



Guidebook

for

Young Job Seekers

Tips

Exercises

Information



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Tips

Exercises

Information

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Layout: Myrsky Koskimies

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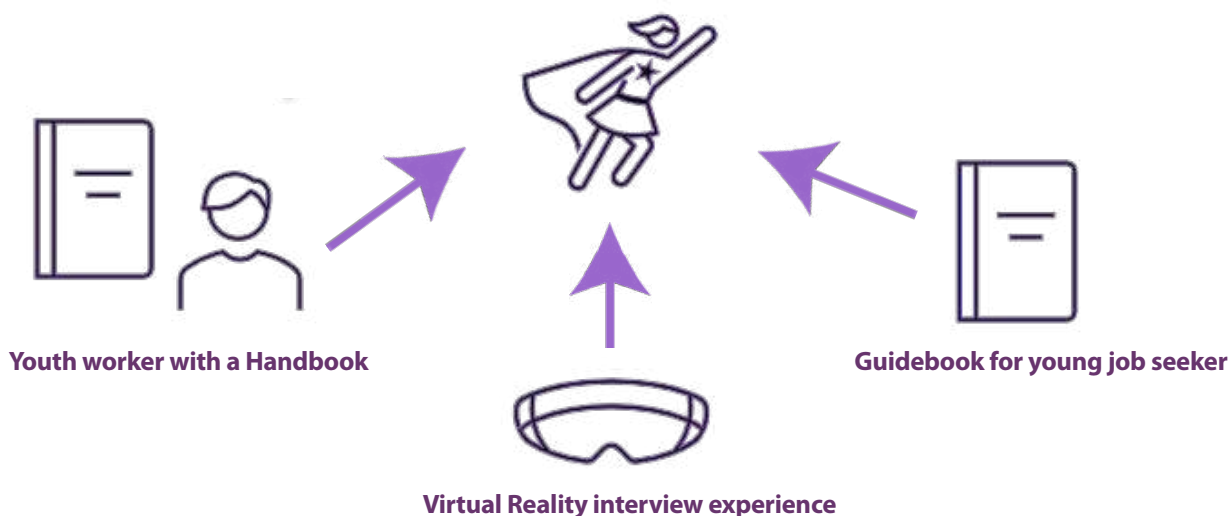
1. Introduction

Welcome!

This guidebook is for you to lean on if you are currently or about to start job search and preparing for a job interview.

The VR-ACE project is about **Enhancing Youth Employment with Virtual Reality Interviews**. The project seeks to address the issues young people face in entering the labour market, particularly their lack of success in interviews.

The guidebook, together with the Virtual Reality (VR) interview experience to strengthen your interview skills, both aim to equip young job seekers with the tools and resources they need to present themselves effectively during job interviews and stand out from the crowd. These tools are designed to be used together. However, they can be used as individual tools as well. Additionally, we have developed a handbook for youth workers.



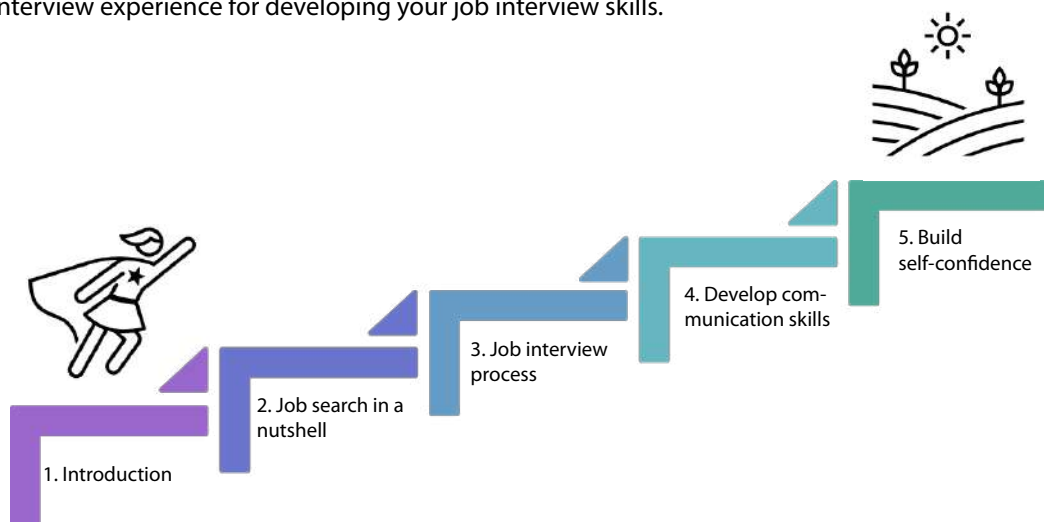


Investigations from the project partners in six EU countries surveyed altogether 99 young job seekers and 33 youth workers. Field research showed that young adults especially need and wish for support in developing self-confidence, communication and presentation skills, stress management, and self-awareness to land their first job.

The structure of this guidebook for young job seekers is built on these findings.

- In Chapter 2, you are guided through the job search process. You learn the basics of job search, creating CV and application, job interviews, and employment contracts.
- In Chapter 3, we focus more in-depth on job interviews – how to prepare for them, what happens during them, how to navigate difficult questions, and how you make an impression afterward. You get valuable tips and checklists that support you in this phase.
- In Chapter 4, we focus on communication skills, such as active listening, verbal and non-verbal communication, and adapting your communication in different situations. In addition, you learn ways of practicing self-marketing and storytelling that are valuable for you in both writing applications and succeeding in job interviews.
- Chapter 5 is all about building confidence and how you can take steps towards more self-confidence. This chapter gives an outlook on different tools and approaches to building one's self-confidence, stress-coping, and relaxation skills. In the end of each chapter we have included some recommendations for extra resources for you.

Additionally in the end of this guidebook, we have included a VR Tutorial and information about the Virtual Reality interview experience for developing your job interview skills.



We hope this guidebook is useful for you and helps you in your pursuit of gainful employment!



2. Job search in a nutshell

This chapter revolves around equipping young job seekers with essential skills and knowledge necessary for navigating the job market effectively. It emphasises the importance of understanding various aspects of job searching, including crafting CV and applications, understanding what happens in an interview, understanding employer-employee relationships, and the significance of employment contracts.

What you will learn:

- Identify your career interests and understand how to reflect on personal skills, values, and aspirations to align with suitable job opportunities.
- Craft effective applications and tailored CVs and cover letters that highlight relevant skills and experiences, increasing the chances of securing interviews.
- Understanding what happens in job interviews.
- Understanding employment rights and learning about the roles and responsibilities of both employers and employees, as well as recognizing and advocating for one's rights in the workplace.
- Gaining knowledge of the key components of employment contracts, enabling job seekers to understand their rights and obligations before signing an agreement.

2.1 Searching for a job

Searching for a job can be a challenging experience. Understanding how to effectively find and apply for positions is essential for success. Employers usually share job advertisements online on their company websites and social media, and on various job search platforms. Hidden jobs can be found by contacting employers directly.

Identifying your career interests and goals can lead to a more focused and effective job search. Research shows that self-reflection is a key part of career development (Savickas, 2005), allowing individuals to align their skills and values with potential job opportunities. By taking the time to reflect on your experiences, values, and aspirations, you can improve your chances of finding a job that truly fits your needs and desires.

Exercise: Job search reflection

Goal: To help job seekers identify their career interests and refine their job search approach.

Preparations: Set aside quiet time for reflection (30-60 minutes). Have a notebook or digital document ready for notes.

Description:

1. **Self-Assessment:** List your top 5 skills and experiences. Reflect on how these can translate into potential job roles. Write down your career interests and preferred industries.
2. **Values Exploration:** Identify 3-5 values that are important to you in a job (e.g., work-life balance, career growth, company ethics). Rank these values in order of importance to clarify priorities in your job search.
3. **Goal Setting:** Set short-term goals (e.g., apply to three jobs this week) and long-term goals (e.g., secure a job in the next three months) for your job search.
4. **Networking Action:** Identify at least two people in your network to reach out to for advice or potential job leads.

Resources and materials: Career exploration website (e.g. Eures). Journaling supplies or digital note-taking apps (e.g., Evernote, Google Docs). Online self-assessment tools (e.g., 16 Personalities test, VIA Character Strengths Survey).

