, and was prepared to wait. But to be posted in a rural or even semi-urban area for two years? He shuddered at the thought. "Sir, I was more keen on a job in the head office or even the regional office, perhaps doing product management."

"Mr CATwala, I see that you have not done any research on the kind of career you would like to take up. How can you possibly do product management till you have actually spent some years in the field, selling? Till you have field sales experience, your know-how would be entirely theoretical, wouldn't it?"

"Anyway, let's skip this. Tell me, assuming that this is the goal you have set for yourself, why do think you'll be able to achieve it?"

"Well sir, I am confident that I'll be able to achieve it," replied Catty, but even he was aware that it sounded lame.

"Be specific. Don't give us general answers."

And poor Catty frowned at the fly on the wall behind the two professors, and thought. And thought. And thought some more. But nothing came to mind. "I'm sorry sir, I can't think of anything on the spot. But I know that I can do it." Catty was aware that this sounded even more lame than his earlier statement, but he couldn't help it.

"All right Mr CATwala, thank you very much. That will be all." And the professor, who was a polite soul, led Catty to the door. "such a pity", the professor thought, "another candidate who could have been selected. Based on the first half of his interview, he might still get in, but it was touch and go...."

And so, an uncertain Catty trudged back home, wondering yet again whether he would be selected. Most of the interview

had been good, but at the end he had bungled. On the whole, was it good enough...?

Analysis

As you might have expected, Quanti and Verbi had had a similar experience in their interviews. Quanti had mentioned that he wanted to get into finance, but had no clue about what a career in finance was all about. And Verbi had said 'HR' but other than the fact the HR dealt with people, she was equally delightfully vague.

And so three young minds waited for their Guru to speak.

As usual, Guru was blunt in his assessment. "You want to get into a B-school, don't you? But you don't have the faintest idea about what you'll do within your MBA. Just dropping terms like marketing or finance is no good—anyone can drop these terms. The panel wants to know if you've done your thinking. Where you want to reach, and how an MBA will help you. In particular, what specialisation you would take up. And they want clarity. Remember, you are competing with several other candidates, and they are looking for the best."

The three friends looked crestfallen, and Guru realised he had been too blunt. "Actually, this is a fairly simple problem to tackle. When you do an MBA, you would need to decide your area of specialisation—such as marketing, finance, human resources, or IT and systems management. And to do that, you would obviously need to understand the kinds of jobs and careers each area offers. Now there is a very simple way to do this—just look at the employment page in a business newspaper—or even on the Internet, and you'll come across several advertisements for jobs. Study these for a few days and you'll get the hang of the kinds of jobs and careers available, the growth prospects, and the kinds of companies involved. Importantly, these will also give you an idea of the qualifications required for each of these."

Be clear about what you want to do in your career. Ideally this chosen direction should match your strengths.

This was a good idea and the friends nodded.

“It’s also a good idea to talk to some seniors, because they would have seen all this first hand. And then the next step is to figure out which of these jobs you would like. Equally important, which of them tie up well with your strengths. For example, marketing jobs require the ability to convince people and lots and lots of perseverance. They tend to be highly paid but they also have high stress levels. IT jobs require significant analytical abilities—or the ability to understand the customer’s environment and problems in detail, and to figure out IT based solutions to these problems. In HR jobs, you must like working with people, and solving people related problems.”

Now remember, you guys have listed out your strengths earlier (Interview 5). It is, therefore, easy for you to match your strengths with the direction you have in mind.”

“And that’s what the panel wants to see. Are you clear about the direction you want to take? Are you aware of what the nature of job involves? Do you have what it takes? And that, by the way, is goal orientation!”

Catty had one final question, “But Guru, what if I’m not clear about what I want to do? What if I’m currently thinking of marketing, but ultimately end up wanting to do finance? If I mention marketing in the interview, wouldn’t that be binding on me?”

“Good question. Actually, it will not be binding. As long as you join a general MBA program, you can always decide on your specialisation later. But if you were to join a focused MBA program, such as an MBA in HR or an MBA in retail or banking, obviously you would not be able to move out. So be very clear about what you want to do before joining a focused MBA program.

This made sense. Things were clearer now, and the three friends were more confident than ever. Armed with this confidence, they walked out. A keen observer would have noticed a sense of impatience as they came out.

That's right, our friends were indeed impatient. They could hardly wait for the next interview.

What You Need To Do

Let's take a look at the 'Mini To Do List' from this chapter:



MINI TO DO LIST

To Do	KMATs Covered
Be clear about what you want to do in your career	General Awareness, Goal Orientation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study job ads in the newspaper and on the Internet—the nature of the job, and the capabilities required. • Your chosen direction should match your strengths. 	

