



Handbook

for

Youth Workers

Tips

Exercises

Information



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Tips

Exercises

Information

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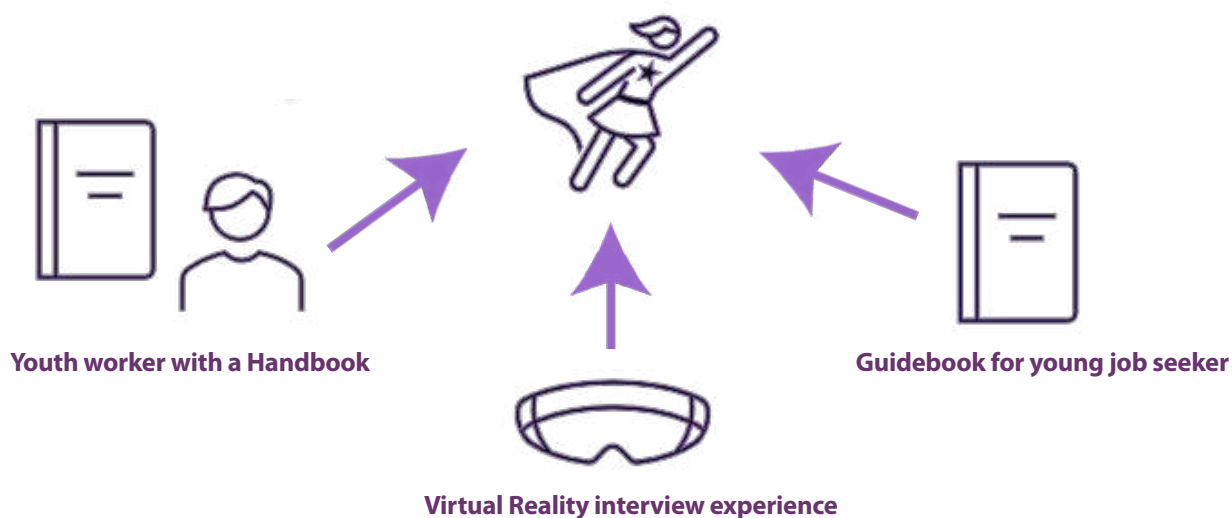
1. Introduction

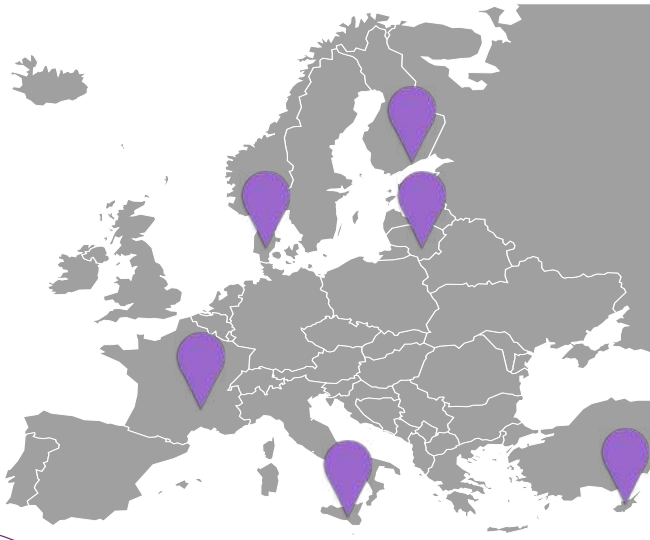
Welcome!

This guidebook is for you to lean on and learn from while supporting young job seekers to succeed in job interviews and getting a job.

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.

This handbook, together with the guidebook for young job seekers and the Virtual Reality (VR) interview experience to strengthen young job seekers' interview skills, all 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 also be used as individual tools.





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 support in developing self-confidence, communication and presentation skills, stress management, and self-awareness to land their first job, and youth workers need skills and tools to provide this kind of support. Nevertheless, there was also an identified need to support understanding of job search and job interview processes for young job seekers.

The structure of this handbook for youth workers is built on these findings.

- In Chapter 2, you are guided through job search and job interview processes, and best practices. You gather material to support young job seekers you encounter in your work. You build on your skills to assess the needs of the young job seekers and how to support them in job search and interview.
- In Chapter 3, you learn more about the roles, responsibilities, and rights of the employer and employee from the perspective of a job seeker. You learn and practice how to approach this topic with young job seekers.
- In Chapter 4, we focus on communication skills, such as active listening, verbal and non-verbal communication, and adapting them according to different situations. You learn ways of practicing self-marketing and storytelling techniques that can be used when coaching young job seekers.
- Chapter 5 is all about building confidence and how you can support confidence in a young job seeker. This chapter gives you tools and approaches to building one's self-confidence. We introduce stress-coping and relaxation techniques, and you learn concrete tools that can be applied with young job seekers. Additionally, you learn ways to give feedback, coach, and provide mock interviews.
- Finally, Chapter 6 focuses on designing a training program or session for your specific target group and their needs. The overarching idea is that the previous chapters have also provided you with content and examples of exercises you can mix and match to develop the kind of training your participants need. You learn key factors to effective training, practice developing training plans, and learn to evaluate suitable digital training tools for your training needs.