Tip: Track your strengths and weaknesses

Knowing what you're good at can help you present yourself more confidently in CV, application and job interviews. While being aware of your weaknesses shows self-awareness and a willingness to improve. Learn more on how to identify your strengths and weaknesses in Chapter 5.

Exercise: Successful job search

Goal: Learn steps to make your job search successful

Preparations: Find a quiet space where you are not disturbed for 15 minutes. Have a digital device with internet access, notebook or digital document for notes.

Description:

1. Watch the following video (How to Get Your First Job – No Experience).
[How to Get Your First Job – No Experience](#)
2. Write down notes and your thoughts.



Tip: Stay organised

Stay organised during your job search by creating a spreadsheet to track applications, deadlines, and responses. Regularly review and adjust your strategy based on what works best for you.

2.2 CV and application writing

Writing an effective CV (curriculum vitae or resume) and application is a vital skill for job seekers, as these documents serve as the first impression to potential employers.

A well-crafted CV outlines an individual's qualifications, skills, and experiences, making it essential to tailor it to specific job opportunities (Brown & Lent, 2013). A cover letter is a written response to the job advertisement answering to questions like 'why you want this job', 'why should you be hired', and 'what experience you have to excel in this role'. Together these form your application, and can also include letters of recommendation and information filled on a company's career portal.

Learning how to write compelling applications can significantly enhance a candidate's chances of securing an interview. Research indicates that a targeted CV can increase the likelihood of being shortlisted (Chapman et al., 2005). In the following exercises you get to practice creating an effective CV to improve your job search success.

Exercise: Creating CV from scratch

Goal: Guidance to develop a professional CV that effectively highlights your skills and experiences.

Preparations: Gather personal information, including contact details and professional social media links (e.g. LinkedIn). Compile a list of your education, work experience, skills, and any relevant certifications or training.

Description:

1. **Choose a CV Format:** Decide on a format that suits your style and the industry you are applying to (e.g., chronological, functional, or hybrid).
2. **Contact Information:** At the top of your CV, include your name, phone number, email address, and location (city/town). Consider adding a link to your LinkedIn profile.
3. **Professional Summary:** Write a brief summary (2-3 sentences) that highlights your career goals and key qualifications, tailored to the job you are applying for.
4. **Work Experience:** List your work experience in reverse chronological order. For each position, include the following: Job title, Company name, Location, Dates of employment (month/year), and A brief description of your responsibilities and achievements, using bullet points to make it easy to read.
5. **Education:** Include your educational background, listing your qualifications in reverse chronological order. Include: Degree obtained, Institution name, Dates attended, Any relevant coursework or honours.
6. **Skills Section:** Create a section dedicated to your key skills that are relevant to the job you're applying for (e.g., technical skills, languages, soft skills).
7. **Additional Sections (Optional):** Depending on your background, you may want to include sections for certifications, volunteer work, publications, or professional affiliations.
8. **Formatting and Proofreading:** Ensure your CV is well-organised, using consistent fonts and formatting. Keep it to 1-2 pages, and proofread for spelling and grammatical errors.

Resources and Materials: CV templates from reliable sources (e.g., Europass, Canva, or Microsoft Word). Examples of effective CVs from your industry.

Tip: Customise your CV regularly

To increase your chances of standing out to potential employers it is useful to customise your CV for each application. The purpose of customising is to highlight the most relevant experiences and skills that align with the job description at hand.

Regularly practising CV tailoring for different roles enhances your ability to present yourself as the ideal candidate for each position.

Exercise: CV tailoring practice

Goal: To practise customising your CV for a specific job application.

Preparations: Select a job advertisement that interests you. Have a copy of your current CV ready.

Description:

1. Analyse the Job Ad: Identify key skills and qualifications required.
2. Match Your Experience: Highlight relevant experiences and skills in your CV that align with the job requirements.
3. Update Your CV: Modify your CV to emphasise the most pertinent information for the role.
4. Review and Refine: Ensure the tailored CV is concise, error-free, and effectively showcases your suitability for the position.

Resources and Materials: Job advertisement details. Current CV. Access to the Europass CV builder for guidance.

2.3 Job interview

Job interviews are about finding the best fit for both employer and employee. Employers are looking for a candidate who's capable, and has the potential and enthusiasm for the role. As a job seeker and potential employee, a job interview also gives you the opportunity to see and hear more about the company and job role you are applying for.

Approaches to interviews vary according to needs and goals of the employer (McDaniel et al., 1994). Employers are using different types of interviewing such as:

- **Face-to-face interviews.** This is the most common type of interview. These are usually held at the employer premises in an office building or a site location depending on the field of work. These interviews can be formal or informal in style.
- **Online interviews.** Online interviews can be an effective way to have a job interview if the job you are applying for is in another city or even country. Online interviews can be requested by the employer or by the employee.
- **Video interviews.** This type of interview is sometimes used when multiple candidates are still considered for the same position. The candidate is requested to submit one or more short self-recorded videos where they reply to preset interview questions. The employer usually gives clear instructions on how to submit video(s).
- **Group interviews.** On some occasions group interviews are used. Several candidates are invited to the group interview at the employer office or other location where they participate in the job interview together. Candidates may also have group tasks to perform. The purpose of these interviews is to give the interviewer insight on how the candidates perform in groups and under pressure.

Tip: Prepare and practice well for the interview

Preparing for a job interview is a crucial part of increasing your chances to get the job. Honest, prepared, and thoughtful responses are key to making a strong impression in a job interview. For a detailed description on what happens in a job interview and checklists to support you, see Chapter 3. For tools to develop your communication skills, see Chapter 4. For ideas on how to practice for job interviews, see Chapter 5.

2.4 Employer and employee roles, responsibilities, and rights

Understanding the roles, responsibilities, and rights of both employers and employees is essential for job seekers navigating today's complex work environment. Knowledge of these aspects not only empowers individuals to assert their rights but also helps them meet their obligations within the workplace.

Research indicates that clear understanding of employment rights significantly enhances job satisfaction and workplace productivity (Guest, 2017). Moreover, awareness of employer responsibilities fosters a more positive and respectful work culture (Brewster et al., 2016).

Exercise: Understanding employer and employee rights

Goal: Learn about the roles and rights of employers and employees in the workplace.

Preparations: Set aside quiet time for reflection (20-30 minutes). Have a digital device with internet connection, and notebook or digital document ready for notes.

Description:

1. **Gather information:** Search for information on local labour laws and employment rights. Identify relevant resources, such as websites or books focused on employment law.
2. **Research local laws:** Investigate the employment laws in your area, noting key rights and responsibilities for both parties - employers and employees.
3. **Create a summary:** Develop a summary of the most important rights and responsibilities that apply to you as a potential employee. Develop another summary of the most important rights and responsibilities that apply to an employer.

Resources and Materials: Local government websites on employment law (e.g. EURES). Books such as Employment Law for Dummies by Jennifer Monroe or The Employer's Handbook by Barry A. Friedman. Online forums or discussion groups focused on workplace issues (e.g. EPALE).

Tip: Stay informed

Stay informed about your rights and responsibilities as an employee by regularly reviewing local labour laws and seeking guidance from professionals in your field. Knowledge is key to navigating the workplace successfully.

Tip: Learn to advocate for your rights

Engage in role-playing exercises with peers or your youth worker to practice addressing workplace issues related to rights and responsibilities and advocating for your rights. Role-play scenarios can be built around topics such as 'job description', 'working hours', 'salary or bonus discussion', and 'terms of termination'.

2.5 Employment contract

An employment contract is a fundamental component of the employer-employee relationship, serving as a legally binding document that outlines the terms and conditions of employment. Understanding the intricacies of employment contracts is essential for job seekers to protect their rights and ensure clarity in their work arrangements. Research highlights that clear contracts contribute to better job satisfaction and lower turnover rates, as employees are more likely to feel secure and informed about their roles (Brewster et al., 2016).

Exercise: Understanding employment contracts

Goal: Learn the knowledge necessary to navigate employment agreements confidently and to understand the implications of the terms you are committing to.

Preparations: Set aside quiet time for reflection (20-30 minutes). Have a digital device with internet connection, and notebook or digital document ready for notes.

Description:

1. Gather 2-3 examples of employment contracts (from reliable sources).
2. Research local laws regarding employment contracts in your area.
3. Review contract examples: Examine different types of employment contracts, noting key components and variations between them.
4. Create a contract checklist: Develop a checklist of important terms and conditions to look for in an employment contract.

