



MODULE 05 — FLAGSHIP

IPMAT PI Mastery Guide

Everything you need to walk into your IIM Personal Interview with total confidence — mindset, structure, frameworks, body language, and your complete 30-day plan.

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INTERVIEW PHASES

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ANSWER FRAMEWORKS

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BODY LANGUAGE TIPS

30-Day
PREP PLAN



THE STEPWISE PI PHILOSOPHY

The Personal Interview is not an interrogation — it is a conversation between two professionals who want to see if you belong at IIM. Your job is not to be perfect. Your job is to be thoughtful, genuine, and prepared to think on your feet.

SECTION 01

The Right Mindset

What separates confident candidates from anxious ones — before you enter the room

You Are Not Auditioning

Think of the PI as a conversation with a senior professional, not a test you can fail. Panelists want you to succeed — they are looking for reasons to say yes.

Uncertainty Is Expected

'I don't know, but here is how I would approach finding out' is far stronger than a confidently wrong answer. Intellectual honesty is a management skill.

Your Story Is Enough

At 17-18, no one expects a startup founder. What they want is a student who has lived curiously and reflects authentically.

Energy Over Perfection

A candidate who is engaged, warm, and enthusiastic will almost always outperform one who recites memorised answers without emotion.

Preparation Is Not Memorisation

Prepare talking points, not scripts. Interviewers can hear when you are reciting. Prepare ideas, then trust yourself to speak naturally from them.

Stress Is Information

Some panels stress-test deliberately. The cue: slow down, take a breath, think, then answer. Calm under fire is exactly what they are looking for.

SECTION 02

How an IIM PI Is Structured

The 5 phases of a typical 20-35 minute IPMAT Personal Interview

01

Entry & Warm-Up (2–4 min)

Greetings, settling in, a light opener. Enter confidently, greet all panelists, wait to be seated. Your first 30 seconds form the first impression — often the most durable one.

02

Self-Introduction (3–5 min)

Almost every panel begins here. Prepare a crisp 90-second introduction: name, city, school, academic highlights, one significant achievement, one key interest, and why IPM.

03

Academic Deep-Dive (5–10 min)

The panel picks threads from your stream — Math, Physics, Economics, Accounts — and goes deep. Always explain your thought process aloud, step by step.

04

GK, Current Affairs & Situational (5–8 min)

Questions on India's economy, polity, international events, sports. May include extempore or rapid-fire rounds. Show that you read, think, and form opinions.

05

HR, Motivation & Closing (5–8 min)

Why IPM, why this college, where you see yourself, strengths and weaknesses, career goals. Have specific, honest answers ready. End with a warm, confident close.

SECTION 03

Answer Frameworks That Work

Structures to organise your responses under pressure — memorise the framework, not the answer

STAR Method — For Behavioural & Leadership Questions

- S** **Situation** — Set the scene briefly. When, where, what was the context?
- T** **Task** — What was your specific role or responsibility in this situation?
- A** **Action** — What did you actually do? Be specific about your individual contributions.
- R** **Result** — What happened? Quantify if possible. What did you learn from it?

Best for: 'Tell me about a time you led a team.' / 'Describe a challenge you overcame.' / 'When did you fail?'

PREP Method — For Opinion & Current Affairs Questions

- P** **Point** — State your position clearly in one sentence. Own it.
- R** **Reason** — Why do you hold this position? Give your core argument.
- E** **Example** — Support your reason with a concrete example or data point.
- P** **Point again** — Restate your position, optionally acknowledging the other side fairly.

Best for: 'What do you think about demonetisation?' / 'Is reservation good for India?' / 'Should India have a bullet train?'

Think Aloud — For Academic & Problem-Solving Questions

- 1** **Clarify** — Repeat or paraphrase the question to confirm you understood it correctly.
- 2** **State knowledge** — State what you know about the topic before attempting the answer.
- 3** **Reason aloud** — Walk through your reasoning step by step — out loud. Don't jump to conclusions.
- 4** **Acknowledge uncertainty** — If unsure, say so — then offer your best reasoned guess with appropriate caveats.
- 5** **Invite feedback** — Invite correction: 'Does that align with what you were looking for?'

Best for: Derivations, proofs, economics graphs, unexpected conceptual questions. The panel values process over the right answer.

Self-Introduction Formula — For 'Tell Me About Yourself'

- 1** **Name & City** — 'I'm [Name] from [City].' One sentence. No more.
- 2** **Academic Background** — School, stream, a key result or rank. 15 seconds.

- 3** **One Defining Achievement** — The thing you're most proud of, told briefly. 20 seconds.
- 4** **One Genuine Interest** — A hobby, passion, or curiosity that reveals your character. 15 seconds.
- 5** **Why IPM** — One clear, honest reason. Not 'IIM is the best.' 15 seconds.

Total: 75-90 seconds. Practice until it feels natural, not memorised.

5 Practice Questions — Try These with the Frameworks Above

Tell me about a time you failed. What did you do after?

→ *STAR. End on the lesson, not the failure itself.*

Should India legalise cryptocurrency?

→ *PREP. Take a clear position before acknowledging nuance.*

Prove that root 2 is irrational.

→ *Think Aloud. State the proof by contradiction, step by step.*

What is your biggest weakness, and what are you doing about it?

→ *Be honest. Pick a real weakness. Show growth, not a disguised strength.*

If you were Finance Minister for a day, what one policy would you change?

→ *PREP. Show economic awareness — not just popular opinion.*

SECTION 04

Body Language & Presence

55% of your first impression is formed before you speak a single word

Enter with Energy

Knock, wait, then enter with purpose. Don't shuffle or apologise for being there.