Additionally in the end of this handbook, we have included a VR Tutorial and information about the Virtual Reality interview experience for developing one's job interview skills. This way you feel comfortable guiding young job seekers with the VR-ACE app "ACE the interview!".

We hope this handbook is useful for you and helps you support young job seekers in their pursuit of gainful employment!

1. Introduction

2. Identify needs of support in Job search and interview skills

3. Support understanding roles, responsibilities, and rights

4. Support building communication skills

5. Support building confidence

6. Designing a training program or a coaching session



2. How to support job search?

This Chapter provides a structured approach to guiding job seekers through each step of the job search process, from identifying opportunities to acing interviews and reflecting post-interview.

Each unit offers youth workers practical tools, exercises, and discussion points to support job seekers in developing essential skills. These units build on one another, ensuring that job seekers are equipped with a comprehensive understanding of the job search journey.

What you will learn:

- **Job search strategies:** Help job seekers develop essential job search strategies, including utilizing job search platforms and identifying suitable opportunities tailored to their skills and interests.
- **Professional applications skills:** Assist job seekers in creating professional, tailored CVs and cover letters, incorporating feedback mechanisms to ensure high-quality applications that stand out to employers.
- **Interview preparation techniques:** Equip job seekers with effective interview preparation techniques, including understanding various interview formats, anticipating common questions, and mastering positive body language, thereby boosting their confidence and performance.

- Post-interview reflection: Guide job seekers in crafting follow-up communications and assessing their interview performance using reflective tools, emphasizing the importance of post-interview etiquette and self-reflection.

Through these objectives, youth workers will enhance their capacity to assess job seekers' understanding, provide targeted support, and foster self-reflection, ultimately contributing to job seekers' confidence and success in their job search efforts.

2.1 Searching for a job

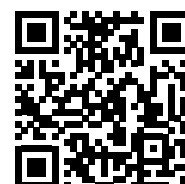
The essential steps that job seekers need to know to find and apply for jobs effectively include understanding how to search for reliable job ads, identifying potential employers, and recognizing the importance of knowing where and how to look for positions that match their interests and skills. Research indicates that having a well-structured job search strategy significantly enhances the likelihood of securing employment (Brewster et al., 2016).

Youth workers can assess the job seeker's knowledge of these basics by asking key questions. This helps identify any gaps in knowledge, guiding youth workers on where to focus their support and coaching.

- What job search platforms have you used?
- What qualities do you look for in a job ad?

Youth workers can support job seekers by offering practical exercises and discussions that reinforce these basic skills. For example, introducing job seekers to tools like the EURES portal can provide them with a user-friendly platform to search for positions across 31 European countries and explore job fairs, skills workshops, and employer presentations hosted by EURES. Research shows that utilising such platforms can improve job matching and access to employment opportunities (European Commission, 2020).

These discussions can be complemented with hands-on practice in setting job alerts or reviewing sample job descriptions together. Encouraging job seekers to visit their local employment office for additional support or to connect with a EURES Adviser (https://eures.europa.eu/index_en) can further enrich their job search experience and provide personalized assistance with both job search and information on living conditions in different countries.



Tip: Create a resource list and keep it up to date

Collect a list of job search platforms, websites, and job offices in your area and country. This is a great resource for you when supporting young job seekers in job search. Update your list regularly.

Exercise: Understanding job search basics

Goal: To help jobseekers understand foundational job search steps and gain confidence in identifying potential employers.

Preparations: Prepare a list of open-ended questions, such as “What do you value in a job?” and “What resources or websites do you typically use to find job openings?” Also, gather sample job descriptions from different industries to use for discussion and practice.

Description:

1. Youth worker engages in a discussion with job seeker to assess their current understanding of job search basics. Using the prepared questions, they pinpoint areas where the job seeker may need guidance.
2. Following this, youth worker introduces a hands-on activity where job seeker find a job listing that matches their skills and goals. Together, they review the job ad to practice interpreting requirements and identifying key qualifications.

Resources and materials: Access to job search platforms or printed job listings, assessment questions, sample job descriptions, paper, and pen.

Tip: Encourage jobseekers to describe their ideal role

This reflection helps them clarify their career direction and focus on job opportunities that align with their values and strengths.

Exercise: Job search exploration with EURES

Goal: To help jobseekers understand effective job search practices and explore resources available through EURES and other local services.

Preparations: Create a set of questions to assess the job seeker’s familiarity with job search tools, such as “Have you used any job search portals before?” and “Are you interested in job opportunities in other European countries?” Additionally, gather materials on using the EURES portal and other local employment resources.