Resources and Materials: Sample employment contracts (available online or through career services). Local/ National government websites outlining employment laws. Guides or articles on understanding employment contracts (e.g. EURES).

Tip: Read employment contract carefully before signing

Don't hesitate to ask for clarification on any terms that you do not understand or that seem unfair. Knowledge of your contract can empower you in your role and protect your rights as an employee.

Tip: Practice contract negotiations

Before contract negotiations, create a list of things you wish to be included in the employment contract - 'the best case scenario'. Then create another list that presents alternative outcomes which you are willing to accept (BATNA, best alternative to negotiated agreement). This helps you be more prepared for the actual contract negotiation. Consider also engaging in mock negotiations of contract terms with peers, focusing on how to advocate for fair terms.

Extra resources

Eures job search portal of European Union: <https://europa.eu/eures/portal/jv-se/home?lang=en>

VIA Character Strengths Survey: <https://www.viacharacter.org/>

16 personalities test: <https://www.16personalities.com/>

Youtube Video on how to create a CV using the Europass website: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4pPiVvk7ITXo&ab_channel=DearYoungGraduate

Create your Europass CV: <https://europass.europa.eu/en/create-europass-cv>

Book for business: Employment Law for Dummies by Jennifer Monroe

Book for business: The Employer's Handbook by Barry A. Friedman



3. Job Interview Process

This chapter is about the interview process and how you can act before, during and after it so that you have the best results. If your CV and application have succeeded, it is very likely that by now you will be invited for an interview. Let's see some effective strategies to prepare for your first interview, before, during and after its completion.

What you will learn:

- Prepare effectively for an interview.
- Know how to act during the interview.
- Be prepared for difficult questions.
- Know how to follow up with the potential employer, after the interview.

3.1 Preparing for a job interview

Preparing thoroughly for an interview involves understanding both the employer and the industry. The more you know about the company, the better you can demonstrate a genuine interest and motivation. Start by researching the company, the specific position, and the industry as a whole. Here are some key steps to consider:

- **Research the company:** Review the job description closely, focusing on how your skills and experiences align with the role. Examine the organization's website, social media presence, and recent news to understand its goals, values, and any current events or industry trends that might impact it. This

insight can help you tailor your responses to show that you're informed about the organization's mission and challenges.

- **Gather insider knowledge:** Try to connect with individuals who have a deeper understanding of the organization. Reach out to contacts on LinkedIn, friends, alumni from your school, faculty members, or industry peers. Their insights can give you a clearer picture of the workplace culture, organizational goals, and any specifics about the role.
- **Prepare key points to highlight:** Prepare thoughtful answers to essential questions that are likely to come up. Common themes include why you are interested in this position and why you would be a good fit.
 - * **Interest in the position:** Reflect on how your background—academic, professional, co-curricular—has cultivated an interest in this role. Why do you want to work at this specific company?
 - * **Why you are a good fit:** Assess how your work experience, academic achievements, and personal qualities make you a strong candidate. Highlight relevant skills, using examples to illustrate your qualifications with storytelling techniques such as the STAR method (Situation, Task, Action, Result). See more in 4.4.
- **Prepare to answer challenging questions:** Practice strategies to help you navigate challenging questions with confidence. See more in 3.3.
- **Practice interview skills:** Writing down answers to common questions is a great first step, but verbal practice is essential. Schedule a mock interview with a career counselor, friend, or mentor who can provide feedback on your responses and body language. You might also try using the VR-ACE app or an online tool like Big Interview, where you can practice responding to questions and assess your performance.
- **Prepare questions for the employer:** Remember, the interview is also an opportunity for you to learn about the organization. Prepare questions that help you evaluate if this position aligns with your career goals, values, and preferred work environment.

Tip: Mock interviews

A mock interview is a practice interview that you can do either alone, together with another person, or with a software app, in order to prepare yourself for a real interview situation. Mock interviews build your confidence to communicate your answers and you become more familiar with the interview process. In Chapter 5 you find more information on mock interviews and tools for practice.

On the Day of the Interview:

- Arrive 10–15 minutes early to avoid any delays.
- Have with you a copy of your CV, any notes, and other materials you may need.
- Turn off or silence mobile devices and avoid wearing strong scents.
- Enter the interview with a positive attitude and treat all staff members respectfully.
- Also, pay attention to your physical and emotional health. A job is just a job, but your health comes first!

Tip: Make preparations for online interview

If you are invited to attend an online job interview, prepare a quiet and calm space with a neutral view and enough light. You can attend an online interview from your home, local library, at friends' or neighbours' house, etc. Check 30-60 minutes beforehand that your internet connection, digital devices and the application chosen for online interview are all working. Headphones may be useful.

Tip: Take a short walk before the interview

A few minutes of physical exercise before can release endorphins that improve your mood and reduce anxiety. In Chapter 5 you learn more tools for coping with stressful situations and relaxation techniques.

3.2 During the job interview

Job interviews are about finding the best fit. Employers are looking for a candidate who's both capable and enthusiastic about the role. Honest, prepared, and thoughtful responses are key to making a strong impression.

Interviews are also great opportunities for you to learn more about the job role and employer. By asking questions about the company, team and role, you can indicate your interest and enthusiasm to the interviewer.

During the interview, pay attention to do the following:

- **Active listening:** Pay close attention to the questions asked, ensuring your responses are relevant. Tailor your answers to address the specific needs of the role.
- **Storytelling techniques:** When possible, provide specific examples by describing a situation, the actions you took, the result, and how it applies to the role.
- **Focus on positives:** Emphasize the strengths in your experience rather than apologizing for any perceived gaps.
- **Communication style:** Speak clearly, avoiding fillers like "um" and "like." Be concise, and avoid rambling by directly answering each question.
- **Maintain good eye contact and positive body language:** If there are multiple interviewers, engage with each person to show that you are confident and engaged.
- **Observe company culture:** Take note of the office layout and interactions to gauge the work environment.
- **Obtain contact information:** If possible, get the business card of your interviewer(s) to send a thank you note afterward.

Tip: Practice your communication and stress-coping skills

Focus on building your performance and confidence for the upcoming job interview by practicing your communication skills in Chapter 4. Job interviews are often stressful, however stress is your body's natural response to pressure. Stress-coping strategies can help you manage and maintain emotional balance during interviews. Learn more in Chapter 5.

3.3 How to navigate through difficult interview questions

Even when tailored for specific candidates, certain challenging interview questions tend to come up frequently. Below are common tough interview questions and strategies to help you navigate them with confidence.

1. **Tell me about yourself.** This introductory question helps interviewers gauge your ability to communicate. Offer a concise overview of your career, focusing on recent roles, skills, and relevant certifications. A brief mention of hobbies can add a personal touch but should not dominate the answer. Preparing a 1-minute work bio can be useful, as it often leads into the next question.
2. **Why should we hire you?** Highlight relevant skills and focus on the value you bring to the role, avoiding “me-focused” answers. Mention unique skills or experiences that set you apart and align with the company’s goals.
3. **How are you different from other candidates?** Similar to the previous question, this one encourages you to showcase unique qualifications. Consider mentioning certifications, interdisciplinary skills, or specific experiences that make you a strong fit.
4. **Describe a conflict you experienced and how it was resolved.** For this challenging question, choose a conflict with a positive resolution. Focus on a situation where you actively contributed to a solution, demonstrating your problem-solving and interpersonal skills.
5. **What do you look for in a boss?** This question assesses your compatibility with the company culture. Avoid specifics and stick with positive qualities like fairness and good communication, which most managers aim to embody.
6. **Where do you see yourself in 5/10 years?** This question helps interviewers gauge your career ambitions. Express realistic, professional goals, such as advancement within the company, while acknowledging the role’s potential growth paths.
7. **What are your salary expectations?** Provide a salary range based on market research rather than a fixed number, leaving room for negotiation. Salary guides and location-based data are useful resources for determining an appropriate range.
8. **What could our company improve?** This is a chance to show constructive thinking. Offer a thoughtful, research-based insight, demonstrating your knowledge and interest in contributing to the company’s growth.
9. **How do you handle criticism?** Explain that you approach criticism constructively, perhaps with an example of how feedback helped you grow professionally.
10. **Do you have any questions for me?** This final question is an opportunity to show enthusiasm. Consider asking about day-to-day responsibilities, team culture, or growth opportunities. Thoughtful questions demonstrate genuine interest in the role.