So, we're nearly at the end of our interviews. Make sure you are practicing what we have learnt. And are monitoring your KMAT score. We meet one final time in the next chapter.

Research the B-school



*KMATs Covered: General Awareness,
Goal Orientation*

The Interview

Catty was brimming with confidence as he walked into the next B-school. Everything he had learnt from Guru over the past few months had been assiduously put into practice and he was sure this was it. This interview **had** to be cracked!

The professors asked him questions on electronics, which he answered with aplomb. They were impressed. They then asked him about his views on environmental issues, and he was able to engage them in a lively debate. They wanted to know his strengths and weaknesses and these were promptly explained by Catty. Everything they hurled at him was tackled with quiet confidence. It almost appeared as though the interview was a mere formality for a person of Catty's stature.

Just to conclude, one of the faculty members asked Catty, "So Mr CATwala, why do you want to join our institute?"

"Sir, it's one of the best."

"Can you be a bit more specific? Why is it one of the best?"

"Well sir, the institute has been ranked very high in all the B-school surveys I have seen."

"Yes we know, but why?" The professor was extremely persistent. He wanted details.

Catty was quiet for a bit. He had no clue why this institute was good. All his friends spoke highly about it, and so did the faculty at the coaching institute he had joined. The ranking was good. But why?

The professors were extremely helpful. After all, this was a good candidate, who had answered most questions. “Have you read through our brochure? Or seen our website?” one of them asked. “Did you find anything in the brochure that stood out? Something where we are above all other B-schools?”

Catty had casually flipped through the brochure, but hadn’t had time to go through it in detail. And of course he hadn’t gone to their website. How could he? He had only 24 hours in a day!

The professors persisted. “OK, have you read about any major recent event where we were in the news?”

Event? Catty did read the newspaper but only to check on major current events, as Guru had told him. What event?

Finally the interviewers lost their patience. “Mr CATwala, are you planning to join our B-school with absolutely no idea about what we have done or what we stand for?”

And so a great interview ended on a somewhat unhappy note. One again, Catty knew that most of the interview had been good, but he was not sure if he would finally be selected. Even the panel was not sure. And as always, Catty found himself outside the interview room, wondering for the umpteenth time, why these things happened to him of all people.

The Analysis

That evening when our friends met, Verbi and Quanti looked every bit as uncertain as Catty. And by now I’m sure you understand why. Their interview had also been good but they had both made the same mistake—not spending any time studying today’s B-school. I know you will say this is too much

of a co-incidence, but that's exactly the way it happened, and that's why I am telling it to you.

Catty spoke for all three friends when he said matter-of-factly, "Look, let's face it. All of us bungled when we did not even bother to study the B-school we were applying to. That much is obvious. But Guru, you know how tight our schedules are. In addition to everything else that we must do, how can we possibly study each B-school in detail? And we might be applying to several of them—perhaps ten or even more.

And then Guru spoke. "First of all, remember that this is a priority. If you walk into an interview without knowing anything about that specific B-school, you are asking for trouble. If on the other hand you are aware, it shows that you are thorough in your preparation and are genuinely interested in this B-school. Which obviously makes you stand apart from all those candidates who have no clue about the institute.

Spend some time studying the brochure and website of the B-school before the interview. Include strengths, key areas of focus, and recent events and awards.

Some B-schools are good for specific industries—such as telecom. And if that's your interest, it makes an excellent fit. Other B-schools are good in certain areas of management—such as human resources, or operations management, or finance. It's a good idea to link this up with your future plans (as discussed in the previous chapter). So for instance, if you are keen on marketing and it turns out that the institute you are applying to is strong in marketing, link these up. That gives the institute another reason to take you on board!"

The young friends nodded wisely. This made sense, as it always did when Guru spoke.

"Some institutes have a very strong research program—and are proud of it. Others have very strong international

connections. So, for instance, your chances of spending one semester abroad as an exchange student become brighter.”

“So you see, each institute has something going for it. And knowing this before you walk into the interview, gives you that edge over other candidates.”

“And now for the interesting bit: You do not need to read newspapers and magazines from cover to cover to discover what is special about the B-school. All you need is their brochure—which you have anyway—and access to their website. Remember, the B-school is as keen to sell itself to you, as you are to sell yourself to the B-school. Any specific strengths or recent events that they want to publicise would normally be available on the home page—or at the most on a link that is accessible directly from the home page. Put yourself in their shoes. If they wanted to emphasise major reasons why students should join them, why would they hide these reasons in one of the obscure internal pages? They would put them up front on the home page, wouldn’t they?”