Description:

1. Initiates a conversation to gauge the job seeker’s approach to job searching, using questions to identify areas for further guidance.
2. After the discussion, guide job seeker in navigating the EURES portal, demonstrating how to find job listings, set up job alerts, and locate events like job fairs. This exercise highlights the resources EURES offers, helping job seekers expand their search and consider both local and international roles.

Resources and Materials: Access to the EURES portal, local employment service materials, sample job descriptions, and a set of key questions.

Tip: Encourage jobseekers to consider both local and European job markets

The EURES platform offers a variety of tools and listings across Europe, which can open up a broader range of opportunities and enrich their job search experience.

2.2 CV and application writing

To enhance success, job seekers should gain a thorough understanding of crafting a professional CV and writing an engaging job application, focusing on both structure and personalisation. Exploring the essential sections of a CV—personal details, education, work experience, skills, and achievements—learning how each component presents their qualifications to potential employers is beneficial. Research shows that a well-structured CV can significantly impact hiring decisions, as it serves as the first impression for candidates (Brown & Lent, 2013).

A study by Chapman et al. (2005) indicates that tailored applications are more likely to lead to interview invitations. To assess a job seeker's familiarity with these concepts, youth workers might ask questions like:

- What do you include in your CV to make it stand out?
- What information do you think is essential in the opening of a cover letter?

These questions help youth workers pinpoint areas where job seekers may need additional support, enabling targeted coaching that builds their confidence and skills. To reinforce learning, you can introduce practical exercises, such as reviewing sample CVs and cover letters, which help job seekers identify strong elements and areas needing improvement. Using tools like the Europass CV format—one of the most widely recognised CV formats across Europe—can simplify the process. Europass allows job seekers to create, store, and share CVs in 31 languages, making it an excellent resource for those seeking opportunities locally or abroad.

Following exercises encourage interactive activities, such as mock CV reviews or role-play scenarios, where job seekers receive feedback on their drafts and practise articulating their strengths. Through these exercises, job seekers not only build practical skills but also gain confidence in presenting their unique qualifications to employers.



Exercise: Creating a Europass CV

Goal: To help job seekers create a Europass CV that aligns with European standards and highlights their qualifications.

Preparations: Get familiar with the Europass CV tool.

Description:

1. Introduce the Europass CV tool and prepare a basic outline of essential CV sections (e.g., education, experience, skills).
2. Assist job seeker in creating their Europass profile by inputting details about their education, skills, and experience.
3. Once the profile is complete, job seekers can generate their CV using Europass's preset designs. This exercise helps them become familiar with the widely used Europass format, making it easier to apply for jobs across Europe.
4. Encourage job seekers to save their Europass CV in multiple languages if they are interested in working across Europe, as this will open up more job opportunities.

Resources and materials: Access to Europass website, basic CV section outline, and internet-enabled devices.

Exercise: Writing a tailored Cover Letter

Goal: To help job seekers on how to create a tailored cover letter that showcases their relevant skills and enthusiasm for a specific role.

Preparations: Collect sample job descriptions and example cover letters, along with a list of guiding questions such as, "What aspect of this job interests you the most?" and "What are your strongest skills related to this role?"

Description:

1. Start by explaining the key sections of a cover letter.
2. Ask job seeker to select a sample job description that interests them.
3. Using this as a basis, job seeker drafts a cover letter, guided by the questions to help structure their response.
4. Youth worker reviews the cover letter, providing feedback to improve tone, structure, and relevance.

Resources and Materials: Sample job descriptions, example cover letters, guiding questions, and writing materials.

Tip: Encourage jobseekers to be concise and specific, using clear examples of their skills or experiences that align with the job's requirements.

2.3 Job interview

Understanding what happens in a job interview and why is essential. Job seekers need to know about the job interview process, from preparation to professional conduct. The purpose of following exercises is to introduce different types of interviews, including face-to-face, online, and group formats, and explores the unique expectations and skills needed for each. Key topics include typical interview questions—such as “Tell me about yourself”, “What are your strengths and weaknesses?” and “Why do you want this job?”—as well as positive interview etiquette, like punctuality, body language, and professional attire. Youth workers can help job seekers develop an understanding of these basics to ensure they make a positive first impression (Oliver, 2021).

Exercise: Preparing for an interview

Goal: To help jobseekers build confidence and develop key skills for a successful interview, regardless of format.

Preparations:

- Gather sample interview questions, guidelines on interview etiquette, and materials for both face-to-face and online interview setups.
- Prepare a list of questions to ask job seekers about their current understanding, such as “How do you prepare for a job interview?” and “What would you consider positive interview behaviour?”
- Additionally, job seekers can review 60+ Most Common Interview Questions and Answers (The Muse Editors, 2024) to familiarise themselves with typical questions.

Description:

1. Start by discussing the differences between face-to-face, online, and group interviews, then introduce common interview questions. Job seekers are encouraged to think about how they would respond to each question and identify any aspects they find challenging.
2. Following this, guide a role-play exercise where job seekers practise answering questions and receive feedback on their responses and etiquette.