Tip: Tackle inappropriate or illegal interview questions

Learn about interview questions that are inappropriate or illegal in EU countries: <https://www.eurobrussels.com/article/203/>. Prepare and plan for phrases and ways to evade these questions politely in case they occur.



3.4 After the job interview

Send a thank-you note: Within 24 hours, send a personalized thank-you note expressing appreciation for the opportunity to interview. Reiterate your interest in the role and briefly mention something specific from the conversation to reinforce your enthusiasm.

Self-evaluation: Reflect on your performance. Were there any questions you struggled with? Consider how you might improve for future interviews. This evaluation will help you refine your answers and build confidence.

Evaluate the position and company: Think about what you learned during the interview and assess if the role and company culture align with your career goals and values.

Prepare for next steps: If you make it past the first round, you may be invited to additional interviews. Use the time between rounds to review notes, refine your responses, and dive deeper into specific aspects of the role or organization.

Handling offers and follow-ups: If you're offered the job immediately (a rare situation), express appreciation and politely ask for time to consider the offer. Confirm the timeline for your decision to manage expectations.

If you haven't heard back: If the employer does not respond within the initial hiring timeline, follow up with a courteous email or call to reaffirm your interest and inquire about the timeline.

By following these steps, you can prepare effectively, communicate confidently, and leave a lasting impression that reflects your professionalism and enthusiasm for the opportunity.

Extra resources

Checklist for Interview Preparation. Make sure to read it a week before the interview and refresh it the day before. <https://www.albright.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Interview-Preparation-Checklist.pdf>

Big Interview online tool: <https://www.biginterview.com/>

Learn how to reply to interview question "Tell me about yourself?": <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zegBzsTBTA&t=5s>

STAR Method: How to Use This Technique to Ace Your Next Job Interview: <https://www.themuse.com/advice/star-interview-method>

"5 Tips to Calm Interview Anxiety and Interview Nerves!", Life Work Balance Channel: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dHXwUp8ZvA>



4. Develop communication skills

This chapter is about developing your communication skills in general and to build your performance for the upcoming job interview. Communication can be summed up to be the exchange of information (North, 2024). Good communication skills consist of active listening, nonverbal and verbal communication, ability to adapt communication style, and storytelling.

What you will learn:

- Learn techniques to improve your active listening skills.
- Understand the importance of both nonverbal and verbal communication.
- Learn how adapting your communication style can make a difference in communication.
- Understand the possibilities of self-marketing and self-branding.
- Learn storytelling techniques to effectively communicate your experience in an interview.

4.1 Active listening

Active listening means engaging with what people say by giving affirmative replies and asking follow-up questions to show that you are paying attention (Gallo, 2024).

Why is active listening important? (Bergeron & Loignon, 2024)

- By listening actively you convey the message that what others have to say is valuable.
- It facilitates greater understanding between individuals or teams.
- It fosters psychological safety.

You can improve active listening by practising following techniques:

- Pay close attention to the speaker's behaviour and body language to gain a better understanding of their message.
- Signal that you are following along with visual cues like nodding and eye contact, ask clarifying questions to ensure your understanding.
- Avoid potential interruptions - from technology (phone notifications) and from humans (door knocks, etc.).
- Keep an open mind. Rather than evaluating the message and offering an opinion, simply make the speaker feel heard and validated.
- Confirm that you have understood what the speaker has said by verifying your understanding.

Exercise: Practise active listening with a partner

Goal: Practise active listening with a partner.

Preparations: Find a quiet space where you are not disturbed for 10-15 minutes.

Description:

1. Let your partner share a story of something emotional that happened (3-5 minutes).
2. Demonstrate listening through body language and nonverbal responses. Exclude any commenting at this point.
3. When your partner is done sharing their story, reflect back the content of what the partner shared. Restate their main points in your own words. This shows that you have been paying attention and helps to clarify any misunderstandings.
4. Next, reflect back also the emotions that the partner shared. Then switch roles.

Resources and materials: How to Practise Active Listening: 16 Examples & Techniques. Blog Article. <https://positivepsychology.com/active-listening-techniques/#techniques>.



4.2 Verbal and non-verbal communication

Verbal communication refers to communication in which a message is transmitted using words, spoken or written.

What should jobseekers consider when formulating their message?

- **Clarity.** Choose concrete, familiar words that refer to tangible objects.
- **Vivid language.** Select lively verbs and speak in an active voice.
- **Rhythm.** Choice and arrangement of words create a pattern of sound.

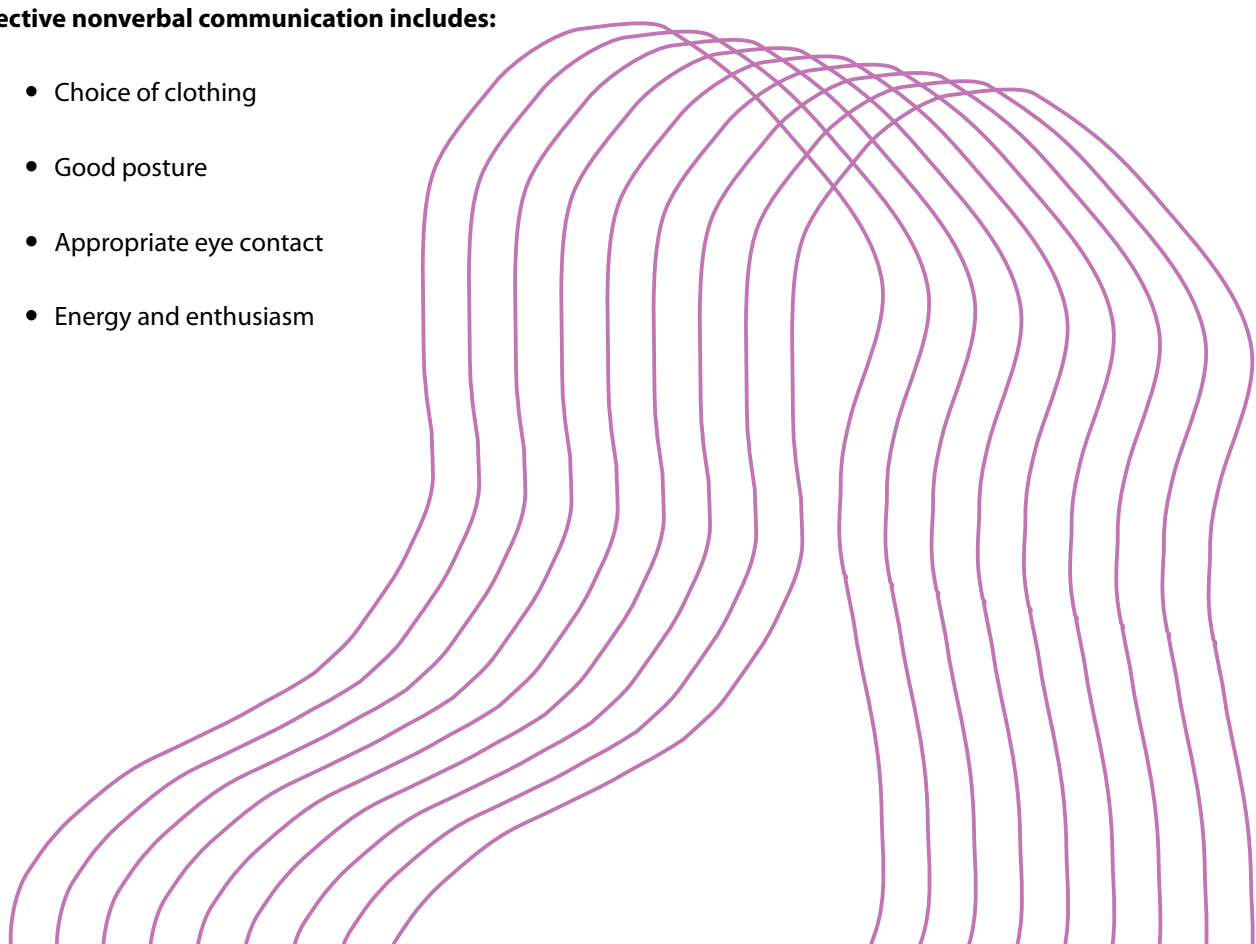
In many situations, non-verbal communication can be just as impactful, if not more so, than verbal communication (California State University Monterey Bay, 2023). For example, a firm handshake and confident body language in a job interview can leave a positive impression, while nervous fidgeting or avoiding eye contact may have the opposite effect.