“So you do not need to study the entire web site in detail. Look at the home page and the links from there. Maybe scan through the rest of the site quickly. But focus on these key areas. That’s what the institute would like you to focus on anyway.”

Verbi had a thought. “Guru, if we’ve done this research, and the panel doesn’t ask us questions on the B-school, what should we do? Shouldn’t we try and create an opportunity?”

Guru beamed as he always did when he liked something. “Absolutely. Often at the end of the interview, the panel might ask you, “Do you have any questions?” And that’s a great time to show that you’ve been thorough in your research. For instance, you might say, “Sir I notice from your website that there is a lot of focus on the HR area in your institute. Does this also include industry interaction?”

And then the three young friends also beamed. As usual, Guru made everything so simple. They were not sure whether

they would get into today's B-school. With a bit of luck they might. But after all the preparation and practice they had been through, they were absolutely certain that the next B-school was theirs.

And that, dear reader, is a lesson to you as well. If you have been through the entire book, done whatever I have asked you to, and most important—put in practice, practice, and more practice, then the next interview is yours. Be positive, walk in with confidence, and I'm sure you'll walk out beaming, confident in the belief that you have finally made it.

What You Need To Do

And now for our final 'Mini To Do List' of this book:



MINI TO DO LIST

To Do	KMATs Covered
Research the brochure and website of each B-school before the interview	General Awareness, Goal Orientation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include strengths, key areas of focus, and recent events and awards. 	

So we've seen lots of 'Mini To Do Lists'. As I've mentioned earlier, at the end of the book, I have put together all these lists into one 'Complete To Do List'.

One final time, let me encourage you to implement this 'Complete To Do List.' And to practice, practice, and then practice again.

And by the way, from a professor to a student:

"All the very best of luck."

Epilogue



Three Years Later....

Three years later, a group of friends met at Barista. One of them was an assistant manager with a large consumer multinational. The second one was just completing his stint as a management trainee in one of the biggest international banks around. And the third one was an associate consultant with a highly respected management consulting firm. All three had completed their MBA a year ago, from one of the leading B-schools in the country. And all three were immensely proud of their degree.

As the three friends sipped their coffee, their minds went back to the time when they were struggling to get into a B-school. Every interview had been a fiasco. And every time they faced an interview panel, they came away frustrated. But these three friends had a terrific advisor who taught them that each failure was actually a great learning experience. And who built up their ability to master GDs and interviews. Step by step. And because of whom, these three young friends were able to get into a great B-school, and subsequently land great jobs.

That advisor—Guru—now looked at them fondly, as a hen would probably look at its little chicks. He was proud of all three of them—Catty, Verbi, and Quanti. These three youngsters had taken his advice and had spent days and weeks practicing what they had learnt. That was the key to their success. And to toast their success, the four friends raised their mugs of coffee, clicked them, and shouted,

“CHEERS!”

At this, a bearded man at the next table looked up. He saw four happy friends and wanted to know what it was all about. The friends told him. And then they said something else. “Sir, we have learnt all about facing GDs and interviews the hard way. And we realise that there are a lot of youngsters out there, who are going through the same frustrations that we went through. These young people can learn a lot from our experiences. Isn’t there some way in which our learning can be condensed and communicated to those millions of young students out there.”

The man with the beard smiled. And then he introduced himself, “My name is Dhruv Nath, and I’m a professor of management. I am also a writer. What if I were to write down your story and bring it out in the form of a book? All the learning would then be available to all other students as well.”

“Great idea, sir,” they almost sang in chorus.

So they started telling their experiences to the man with the beard.

Who brought out these experiences in the form of a book.

And that, my friend, is the book you are holding!

Keep this Book for the Future



So now you have used the Ten KMATs. And have, hopefully, got into a great B-school.

First of all, congrats. I wish you a terrific career as a manager.

At this stage, since your job is done, you are probably tempted to tear up this book page by page. Or, perhaps, to sell it off second hand, for maybe Rs 10, in the Churchgate market in Mumbai or the Daryaganj market in Delhi. Or whichever market you have in your city for second hand books.

But hold on a moment. What you have learnt in this book are the Ten KMATs. And how to prepare for managerial interviews using these Ten KMATs. Now why should this be limited only to MBA admissions? If you are looking at a career as a manager, you would have several interviews lined up in life—whether it is for your summer project, your first placement from your B-school, or even subsequent placements, once you have picked up experience.

Isn't it obvious that the techniques you have learnt here are equally applicable to all future interviews as well?

Right?