Resources and Materials: Sample interview questions, interview etiquette guidelines, 60+ Most Common Interview Questions and Answers (The Muse Editors, 2024), role-play materials, checklist of interview dos and don'ts, paper, and pen.

Tip: Encourage job seekers to think of concrete examples from their experiences

Encourage job seekers to think of concrete examples from their experiences to answer interview questions. Specific examples can make responses more engaging and help showcase their skills and accomplishments effectively. Learn more about developing self-marketing and storytelling skills in Chapter 4. Learn more about practicing for a job interview in Chapter 5 through mock interviews.

Exercise: 5 Tips for Acing Your Interview

Goal: To help job seekers implement effective strategies for interview success, focusing on preparation, confidence, and post-interview reflection.

Preparations: Print out the “5 Tips for Acing Your Interview” from EURES website and prepare scenarios or questions related to each tip. For instance, create sample questions the interviewer might ask and gather background information on a fictional company for research practice.

Description: Introduce the “Tips for Acing Your Interview,” discussing each tip in depth.

1. **Research, research, research:** Give job seeker some details on a fictional company and ask them to identify key information about its values, mission, and operations. This helps them practice gathering relevant background knowledge to demonstrate genuine interest.
2. **Prepare for their questions:** Present common interview questions to job seeker, such as “What’s your biggest weakness?” and work together to formulate responses. The goal is to help job seeker turn challenging questions into opportunities to highlight strengths.
3. **Prepare for your questions:** Guide job seeker to brainstorm meaningful questions they might ask interviewers, such as questions about team dynamics, the organisation’s goals, or relocation advice if necessary. This exercise reinforces the importance of showing interest and engaging in the conversation.
4. **Walk tall:** Guide job seeker through simple body language exercises, including maintaining eye contact, sitting up straight, and practising “power posing” to convey confidence. You can also roleplay different scenarios, where job seekers practice handling nerves effectively.
5. **Ask for feedback:** Simulate a post-interview follow-up, where job seeker drafts a polite email requesting feedback. This step helps job seeker see interviews as learning experiences, even if they aren’t successful.

Resources and Materials: Printout of “5 Tips for Acing Your Interview” from https://eures.europa.eu/5-tips-acing-your-interview-2017-05-08_en, fictional company profiles, sample interview questions, body language videos or visual aids, and paper and pens for note-taking.



Tip: Encourage job seekers to reflect their learning

Encourage job seekers to keep notes on what they learned from the exercises and revisit these notes before real interviews. Practising these tips will build confidence and help them feel more prepared for various interview situations.

Tip: Examine the goal of employer

It can be useful to examine the goal of an employer when preparing for an interview and reflect on what they seek to accomplish. Explore together with job seekers these 20 Key Qualities Interviewers Seek in Candidates. (Indeed Editorial Team 2024a: <https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/interviewing/what-interviewers-look-for>)



2.4 After the job interview

The post-interview process includes follow-up etiquette, assessing one's performance after an interview, and handling potential outcomes. It is essential to have the understanding of when and how to follow up with the employer, maintaining professionalism after the interview and evaluating the interview to identify areas for improvement. It is also crucial for job seekers to learn strategies for responding to job offers, negotiating terms, or dealing with rejection constructively.

Research indicates that effective follow-up communication can enhance a candidate's image and reaffirm their interest in the position (Harrison et al., 2018). Additionally, understanding how to assess one's performance and handle feedback is critical for continuous improvement in job search efforts (McDaniel et al., 1994). Youth workers can assess a job seeker's familiarity with these post-interview steps by asking questions like:

- What would you do after the interview to show interest?
- How do you handle feedback or rejection from an interview?

These questions can reveal the job seeker's knowledge and confidence in managing post-interview activities and allow youth workers to identify areas where they may need support.

To support learning, youth workers can engage job seekers in discussions on follow-up strategies and guide them through exercises like writing a thank-you email or practicing responses to potential feedback. Additionally, youth workers can introduce tools for self-assessment, encouraging job seekers to reflect on their interview performance, note strengths and areas for improvement, and develop a plan for future interviews.

Exercise: Writing a follow-up thank-you email

Goal: To help job seekers understand the importance of a follow-up email and how it can reinforce their interest in the position.

Preparations: Prepare examples of effective thank-you emails and a list of key elements to include, such as expressing appreciation for the interview, reaffirming interest in the role, and mentioning any specific topics discussed.

Description:

1. Begin by discussing the purpose and tone of a follow-up email together with job seeker.
2. Then show examples of thank-you emails for review.
3. Job seeker drafts their own follow-up email for a mock interview scenario, using the examples as guidance.
4. Review the draft and offer feedback for job seeker on tone, clarity, and relevance.

Resources and Materials: Sample thank-you emails, list of follow-up email elements, and paper or computers for drafting emails.

Tip: Encourage jobseekers to personalise their thank-you email

Encourage jobseekers to personalise their thank-you email by mentioning a memorable part of the interview or expressing enthusiasm about a specific aspect of the job or company. This shows genuine interest and helps them stand out.