Types of non-verbal communication include:

- Body Language
- The Tone of Voice
- Facial Expressions
- Eye Contact
- Posture and Gestures

Effective nonverbal communication includes:

- Choice of clothing
- Good posture
- Appropriate eye contact
- Energy and enthusiasm



Exercise: Observe your verbal and nonverbal communication

Goal: To help young job seekers feel more comfortable with their speaking abilities.

Preparations: Find a quiet space where you are not disturbed for 10-15 minutes.

Description:

1. Practise alone by speaking in front of a mirror or recording yourself giving a presentation or speech.
2. When watching yourself, you can study your body language and take steps to improve it - for example, by using more or limiting your gestures and maintaining a smile or friendly demeanour. When you record yourself, assess your voice and tone.

Tip: Ask friends and family for feedback

You can also practise your verbal communication skills in more realistic settings, such as in front of friends or family. Not only will this help you feel more comfortable speaking in front of others, but it also allows you to gain feedback. If you have a speech or presentation planned, perform it as you would in front of the actual audience and ask these friends and family to give feedback on your verbal and nonverbal communication abilities. Their insights will instruct you on what you already do well and where you need improvement.

4.3 Adapting Communication Style

Different communication styles influence how a person interacts with others, how their messages are perceived, and how effectively a person connects with those around them.

How can you identify your communication style?

- **Self-reflection.** Consider how you typically express yourself in conversations.
- **Feedback from others.**
- **Communication style assessments.** These assessments typically ask you to respond to a series of questions or scenarios, and they analyse your responses to determine your predominant style.
- **Observation.** Pay attention to how you communicate in different contexts.

Exercise: Explore different communication styles

Goal: Increase self-awareness of different communication styles and understand how it impacts interactions with others in a possible workplace.

Preparations: Find a quiet space where you are not disturbed for 15 minutes.

Description:

1. Think of your past experiences regarding misunderstandings and conflicts in communication. These can be experiences with family or friends or common workplace scenarios, such as giving feedback to a colleague, handling a difficult client, negotiating a deadline or resolving a team conflict.
2. Watch these videos and write down your thoughts. [Listening skills for conflict resolution](#), [Framing a Conversation for conflict resolution](#)



Tip: Practice changing your communication style

It can be valuable to observe yourself and others in communicational situations while developing your communication skills. Try asking more open-ended questions and listen actively. Pay attention to how the others react to different types of messages and situations. Notice their words and tone, body language and facial expressions, topics and questions they raise or avoid, what motivates and frustrates them, and what feedback and support they need or offer. Developing your understanding of communication, you come to anticipate their needs, respect their preferences, and communicate more respectfully.



4.4 Self-marketing and storytelling

One of the primary goals of creating a CV and application, and being invited to a job interview, is to capture the attention of hiring employers in order to stand out from the competition. Just like a company markets its products, young job seekers can effectively promote and showcase their skills to potential employers.

Self-marketing to get noticed for your skills

Self-marketing begins with self-awareness, by reflecting on your distinct talents, skills, and academic or professional achievements. According to Ninawe (2023), to get noticed by the potential employer, personal brand plays a crucial role in how you present yourself to the world, and it can make a huge difference in whether or not you get hired:

- **Identify your unique selling point.** What makes you stand out from other job candidates? Is it your experience, your education, or your personality?
- **Craft a personal brand statement.** This should be a short statement that sums up who you are and what you bring to the table. For example, "I'm a marketing professional with a passion for storytelling and a track record of driving results."
- **Develop a consistent personal brand across all job search platforms** (e.g. LinkedIn, EURES, Europass)
- **Attend Career Fairs.** It is a great way to meet potential employers face-to-face and learn about open positions.

Storytelling for sharing your experience

Storytelling consists of five fundamentals which help job seekers to impress hiring employers:

1. **Situation - action - result structure.** The situation sets the scene and establishes some tension or build-up to the problem the job seeker faced. The action addresses the measures the job seeker took to deal with the situation, and the result encapsulates the outcome of the situation.
2. **Character development.** Job seekers' stories need to demonstrate the depth of their character to the interviewer without exposing flaws that will scare them away.
3. **Add details.** Details about a job seeker's professional experience will make their stories more credible and enticing for the interviewer.
4. **The Two minute rule.** Levinson (2023) recommends to draft stories on paper, rehearse them out loud with friends or family who can provide feedback, and revise them as necessary until the job seeker can hit all necessary points in two minutes or less.
5. **Delivery.** Job seekers should speak about their work with enthusiasm. It demonstrates another quality that hiring managers find irresistible in prospective employees which is confidence.

Exercise: Practice storytelling with STAR interview technique

Goal: Learn to describe your experience through the STAR method.

STAR is an interview technique that gives you a straightforward format you can use to tell a story by laying out the situation (S), task (T), action (A), and result (R). STAR is a time-tested, effective technique for crafting and presenting persuasive, compelling stories (Herzog, 2022).

Preparations: Find a quiet space where you are not disturbed for 10-15 minutes. Have a paper and pen, or a digital device for writing notes.

Description:

1. Use the STAR method to practice one of the following two scenarios, or you can create your own scenario:
 - a. Tell us a situation where you found yourself in a difficult position during your education years and how you solved it.
 - b. Tell us about a problem you solved in an educational or recreational context e.g. it can be about a holiday, sports, etc.
2. **Situation.** Describe the situation that you were in or the task that you needed to accomplish. You must describe a specific event or situation, not a generalised description of what you have done in the past.
3. **Task.** What goal were you working toward? Describe what your responsibility was in that situation.
4. **Action.** Describe the actions you took to address the situation with an appropriate amount of detail and keep the focus on you. What specific steps did you take and what was your particular contribution? Be careful that you don't describe what the team or group did when talking about a project, but what you actually did. Use the word "I," not "we" when describing actions.
5. **Result.** Describe the outcome of your actions and don't be shy about taking credit for your behaviour. What happened? How did the event end? What did you accomplish? What did you learn? Make sure your answer contains multiple positive results.
6. Make sure that you follow all parts of the STAR method. Be as specific as possible at all times, without rambling or including too much information. Also, eliminate any examples that do not paint you in a positive light. However, keep in mind that some examples that have a negative result (such as "lost the game") can highlight your strengths in the face of adversity.

Resources and materials: VA Wizard: The STAR Method of Behavioural Interviewing. https://www.vawizard.org/wiz-pdf/STAR_Method_Interviews.pdf.



Extra resources

Learn more about verbal communication on the website of Education and Training Boards Ireland: <https://library.etbi.ie/communication/verbal>

12 Top storytelling marketing examples: how brands tell stories. Attest. <https://www.askattest.com/blog/articles/12-top-storytelling-marketing-examples>.



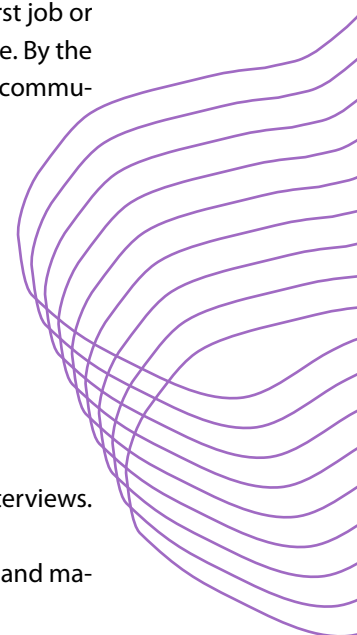
5. Build self-confidence

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Self-confidence is crucial for any young job seeker. It acts as the foundation for how you present yourself, tackle challenges, and respond to opportunities. Whether you're starting your first job or transitioning between roles, having confidence in your abilities can make all the difference. By the end of this chapter, you will not only understand what makes you unique but also how to communicate your value in professional settings confidently.

What you will learn:

- Understand the importance of self-confidence in job seeking.
- Identify personal strengths and weaknesses and learn how to leverage them.
- Develop techniques to improve your self-awareness and self-confidence.
- Learn stress-management and relaxation strategies for high-pressure situations, such as job interviews.
- Practice and prepare for job interviews, enhancing your ability to speak about your strengths and manage your weaknesses confidently.