So, don't tear up this book. And don't sell it off second hand—even though the offer of Rs 10 might sound tempting. Keep the book with you and whenever you come up for your next interview in life, take it out, dust it, and use it all over again.

And good luck with it, every time you use it!

A Complete To Do List



And now it is time for our ‘Complete To Do List’, which takes care of all the actions you need to take. This is the list you need to put up on the soft board or wall in your room, where you can see it all the time.

You would notice that at the end of this ‘Complete To Do List’, I have left some entries blank. You might want to fill them up with specific actions that you have planned.



COMPLETE TO DO LIST FOR GDS AND INTERVIEWS

To Do	KMATs Covered
1 Apply to several B-schools <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fill in each application form carefully, completely. Well before the last date • Keep a photocopy of each filled-in form before submitting it. 	Maturity
2 Build up general awareness through newspapers, magazines, TV news channels, etc. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss this with friends 	General Awareness, Thinking Ability
3 Practice GDs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On your own <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Pick up a topic and think of five things in favour of the topic, and five things against it □ Make a short presentation on the topic • With friends <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Record the GD, and then evaluate your performance against the Ten KMATs. • Include abstract topics 	Leadership, Teamwork, General Awareness, Thinking Ability, Communication, Perseverance, Stress Management, Maturity
4 Within your course, identify and revise the subjects you are strong in <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whenever you get an opportunity in the interview, put these across 	Subject Knowledge, Thinking Ability, Maturity

(Contd)



To Do	KMATs Covered
5 Don't guess. But if you want to, inform the panel first <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NEVER fool the panel 6 If you are a working professional, build an awareness of what's happening around you—your colleagues, other departments, your company, your competitors, the industry, etc. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Put yourself in the shoes of your management. What problems are they facing? What opportunities do they see? How would you tackle these? 	Subject Knowledge, Thinking Ability, Maturity Subject Knowledge, General Awareness, Thinking Ability
7 Fill up Table 5 in Interview 5, by making a list of your major achievements in life <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What KMATs or other strengths did you demonstrate? • Use opportunities in your interview to put these achievements across • How would you do it better, or on a bigger scale, or in a different environment, etc. 	Leadership, Teamwork, Thinking Ability, Communication, Perseverance, Stress Management, Maturity, Goal Orientation
8 Practice going through interviews with friends, seniors.	All
9 Identify your weaknesses—Use Table 7 in Interview 7. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be prepared to share them in the interview 	Thinking Ability, Maturity

(Contd.)



To Do	KMATs Covered
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are you doing to overcome each weakness? 	
10 Practice problem solving <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get together in a group, and identify a problem of current relevance. Figure out solutions to the problem. Keep thinking and persevering. 	Thinking Ability, Perseverance, Stress Management, Maturity, Goal Orientation
11 Be clear about what you want to do in your career <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study job ads in the newspaper and on the Internet—the nature of the job, and the capabilities required • Your chosen direction should match your strengths 	General Awareness, Goal Orientation
12 Research the brochure and website of each B-school before the interview	General Awareness, Goal Orientation
13	

(Contd)



To Do

KMATs Covered

KMAT Index



<i>KMAT</i>	<i>Chapters in which it is Covered</i>
1. Leadership	GD 2, 3, Interview 5
2. Teamwork	GD 2, 3, Interview 5
3. Subject Knowledge	Interview 2, 3, 4
4. General Awareness	GD 1, 2, 3, 4, Interview 4, 9, 10
5. Thinking Ability	GD 1, 2, 3, 4, Interview 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8
6. Communication	GD 2, 3, Interview 5
7. Perseverance	GD 3, Interview 5, 8
8. Stress Management	GD 3, 4, Interview 5, 8
9. Maturity	GD 2, 3, Interview 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8
10. Goal Orientation	Interview 5, 8, 9, 10

Author's Profile



*D*r Dhruv Nath is a Professor at one of the leading Business Schools in India.

He has a B.Tech in Electrical Engineering as well as a PhD from IIT Delhi. Subsequently, he spent nearly 20 years with the Indian Software industry, where he worked in senior positions in diverse areas such as e-Business Consulting, CRM, and Information Systems Planning and Development. Dr Nath moved from industry to academics in 2002.

Dr Nath has been a consultant to several organisations such as Hindustan Unilever, Glaxo, Gillette, Nestle, Indian Oil Corporation, Bajaj Auto, Air India, and Thermax, as well as, to the Prime Minister of Namibia and the Chief Minister of Delhi.

Dr Nath has written two other books, *The Nuts and Bolts of E-Commerce*, and *The Nuts and Bolts of CRM*, both published by Tata McGraw Hill.

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