Exercise: Self-assessment and reflection on interview performance

Goal: To encourage job seekers to reflect on their interview performance, identify strengths and areas for improvement, and create a plan for future interviews.

Preparations: Prepare a self-assessment checklist or worksheet that prompts jobseekers to evaluate aspects of their interview, such as preparation, confidence, responses, body language, and overall engagement (Indeed Editorial Team, 2024b).

Description:

1. Introduce the idea of self-assessment as a tool for growth.
2. Guide job seeker to complete the self-assessment worksheet individually, reflecting on specific parts of the interview.
3. Afterward, facilitate a discussion where the job seeker shares insights and sets goals for improvement, such as practising certain questions or working on body language.

Resources and Materials: Self-assessment checklists or worksheets, paper and pens.

Example of a Self-Assessment Checklist for Interview Performance:

1. Preparation
 - * Did I research the company and role thoroughly?
 - * Was I familiar with the company's values, mission, and goals?
 - * Did I prepare answers to common interview questions?
 - * Did I bring all necessary materials (e.g., CV/resume, references, notes)?
2. Confidence
 - * Did I feel calm and composed during the interview?
 - * Was my body language open and confident (e.g., good posture, steady eye contact)?
 - * Did I project confidence in my answers without over-explaining?
3. Responses to Questions
 - * Did I provide clear, concise answers?
 - * Did I include specific examples to support my responses?
 - * Was I able to answer questions effectively?
 - * Did I highlight my strengths in a way that aligned with the role?
4. Body Language and Engagement
 - * Did I make appropriate eye contact with the interviewer?
 - * Was I mindful of my tone, pacing, and gestures?
 - * Did I maintain a positive and engaged attitude throughout the interview?
5. Overall Engagement
 - * Did I ask thoughtful questions about the company or role?
 - * Did I show enthusiasm and interest in the position?
 - * Did I express gratitude at the end of the interview?
6. Reflection Questions
 - * What did I do well during the interview?
 - * What aspects of my performance could be improved?
 - * What will I focus on improving before my next interview?

Tip: Remind job seekers that each interview is a learning opportunity

Encourage them to use their self-assessment notes to guide preparation for future interviews, building on each experience to improve confidence and performance.

Resources for further reading

Europass cover letter instructions: <https://europass.europa.eu/en/create-europass-cover-letter>

Instructional video on Europass website: <https://audiovisual.ec.europa.eu/en/video/I-204554?language=EN>

Europass website: <https://europass.europa.eu/en/create-europass-cv>

Instructional video on Europass website: <https://audiovisual.ec.europa.eu/en/video/I-193054?language=EN>

EURES website link: https://eures.europa.eu/index_en

Interview techniques by EURES: https://eures.europa.eu/5-tips-acing-your-interview-2017-05-08_en

Indeed Editorial Team, 2024, What Hiring Managers Look for in an Interview with Michael Pukownik of Amazon Music: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cDnPIk5KghY&t=4s>

William Arruda, Senior Contributor, 2024, 10 Ways to Show That You Are a Leader During Job Interviews: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/williamarruda/2023/10/20/10-ways-to-show-that-you-are-a-leader-during-job-interviews/>

Malone University Editorial Team, 2024, Communication During Your Job Interview, Malone University website: <https://www.malone.edu/alumni/resources/alumni-career-services/interview-preparation/communication-during-interview>



3. How to support both understanding employer expectations and role of employee?

The aim of this chapter is to equip you with tools to help job seekers understand employers' expectations for specific job positions and to position themselves accordingly when applying for a job role. Employers are looking for a candidate who's capable, and has the potential and enthusiasm for the role. For a job seeker and potential employee, a job interview gives them the opportunity to see, ask, and hear more about the company and job role they are applying for.

Additionally, 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.

What you will learn:

- Assist job seekers align with employers' motivations and tailor their communication to specific job positions.

- Support job seekers in understanding employment rights and the roles of employers and employees, while advocating for their rights in the workplace.
- Provide job seekers knowledge of the key components of employment contracts, enabling job seekers to understand their rights and obligations before signing an agreement.

3.1 Targeted communication towards the potential employer

In the job searching process, one-fits-all communication is not a good method. All communicational messages starting from CV, cover letter, and emails are beneficial to tailor according to each employer in order to maximise the hiring potential.

As a youth worker, how can you support job seekers with professionally expressing their interest in a job role?

- Step 1: Instruct the candidate to research the position in advance. They must begin by gathering detailed information about the role, the organization, and the broader industry. This knowledge will allow them to create a thoughtful and customized expression of interest that demonstrates their understanding and commitment.
- Step 2: Help the job seeker highlight relevant skills and experience. Identify with them the specific skills and experiences that align with the role's requirements and the organization's mission. Focus on how their background supports their goals and how it can add value in this position.
- Step 3: Support the candidate to craft a persuasive message. Compose a focused expression of interest, clearly articulating why the job seeker is an excellent fit for the role. Emphasize both their qualifications and enthusiasm for joining the team, aiming to present them as a dedicated and strategic match.
- Step 4: Personalize the candidate's communication. Help them tailor their method of communication based on the context and recipient. Whether in an email, letter, or online application, ensure that the message is professional, personable, and specific to the organization.