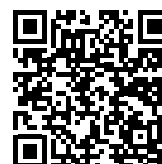
5.1 Identify your strengths and weaknesses

One of the most important steps in building self-confidence as a jobseeker is understanding your own strengths and weaknesses. Knowing what you're good at can help you present yourself more confidently in interviews, while being aware of your weaknesses shows self-awareness and a willingness to improve.

- Strengths are the skills, qualities, and talents you excel at, whether it's problem-solving, communication, or leadership. These are the attributes that make you unique and valuable to potential employers.
- Weaknesses are areas where you might struggle or need improvement. Recognizing them is just as important because it demonstrates self-awareness and a growth mindset.

Understanding your strengths allows you to focus on what you do best, while being aware of your weaknesses can help you develop strategies for overcoming them. This is especially important when preparing for job interviews, as employers often ask about both your strengths and weaknesses to assess your fit for the role. Answering this question is not always easy as it takes self-awareness and self-reflection to know what your strengths and weaknesses are and being able to address them during a job interview.

You should be able to identify what these are, depending on the job you are applying for. For example, if you are applying for a job where you're supposed to talk to people, you might want to focus on your social skills.



Check out this short video about how to answer the question: "What is your greatest strength?" [How to answer "What is Your Greatest Strength?"](#)

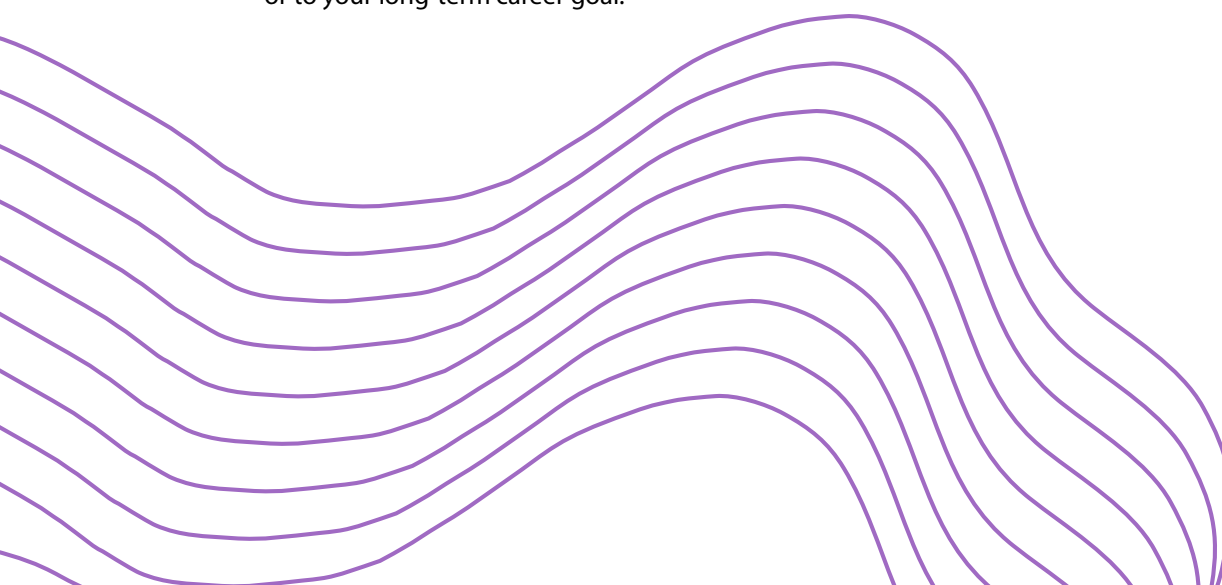
Similarly, here's a video about what to say and not to say when you're asked: "what are your greatest weaknesses?" [Interview Question: "What Are Your Weaknesses?" And You Say, "..."](#)



There are different ways to identify your strengths and weaknesses.

- Personal reflection
- Asking feedback from people close to you (family, friends, teachers, etc.)
- Using online tools, such as StrengthsFinder (<https://high5test.com/>), VIA Character Strengths Survey (<https://www.viacharacter.org/>) or 16Personalities (<https://www.16personalities.com>).

Once you've identified your strengths and weaknesses, think about how they apply to the job you're seeking or to your long-term career goal.



Exercise: SWOT Analysis

Goal: To help you better understand your strengths and weaknesses through a structured self-assessment.

Preparations: A notebook or digital journal to record your thoughts. Access to feedback from family, friends, or colleagues.

Description:

1. **Define a job goal.** It can be a certain specific job role you are applying for or a dream job you wish to have 5-10 years from now.
2. **Strengths:** Think about the tasks you enjoy doing and where you've excelled in the past. What strengths could especially help you achieve your job goal? Write down 3–5 strengths.
3. **Weaknesses:** Identify 3–5 areas where you feel you could improve or have struggled. Are some of these especially important to tackle to help you achieve your job goal?
4. **Opportunities:** Consider external opportunities such as specific job experience or training that could help you achieve your job goal?
5. **Threats:** Identify any external challenges or obstacles that might hinder your growth and achieving the job goal, such as limited experience in a certain area.
6. Finally, reflect on your notes. Maybe you are able to identify next steps towards your goal.

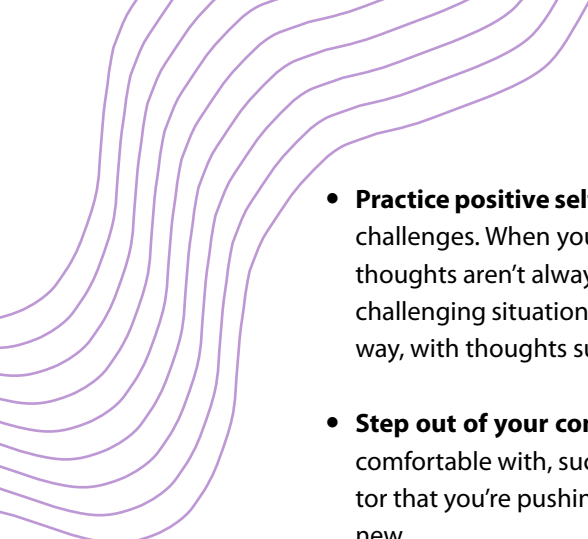
Resources and Materials: A SWOT analysis template (available online or you can create your own). Access to one of the recommended online assessment tools (e.g., StrengthsFinder, VIA Character Strengths Survey, or 16Personalities).

5.2 Build your confidence

Self-confidence is the trust you have in your own abilities, qualities, and judgment. It's essential because it affects how you communicate with others, how you handle challenges, and how you are perceived by potential employers. Confidence allows you to present yourself more effectively, answer questions with ease, and respond calmly to unexpected situations in job interviews.

Your level of confidence will affect how you present yourself to others. There are several ways in which you can become more self-confident:

- **Practice self-care.** Self-care practices include maintaining a balanced diet, with nutrient-rich foods that increase your level of energy and make you feel stronger; exercising, practicing meditation, which helps you recognise and accept yourself and reduce negative self-talk; and getting enough sleep.
- **Practice self-compassion.** This means being kind and understanding toward yourself when you face mistakes, failures, or setbacks. It helps you be more emotionally resilient and enables you to handle difficult emotions more effectively, strengthening your relationship with yourself and others.

- 
- **Practice positive self-talk.** This can build self-compassion, helping you overcome self-doubt and face challenges. When you catch yourself thinking you're not capable or ready, remind yourself that these thoughts aren't always true. Shift your mindset with positive self-talk. For example, when faced with a challenging situation, instead of thinking that you can't do it, reframe your thoughts in a more positive way, with thoughts such as: "I can do it", or "all I have to do is try".
 - **Step out of your comfort zone.** This involves, for example, facing situations that you might feel uncomfortable with, such as speaking in public. Instead of seeing fear as a stop sign, view it as an indicator that you're pushing boundaries and growing. Focus on the positive outcomes of trying something new.
 - **Do things that you are good at.** When you do things that you are good at, your confidence level soars, and you feel more satisfied with your life. This satisfaction will extend to all aspects of your life therefore improving your overall well-being.
 - **Set realistic goals.** Define what you want to achieve by stepping out of your comfort zone. Clear goals help you stay focused and motivated.

Exercise: The Confidence Ladder

Goal: To gradually build your self-confidence by taking small, manageable steps toward a larger goal.

