

3. Preparation

- Factual preparation: know the company
- Preparing for the interview
- Practical preparation: What should I wear and where do I need to go?

3.1 Factual preparation: know the company

When you apply to a company, you are expected to know a thing or two about it. Make sure you are familiar with the information on their website. Also pay attention to the headings on vision or company philosophy; you may find points of connection there between the company's motives and your own (which you can use when practising your answers shortly!). Remember the most important facts about the company.

Exercises: factual preparation

1. Look at three websites of companies you have applied to or that appeal to you and check whether you know the facts about the company, by giving a short summary of the company out loud from memory. Who are they, what do they do and what do they want.
2. What else do you want to know about the company? Is anything unclear? Map out a few questions and note them down. This will come in handy shortly, when preparing for the interview.

3.2 Preparing for the job interview

- A job interview is a mutual introduction
- Practise, practise, practise
- STAR
- Positivity and Activity

A job interview has been a success if you were able to present yourself well and leave a representative impression of yourself, and if you have also gained a better picture of the company and the position you applied for. The point is that you fit into your new job; you are not only presenting yourself to the employer, the employer is also presenting itself to you. It is a mutual introduction. Simply being present in a company for the interview often gives you a lot of information already. Always prepare some questions too about matters relating to an employer that are important to you. Now to make sure you know how to present yourself well.

Preparing for a job interview is the single most important element in coming across well during that interview, and at the same time it is what is most often forgotten. People think: but you can never practise an interview, a real conversation always goes completely differently, and then they suddenly ask odd trick questions and I can no longer find the words and I can never just be myself... etc. This is an entirely mistaken line of thinking. You can practise an interview and you can find the right words, but you do have to actually practise. By being well prepared, you will still be able to answer fluently even under pressure. After all, you already know what it is about: you want to show yourself and demonstrate why you can and want to do that job. You also already know 'the difficult matters': if you have a gap in your CV, or nothing but unfinished courses of study, prepare yourself: an employer is certain to ask about that.

The first thing you need to prepare are STAR examples: focused on the role and on your best qualities, on what you are and what you can do, from your p-CV.

The second thing you need to practise are the answers to the most common job interview questions. These answers should be formulated actively and positively (this can also be done using STAR). Always start with the most important point and stay concise and clear. Being positive sometimes seems impossible; but then think of what Johan Cruyff said: 'Every disadvantage has its advantage'. Sometimes it takes some inventiveness, but every disadvantage can be turned into its positive counterpart. For example: 'Do you have a lot of experience in this role?' (the actual answer being none at all!) 'No, but I do have experience in (***)something similar), and I have the required training: during my studies I discovered that (***)field of work) really suits me and I look forward to getting to work in the field I was trained for'.

Preparing is a matter of doing: start in good time and do all the exercises. An added bonus: most interviewers also use STAR in the way they phrase their questions, so after the exercises you will be prepared for that straight away.

Exercises: Preparing for the job interview

1. In the previous section you practised writing STAR examples. Now it is about telling STAR examples. Start from the examples in your letter and practise delivering a particular STAR. Out loud! This is very important, do NOT practise it in your head. Bear in mind: the first time you have to express something it usually comes out haltingly, after that it often sounds 'rehearsed' or 'recited': keep going! Only then comes the moment when you can tell something naturally. Naturalness takes a great deal of practice! Per aspera ad astra.
 - In any case, practise STARs for questions that refer to the job requirements you need for the role you are applying for or want to apply for. E.g.: You are applying as a team leader: What shows that you are good at leading a team?

- The same applies to questions that allow you to say something about one of the three best qualities from your p-CV. E.g.: You are flexible?

2. Practise answering all the frequently asked questions below out loud: (make notes as you go about what you definitely want to say) 

- Tell us something about yourself.
- What do you know about our organisation? (see factual preparation)
- Why do you want to work here? (think of your personal CV: what do I want!)
- Do you have experience with this kind of work?
- Why did you leave your previous employer?
- What did your employer think of you?
- Why should we hire you?
- What do you consider most important in a job?
- What do you find most attractive about your job?
- Where do you see yourself in 5 years' time?
- What is the biggest risk you have ever taken?
- What do you want to achieve with us?
- Could you give an example of your decisiveness?
- Are you up to the task?
- What do you consider the most important quality in the new member of staff you are appointing?
- What are your strengths?
- What are your weaknesses?
- Don't you think you are too old/too young for this job?

3. Ask your partner or a family member and a friend whether your answers to the questions above were given actively and positively. It is not about what you have done in the past, but about what you do now and who you are now. (ask specifically about these points) Ask whether they have any additional tips for you.

4. Create a [Elevator pitch](#) and rehearse it until you can deliver it at any moment. An elevator pitch is a short self-presentation that you should be able to give during a lift ride with someone who could offer you your dream job. Even if you are perhaps not in a sector where you have to 'sell' yourself with 'pitches', this is still a very important exercise. It teaches you to describe yourself succinctly out loud and trains you to overcome any embarrassment about speaking 'well' of yourself.

5. Practise your elevator pitch in front of the mirror, record it on video if you can and watch it back. Look at your posture and your speaking pace. Are you

standing up straight and speaking calmly and clearly? Are you making good eye contact with your reflection?

6. Prepare the questions you have about the role or the company you are applying to. Draw on the 'what do I want' section of your p-CV for this. Note: a first interview is not the moment to bring up salary and secondary benefits! The interview is entirely aimed at getting to know one another.
7. Tell your partner or a friend two questions for which you have prepared a STAR answer and ask them to choose three questions themselves from the common questions mentioned above. Do a role play with these questions. Ask what your fellow player thought of it and practise again straight away.
8. Write your verbal STARs down on a sheet of paper in a few keywords, together with the tips you want to remind yourself of. 📄

3.3 Practical preparation: what should I wear and where do I need to go?

The practical preparation consists of everything you have to do on the day of the application in order to get to the job interview. Make sure you know a day in advance how to get there. Allow plenty of time for this: you needlessly spoil things for yourself by arriving late. Also make sure you lay out a day in advance all the items of clothing (including your bag, your coat, any gloves or umbrella) that you are going to wear or use that day.

The clothes you wear should match the position you are going to hold. In the advertising world, for example, there is more scope for very fashionable clothing, while the business world sets more store by conservative and 'businesslike' dress. In general you could say: dress conservatively and do not draw attention to your clothes. Whatever you wear, make sure it suits you. You may be a more neutral or slightly smarter version of what you normally wear. Look your best, not completely unrecognisable.

Use the day before the job interview to lay everything out and plan your route. You can look over the information about the company once more and practise your own STARs and answers. Go to bed on time and do something you find relaxing the evening before the interview. Go to the cinema, go swimming, or go to the sauna.

Exercises: practical preparation

1. Practise the job interview in the clothes you are going to wear. See the next chapter for more interview exercises.

TIP: Make sure you have the company's telephone number with you, so that you can let them know if you unexpectedly end up in traffic chaos.

TIP: www.ov9292.nl, maps.google.com