Greet All Panelists

Make brief eye contact with each person. A nod suffices — don't over-greet.

Wait to Be Seated

Always wait for permission to sit. Sit upright — not rigid, not slouched.

Eye Contact Triangle

Share eye contact across all panelists when answering — not just the one who asked.

Controlled Gestures

Gestures show engagement. Avoid fidgeting, pen-clicking, or hair-touching.

Smile Naturally

A genuine smile is warm and disarming. A forced permanent grin looks nervous.

Pause Before Answering

2-3 seconds of thought before a hard question signals confidence, not hesitation.

Pace Your Speech

Anxiety speeds speech up. Deliberately slow down — clarity always beats speed.

Dress Professionally

Formal attire, ironed and clean. Conservative colours. Hair neat. No strong cologne.

Phone Silent, Bag Down

No devices on the table. Keep hands visible. Don't glance at the door.

Don't Over-Apologise

'Sorry, I don't know' weakens you. 'I'm not certain, but my reasoning...' is stronger.

Exit Gracefully

Thank the panel briefly, not excessively. Stand, collect belongings, exit with a smile.

SECTION 05

Do's & Don'ts

Distilled from StepWise mock PI feedback across 500+ sessions

✓ Always Do This

- ✓ Read the room — match the panel's energy level
- ✓ Be specific — names, numbers, and outcomes in every answer
- ✓ Admit when you don't know something — then reason aloud
- ✓ Prepare 4-5 strong life stories that can be adapted to questions
- ✓ Know your resume inside out — every word on it is fair game
- ✓ Keep answers focused — 60-90 seconds per response
- ✓ Do at least 5 full mock PIs before the real one
- ✓ Practise with a mirror or record yourself on video

✗ Never Do This

- ✗ Interrupt the interviewer — ever, for any reason
- ✗ Lie or exaggerate — you will be cross-questioned and caught
- ✗ Use filler words constantly (um, like, basically, actually)
- ✗ Speak negatively about a previous school, teacher, or institution
- ✗ Give a vague answer to 'Why IPM?' — this is a genuine disqualifier
- ✗ Say your weakness is 'I work too hard' or 'I'm a perfectionist'
- ✗ Memorise scripted answers — they always sound hollow to panelists
- ✗ Lose composure under a stress question — breathe, think, then speak

SECTION 06

30-Day PI Preparation Plan

A structured roadmap from today to interview day — one clear focus per day

Week 1 — Foundation

Days 1–2: Self Audit

List your top 10 life experiences. Identify 4-5 STAR stories. Write your self-introduction draft.

Days 3–4: Academics

Revise core concepts from your stream. Focus on understanding, not formulas. Practise explaining aloud.

Days 5–7: GK Sprint

45 min/day: newspapers, current affairs. Cover Polity, Economy, International. Build a 1-page GK cheat sheet.

Week 2 — Build & Practice

Days 8–9: HR Deep Dive

Prepare answers for all 47+ HR questions. Record yourself on video. Watch it back — identify top 3 areas to fix.

Days 10–12: Mock PI #1

Full 30-min mock with a StepWise mentor or trusted adult. Detailed feedback. Identify top 3 things to fix.

Days 13–14: Refinement

Rewrite your self-introduction based on feedback. Revise weak academic topics. Fill the GK gaps you found.

Week 3 — Intensify

Days 15–17: Extempore Practice

3 random topics/day. Speak for 90 seconds each. Use Define > Pros > Cons > Stance. Record and listen back.

Days 18–19: Academic Cross-Qs

For each concept, prepare 3 follow-up questions they might ask. Practice the 'I'm not sure, but... ' format.

Days 20–21: Mock PI #2 & #3

One mock with a peer, one with a mentor. Focus on natural delivery and handling stress questions.

Week 4 — Final Prep

Days 22–25: Full Simulation

Dress in interview clothes. Full mock in a formal setting. No interruptions. Treat it exactly as the real interview.

Days 26–28: Light Revision

No new topics. Revise stories, GK cheat sheet, and key academic concepts only. Read the news every day.

Days 29–30: Rest & Reset

Minimal prep. Sleep well. Lay out interview clothes. Double-check your documents. Trust your preparation.

SECTION 07

Interview Day Checklist

The night before and the morning of — don't leave anything to chance

Night Before

- ✓ Lay out your clothes — ironed, clean, formal
- ✓ Print or organise your documents folder
- ✓ Set two alarms — one backup
- ✓ Read your self-introduction once only
- ✓ Review your 5 key life stories briefly
- ✓ Check venue, travel time, and route
- ✓ Sleep by 10:30 PM — no last-minute cramming

Documents to Carry

- ✓ Admit card / call letter (printed)
- ✓ Class X & XII marksheets — originals + photocopies
- ✓ School leaving certificate
- ✓ Government photo ID (Aadhaar / Passport)
- ✓ Resume — 3 copies on good quality paper
- ✓ Achievement certificates if asked in advance
- ✓ Passport-size photographs (4+)

Morning Of

- ✓ Eat a proper breakfast — not too heavy
- ✓ Dress and check appearance in a full mirror
- ✓ Arrive at venue 30-45 minutes early
- ✓ Keep phone on silent before entering the building
- ✓ Don't compare notes with others in the waiting room
- ✓ Take 3 slow, deep breaths before entering the room
- ✓ Remember: you have prepared for this moment

Mental Reminders

- ✓ You are not competing with others in the waiting room
- ✓ A wrong answer said confidently is still wrong
- ✓ A genuine smile is your best opening move
- ✓ Slow down when nervous — breathe first, then speak
- ✓ The panel is rooting for you to do well
- ✓ Every question is a chance to tell your story
- **Always ahead.**