Preparations: A notebook or digital journal to track your progress. A list of situations or tasks that make you feel nervous or unsure of yourself.

Description:

1. **Create a Ladder:** Write down a challenging task at the top of your ladder (e.g., "Confidently answer interview questions"). Then, work backwards, listing easier tasks on the steps leading up to your goal (e.g., "Practice answering questions with a friend," "Write out potential interview questions," "Record myself answering a question").
2. **Take Small Steps:** Start at the bottom of your ladder and complete the easiest task first. As you gain confidence, move up the ladder to more difficult tasks.
3. **Track Your Progress:** After completing each step, write down how you felt and what you learned. By the time you reach the top, you should feel much more confident in completing the final task.

Resources and Materials: A ladder diagram template (either drawn or found online). Support from a friend, youth worker or mentor to help with practice and feedback.

Tip: Write down your accomplishments before interview

When preparing for an interview, focus on the positive. Write down your accomplishments and remind yourself of the skills you bring to the table. Confidence often comes from a positive mindset.

5.3 Learn stress-coping and relaxation techniques

Stress is your body's natural response to pressure, which can motivate or overwhelm you depending on its intensity. Stress-coping strategies help you manage and maintain emotional balance, while relaxation techniques alleviate physical and mental effects, enhancing focus and confidence in stressful situations like job interviews.

Effective stress management begins with recognizing signs like a racing heart or anxiety. Coping mechanisms such as exercise, deep breathing, or seeking support can help. Regular relaxation practices build resilience through repetition, keeping stress in check and preparing you to face challenges with more clarity and composure.

Exercises for managing stress

- **Mindful Breathing:** When you feel stressed, pause and focus on your breath. Try inhaling deeply through your nose for a count of four, holding your breath for four seconds, and exhaling through your mouth for four seconds. This simple exercise can quickly calm your mind and body. [Mindful Breathing Exercise](#)
- **Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR):** This technique involves tensing and then relaxing each muscle group in your body, starting from your toes and moving up to your head. PMR helps relieve physical tension caused by stress and promotes a sense of calm. [10 Minute Calming Progressive Muscle Relaxation To Ease Anxiety, Stress and Insomnia](#)
- **Physical Exercise:** Regular physical activity is a proven way to manage stress. Even a short walk, some stretching, or a few minutes of physical exercise can release endorphins that improve your mood and reduce anxiety.
- **Meditation and Mindfulness:** Meditation can help you clear your mind and focus on the present moment. Apps like Headspace or Calm offer guided meditations that are great for beginners. Mindfulness techniques, like paying attention to your surroundings or focusing on one task at a time, can also help reduce stress. [5 Minute Mindfulness Meditation](#)
- **Visualization:** Picture yourself in a peaceful and relaxing place, such as a beach or a park. Visualization can help you escape the stress of the moment and feel more grounded and centered.
- **Create a Pre-Interview Routine:** Having a relaxation routine before an interview can help reduce nervousness. Try listening to calming music, practicing deep breathing, or doing a short meditation right before the interview to help you feel relaxed and confident.



Exercise: Breathing and visualization for interview calmness

Goal: To help you stay calm and focused before a job interview by practicing mindful breathing and visualization techniques.

Preparations: Find a quiet space where you can sit comfortably. Set aside at least 10 minutes before an interview or any stressful event.

Description:

1. **Mindful Breathing:** Sit comfortably with your eyes closed if it is comfortable. Take slow, deep breaths in through your nose, hold for a few seconds, and then exhale slowly through your mouth. Focus only on your breath, letting go of any distracting thoughts.
2. **Visualization:** After a few minutes of mindful breathing, visualize yourself in a successful interview. Imagine yourself speaking confidently, answering questions clearly, and feeling relaxed. Picture the interviewer nodding in approval. This positive visualization will help boost your confidence and calm your nerves.

Resources and Materials: No special materials needed, but you may want to use a timer or a guided meditation app for the breathing exercise.

Tip: Incorporate relaxation techniques into your daily routine

Even when you're not feeling stressed. Regular practice can make these techniques more effective during high-pressure moments like job interviews.

5.4 Practice, practice, practice - Mock interviews

A mock interview is a practice interview that you can do either alone, together with another person, or with a software app, in order to prepare yourself for a real interview situation.

Mock interviews are a commonly used method, and an easy way to test how ready you are for the real interview, and allow you to practice and refine your answers to interview questions. The effects of training communication skills with mock interviews have been studied by researchers, when applied within many different professional fields.

The benefits of practicing with a mock interview include (Reddan, 2008; Klein et al., 2015; Rosenbaum et al., 2014; Wilkie & Rosendale 2024):

- Becoming more familiar with the situation of being in an interview
- Learning the most common interview questions, and how to formulate answers them
- Get practice speaking and presenting your answers to an interviewer
- Get feedback on your answers and body language from the interviewer and gain understanding of your own readiness
- Improved confidence with more practice, and with awareness of how the interview works

- Becoming aware of the questions you struggle with, and be able to come up with better answers to them
- Get practice with body language
- Get practice with active listening
- And lastly, If you make mistakes, there won't be any serious consequences.

Exercise: Practice using a mock-interview

Goal: To prepare job seekers for successful interviews by practising key skills and communication, helping candidates provide clear and concise answers that demonstrate their skills and experiences effectively.

Preparations: Find a quiet space where you are not disturbed for 15-20 minutes. Have a paper and pen, or a digital device for writing notes.

Description:

1. Prepare a list of 8-10 relevant interview questions. Search online. You will find some general questions and some very specific questions that are unique to certain positions. You also find a list of common challenging questions in Chapter 3.
2. Research the company. If you are preparing for an interview at a specific company, make sure you research that company well first.
3. Write down some notes for each question, on what you would like to include in your answer.
4. Practice the interview in a space with no distractions. Do this by speaking out loud, this helps to strengthen your communication.
5. Practice with another person. If you would like to practice with another person as the interviewer, find a person who may be a good interviewer. Perhaps you know someone who has had that role before? If you have a coach or a youth worker at your jobcenter, they might be able to act as the interviewer. Or, you can ask one of your former colleagues, friends or family members.
6. Consider recording the interview, and reviewing it later for learning.
7. Ask your interviewer to give feedback on your performance. You can use the following questions for this purpose: What questions did I answer well? Were there any questions where you felt that my answers could need improvement? How would you describe your impression of me during the interview?
8. Do the mockup interview several times if you can, and try to improve your answers gradually. Practice makes perfect!

Tip: Software apps for practicing mock interviews

There are also apps that can help with practicing mock interviews. In the VR-ACE project (Intellectual Outputs, 2024), we have developed a virtual reality app that can be accessed for free through the Meta Quest VR-headsets.

Other apps that are accessible on a phone/tablet, or that work in an internet browser include: Interview Me (WantedLabs Inc, Apple app store/Google Play), Huru Job Interview Prep (Beatview Inc, Apple app store/Google Play) and Grow with Google Interview Warmup, for IT-roles (<https://grow.google/certificates/interview-warmup/>).



Extra resources

Learn more examples of feedback questions for mock interview: <https://bemycareercoach.com/job-searching-tips/interview-tips/interview-feedback-questions.html>

Common interview questions: <https://hbr.org/2021/11/10-common-job-interview-questions-and-how-to-answer-them> & <https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/interviewing/top-interview-questions-and-answers>

VR Tutorial - Job Interview Simulation

Training for a job interview in VR offers a unique combination of putting you in an immersive environment, with interactive human-like avatars that ask you real questions. It is an engaging and safe way to develop your skills.

The VR-ACE app “ACE the interview!” provides a novel and engaging way to practice mock-interviews in an immersive scenario with Meta Quest VR-glasses. The supported VR-headset models are: Quest 2, Quest 3, Quest 3s and Quest Pro.

The VR-ACE app is available for free, easy to use, and available in 7 different languages. In the app, you will get to experience an interview at a virtual company, and get face-to-face with a virtual interviewer. The interviewer will ask you common interview questions that are not specific to any particular job position, but still are crucial to your assessment in an interview. You will also get the chance to evaluate how well you perform during the interview, and the app will also provide you with useful analytics regarding your performance.

“ACE the interview” can be downloaded from the Meta Quest store for free, from within your Meta Quest headset.

You can use the app for practicing either by yourself, or together with for example your youth worker.