Tip: Learn more about adjusting your communication for job interview in Chapter 4 and 5

Exercise: Customise communication messages

Goal: To assist the candidate create targeted communicational messages per employer type.

Description of method:

1. Select together with the job seeker two job postings from a career website.
2. Read them thoroughly and design with the candidate 2 different communication strategies according to the type of position and type of employer.
3. Allow the job seeker to first craft the communication message and texts (e-mail, cover letter etc.). Then discuss and reflect together on the strong and weak points, and correct them together.



3.2 Roles, responsibilities, and rights of employees and employers

While laws differ across European countries regarding the rights and responsibilities of employers and employees, there are some general rules that apply and that are helpful to know and to familiarise the job seeker before they attend an interview, and certainly before they sign a contract and start their first day at work.

Main responsibilities of employees

Employees, even those working part-time or without a formal contract, have core responsibilities toward their employers. Key duties include:

- **Completing assigned work:** Employees must perform their tasks accurately and responsibly. Frequent lateness or unexcused absences can lead to disciplinary actions.
- **Ensuring safety:** They should avoid actions that endanger themselves or others in the workplace.
- **Following instructions:** Employees should adhere to their employer's directions unless the task is dangerous or illegal.
- **Demonstrating loyalty and honesty:** Integrity is expected in all professional interactions.

Consequences for not meeting responsibilities

When employees fail to uphold their responsibilities, employers can take disciplinary steps, including:

- **Written warnings and suspensions:** For minor infractions, a warning or suspension may be issued.
- **Performance review or demotion:** Persistent issues may lead to a negative evaluation or even demotion.
- **Termination for serious offenses:** Actions like theft or serious misconduct can result in dismissal.
- **Legal action:** Employers may seek compensation or an injunction if the employee causes financial harm or quits without proper notice.

Employers' responsibilities to employees

Employers must uphold specific obligations to their employees, which include:

- **Providing a safe work environment:** Employers are responsible for the physical and psychological well-being of their staff, including the prevention of harassment and discrimination.
- **Paying agreed wages and benefits:** This includes timely payment of salaries, vacation days, and holidays.
- **Access to workspace and resources:** Employers should ensure that employees have the necessary tools and a suitable place to perform their duties.

- Respect and protection: Employers must protect employees from domestic or family violence that may affect them at work, including remote working scenarios.
- If an employee has a written contract, it may outline additional responsibilities for the employer, such as reimbursement for work-related expenses.

Resolving Disputes

When issues arise, employees and employers should first attempt to resolve conflicts through discussion. For certain disputes, an initial conversation may be required before taking further steps.

Exercise: Familiarise with employment laws

Goal: To become familiar with the employer's and the employee's responsibilities and rights.

Preparations: Research the rights and responsibilities of employers and employees in your country. Each European country has a centralized, public website that is created by the Ministry of Work or Employment and has the goal to protect the working force.

Description:

1. Start by demonstrating for the job seeker how to research the rights and responsibilities of employers and employees in your country.
2. Discuss with the job seeker on their rights and responsibilities as an employee. Focus on the issues that they find difficult or challenging.
3. Next, discuss with the job seeker on the rights and responsibilities of employers. Focus on the issues that they find difficult or challenging.

Exercise: Tackling inappropriate or illegal interview questions

Goal: Help job seekers recognise inappropriate or illegal interview questions and prepare them to confidently and politely evade these questions in case they occur.

Preparations: Search for interview questions that are inappropriate or illegal in your country and in other EU countries.

Description:

1. Discuss and explore examples of inappropriate and illegal interview questions with the job seeker: Discuss the difference between inappropriate and illegal interview questions. Discuss job seekers rights on not to answer.
2. Prepare and plan together for general phrases and ways to evade these questions politely in case they occur.
3. Have job seeker writing a few phrases down for future job interviews.

Resources and materials: List of interview questions that are inappropriate or illegal in EU countries: <https://www.eurobrussels.com/article/203/>.



Exercise: Employment contracts

Goal: Provide job seekers knowledge of the key components of employment contracts, enabling job seekers to understand their rights and obligations before signing an agreement.

Preparations: Gather examples of employment contracts (from reliable sources, e.g. sample contracts from career services). Familiarize yourself with employment contract requirements in the EU and in your country.

Description:

1. Review contract examples together with job seeker: Have them examine different types of employment contracts, noting key components and variations between them.
2. Introduce employment contract requirements in the EU and in your country to job seeker. Reflect back to contract examples to review if something required is missing.
3. Create a contract checklist: Develop a checklist of important terms and conditions to look for in an employment contract before signing.

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 and Employment contracts in EU https://europa.eu/youreurope/business/human-resources/employment-contracts/index_en.htm).