The only preparation you need to do is to:

- Find a seat in a quiet room where you are not disturbed. The VR-experience is designed for seated use.
- Make sure that the VR-headset sits well, and that you can see the image clearly. Adjust the headset up and down if the image isn't clear.
- Once you open the app for the first time, it will request permission to access the headset microphone. You will need to allow access to be able to use the app correctly.
 - * Note: The app is designed with your privacy in mind. It doesn't use the microphone to actually record your voice, and none of your personal data will be saved in the app, or online. It will only detect if you are speaking, or not.
- Take the handcontrollers in each hand, and make sure you wear the safety straps.
- Select your preferred language and follow the instructions in the app to continue.

In the experience there are buttons that you can press. You simply do that by touching them with your virtual hands. You can also make your virtual hands point with their index finger. Do that by pressing either the trigger button, or the middle finger button, on the hand controllers.




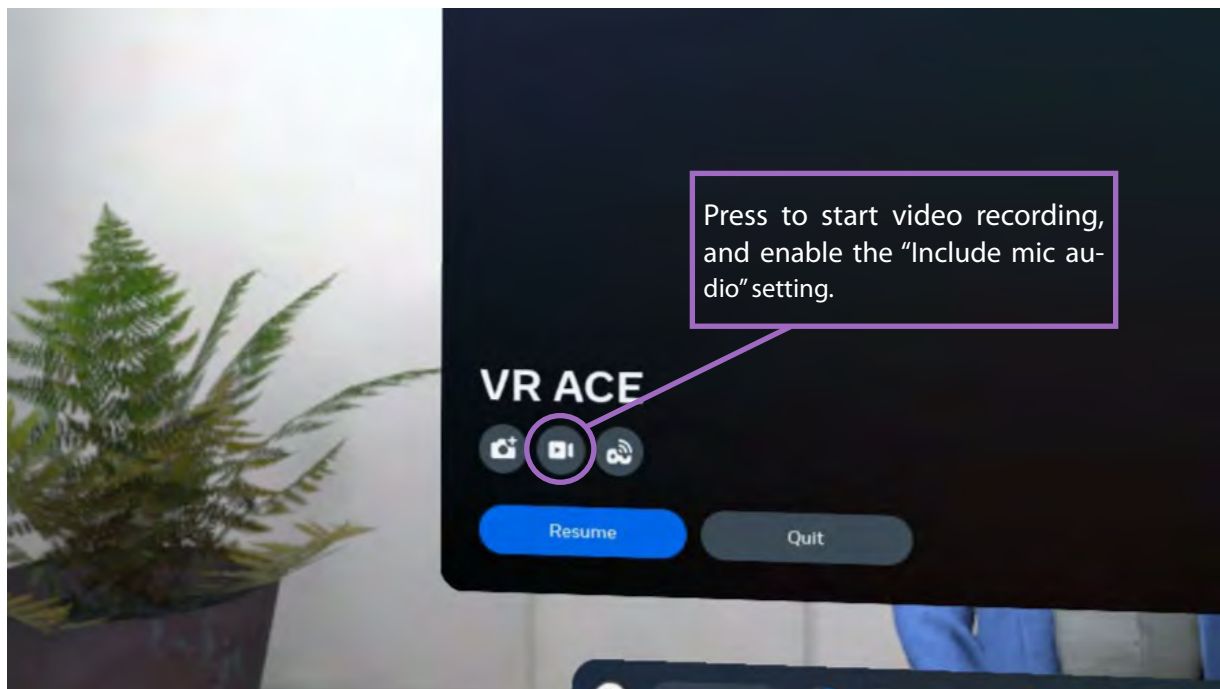
By pressing the side button on the hand controller, you can extend the index finger of your virtual hands.

To exit the app, press the flat button on your right hand controller with the  symbol, and choose "Quit".

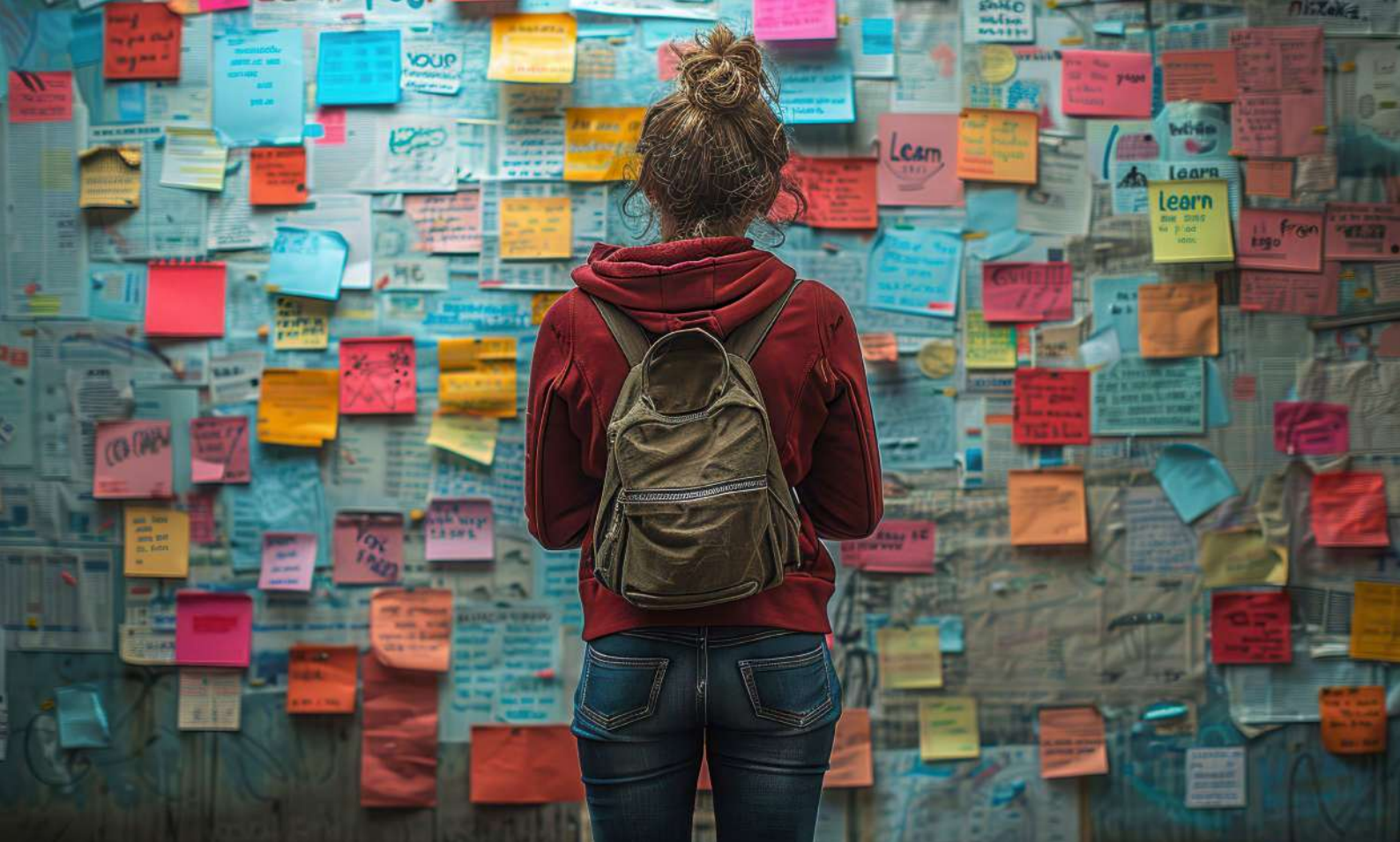
For any further information on the Meta Quest VR-headsets, please visit the official documentation provided by Meta. (Meta, 2024).

Recording yourself while using the app

You can easily turn on the built-in video recording feature (Meta, Record video with Meta Quest, 2025) of the Meta Quest headset by pressing the flat button on your right hand controller with the  symbol, and then pressing the video recording button (see image below).



To stop the video recording, you use the same button again. When you have made a recording, you can view it in the Camera app or Files app (Meta, Use Files on Meta Quest, 2025) that is installed by default on your Quest headset. If you would like to transfer the video recordings to another device, please visit Meta's documentation for guidance (Meta, Transfer pictures or videos from your Meta Quest headset to your computer, 2025).



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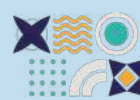
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Co-funded by
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