Resources for further reading

List of interview questions that are inappropriate or illegal in EU countries: <https://www.eurobrussels.com/article/203/>

Employment contracts in EU https://europa.eu/youreurope/business/human-resources/employment-contracts/index_en.htm.



4. How to support developing communication skills?

Communication can be summed up to be the exchange of information (North M., 2024). Given the complex ways that we receive and perceive messages, however, this exchange is far from simple and straightforward. 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 active listening and how you can support developing these skills for job seekers.
- Develop your ability as youth worker to ask insightful questions and provide constructive feedback for job seekers.
- Support job seekers in learning how to use body language to enhance your message and developing public speaking skills to confidently present themselves and their ideas.

- Understand how communication styles vary and how you can adapt your communication style to make another person feel valued and encourage open dialogue and collaboration.
- Support job seekers in learning self-marketing and storytelling techniques to improve their communication effectiveness to excel in job interviews.

4.1 Active listening

Active listening means engaging with what people say by giving affirmative replies and asking follow-up questions to show that person is paying attention (Gallo, 2024). Listening is just as important as speaking when it comes to communicating successfully - it involves mastering a whole host of other skills - from learning how to read subtle cues to controlling your own emotional response. It requires both empathy and self-awareness.

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

- Conveys the message that what others have to say is valuable.
- Facilitates greater understanding between individuals or teams.
- Fosters psychological safety.

Active listening can be improved by practising following techniques:

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

When employees are actively listening to each other, the workplace feels more comfortable and a sense of belonging and respect develops. The way towards an inclusive workplace is to teach future employees management skills that celebrate inclusiveness, diversity and openness.

Exercise: Practice active listening

Goal: To ensure that a person hears not just the words the person is saying, but the entire message.

Preparations: This exercise is performed between two people.

Description:

1. The 'talker' has to describe something, whether it is something that happened at work, their commute, etc. The topic is up to them. Use about three minutes.
2. The 'listener' has to practise active listening skills. After three minutes the listener has to summarise the key things described by the talker including facts about what was described as well as emotions that were described.
3. The talker can then give feedback to the listener if they think they picked up on everything important or if they missed anything out.
4. At the end of the exercise it is useful to review what went well and what could be improved. Bear in mind that the goal is not to remember every detail but to listen, understand and reflect back to the talker your understanding.

Resources and materials: Youth Employment UK (2017). Communication : Active Listening <https://www.youthemployment.org.uk/communication-active-listening/>. David G. (2024). Great Communicators Share These 7 Essential Characteristics <https://www.yourthoughtpartner.com/blog/what-makes-a-good-communicator>



Tip: Summarise and paraphrase

After the speaker finishes, restate their main points in your own words. This shows that you have been paying attention and helps to clarify any misunderstandings.

4.2 Verbal and non-verbal communication

Verbal communication refers to the spoken words used to convey a message.

Nonverbal communication denotes the sounds, gestures, posture, closeness, and other unspoken cues that indicate an individual's emotions. Commonly referred to as body language.

Paraverbal, also called "paralanguage," refers not to what is said, but how it is said. The "how" includes volume, tone, pitch, inflection, and vocabulary.

Communication with young job seekers

When establishing effective communication with youth, it is essential that youth workers use language that youth understand so they can grasp the message that youth workers intend to convey (Effective Communication in Youth Work, n.d.).

In order to communicate effectively with young job seekers, youth workers need to be confident and have a range of skills, such as:

- Active listening
- Empathising with the job seekers' point of view
- Developing trusting relationships
- Understanding non-verbal communication
- Building rapport
- Explaining, summarising and providing information
- Giving feedback in a clear way

Exercise: Conflict resolution

Goal: To help young job seekers develop their ability to resolve conflicts effectively using right communication skills.

Preparations: This exercise is performed between two people. Participants are assigned roles in a fictional office setting. A conflict arises between two team members over a project deadline and workload distribution.

Description:

1. Participants pursue to identify the root cause of the conflict.
2. Communicate openly and honestly with the other person.
3. Actively listen to the other person's perspective.
4. Find a mutually beneficial solution that addresses the needs of both people.

Resources and materials: 10 Communication training activities. (2024, June 28). SC Training. <https://training.safetyculture.com/blog/communication-training-activities/>.



Tip: Bring your awareness to your tone of voice

Start noticing how your tone of voice affects how others respond to you and try using your tone to emphasise ideas that you want to communicate.

4.3 Adapting communication style

Switching up how a person communicates with someone is about being aware of the situation a person is in, making sure they are actively listening to others, and making an effort to behave and respond in the most appropriate way. Youth workers' goal should be to adapt their style of communication to meet the needs of young job seekers they are supporting. Job seekers' goal regarding job search and interviews should be to adapt their style of communication to consider the expectations of potential employers. Adapting one's communication style doesn't mean completely changing it, but rather respecting the other person and their time.

Mary Sharp Emerson (2024) identified 4 main communication styles and how to work with them:

- **Direct.** Analytical communicators prefer direct communication, backed by facts. They are highly focused on the end result and are generally risk-tolerant.
 - * When working with a direct communicator: it is most effective to be clear and concise, and avoid unnecessary details.
- **Functional.** Conscientious, sometimes also called analytical communicator, likes process, precision, and details. Functional communicators thrive in environments with clear expectations, firm deadlines, and the opportunity to work independently.
 - * When working with a functional communicator: expect them to ask many questions before they feel comfortable moving forward.
- **Collaborative.** Also called harmonisers, steady or intuitive. They are focused on people over end results. Their goal is to find solutions that work for everyone.
 - * When working with a collaborative communicator: ensure that you listen before issuing directives. Collaborative communicators will resist being told what to do if they feel their perspective has not been heard.
- **Influencer.** The classic "people person", personal or expressive communicator believes that the emotional connections among team members bring success. Influencers are more focused on "the why" than "the how", and are excellent visionaries.
 - * When working with an influencer: enable them to collaborate to maximise their potential. They may need help developing practical solutions.

As a youth worker, how can you adopt a more flexible communication style?

- Be honest with yourself about how you communicate.
- Analyse past miscommunications to think about what went wrong.
- Practise active listening.
- Improve your emotional intelligence.

As a youth worker, how can you support job seekers to a more flexible communication style?

Adapting communication style to different job interview situations is a critical skill. To ensure that your message is communicated effectively, it is important to consider the context, the audience, any cultural differences, and your own emotional state. This will help job seekers to adjust their communication style with employers accordingly.

Exercise: Storytelling for specific audiences

Goal: To tailor stories to different listeners.

Preparations: Participants craft and tell stories for various target audiences (e.g., students, professionals, elderly). The exercise focuses on adjusting content, tone, and style.

Description:

1. Modify your story to resonate with your audience. Adjust the pace, tone, and level of detail to fit their preferences.
2. Rehearse your story multiple times to ensure a smooth and engaging delivery. Pay attention to your body language, voice modulation, and eye contact.
3. Share your story with a small group of people who represent your target audience. Ask for feedback on your delivery, content, and overall effectiveness.
4. Use the feedback to refine your storytelling skills. Consider what worked well and what could be improved.

Resources and materials: Patrick E. (2023). Adapting Your Communication Style to Different Situations <https://www.chiefmanagementofficer.com/effective-communication-adapting-your-communication-style-to-different-situations>



Tip: Go for assertive communication style

In the workplace, assertive communication style is often considered the most effective. It balances expressing your needs while respecting others. Assertive style encourages open dialogue and collaboration without resorting to aggressive behaviour or silent treatment.

4.4 Self-marketing and storytelling

“Storytelling spurs impactful cross-functional communication and developmental engagement at all levels” (McDougal et al., Pfeffermann, 2011). It offers a platform for vulnerability and openness, and is a fantastic starting point for more collaborative work (Bock, 2023).

To deliver a story as part of an important project kickoff or in a job interview, there are some key principles:

- “What is the key message?” Use this as your guiding star, start to finish.
- “Dig deep.” There is no need to overshare, but staying too close to the surface of your story — that is,

the plain facts of what happened and in what order — will not inspire a connection with your audience.

- “Keep it short and sweet.”
- “Remember the power of visuals.” Leverage some visual elements — pictures, data, drawings.
- “Memorise the first 1-2 lines. Let the rest flow.” Not being overly scripted is one key to conveying authenticity and letting your personality shine.

Here are some storytelling tips that can help you strengthen your narratives and engage your audience:

- Choose a clear central message.
- Embrace conflict.
- Have a clear structure.
- Mine your personal experiences.
- Engage your audience.
- Narrow the scope of your story.

Exercise: Metaphorical storytelling

Goal: To learn how to use metaphors in storytelling.

Preparations: Participants craft a story around a specific metaphor or theme, learning to embed deeper meanings within the narrative.

Description:

1. Select a metaphor that resonates with you, such as “life is a journey,” “love is a battlefield,” or “time is money.”
2. Create a short story or narrative that incorporates your chosen metaphor. The metaphor should serve as a central theme or underlying message.
3. Use the metaphor to symbolise abstract concepts or emotions. For example, if your metaphor is “life is a journey,” you might symbolise challenges as obstacles on the path or personal growth as reaching new destinations.
4. Share your story with a group or partner. Discuss the underlying meanings conveyed through the metaphor and how it enhances the storytelling experience.
5. Reflect on the process of using metaphors in storytelling. Consider how it can be applied to other creative endeavors, such as writing, painting, or music.

Tip: STAR storytelling technique to effectively share your experience in a job interview

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). See e.g. VA Wizard: The STAR Method of Behavioural Interviewing. [https://www.vawizard.org/wiz-pdf/STAR Method Interviews.pdf](https://www.vawizard.org/wiz-pdf/STAR_Method_Interviews.pdf).

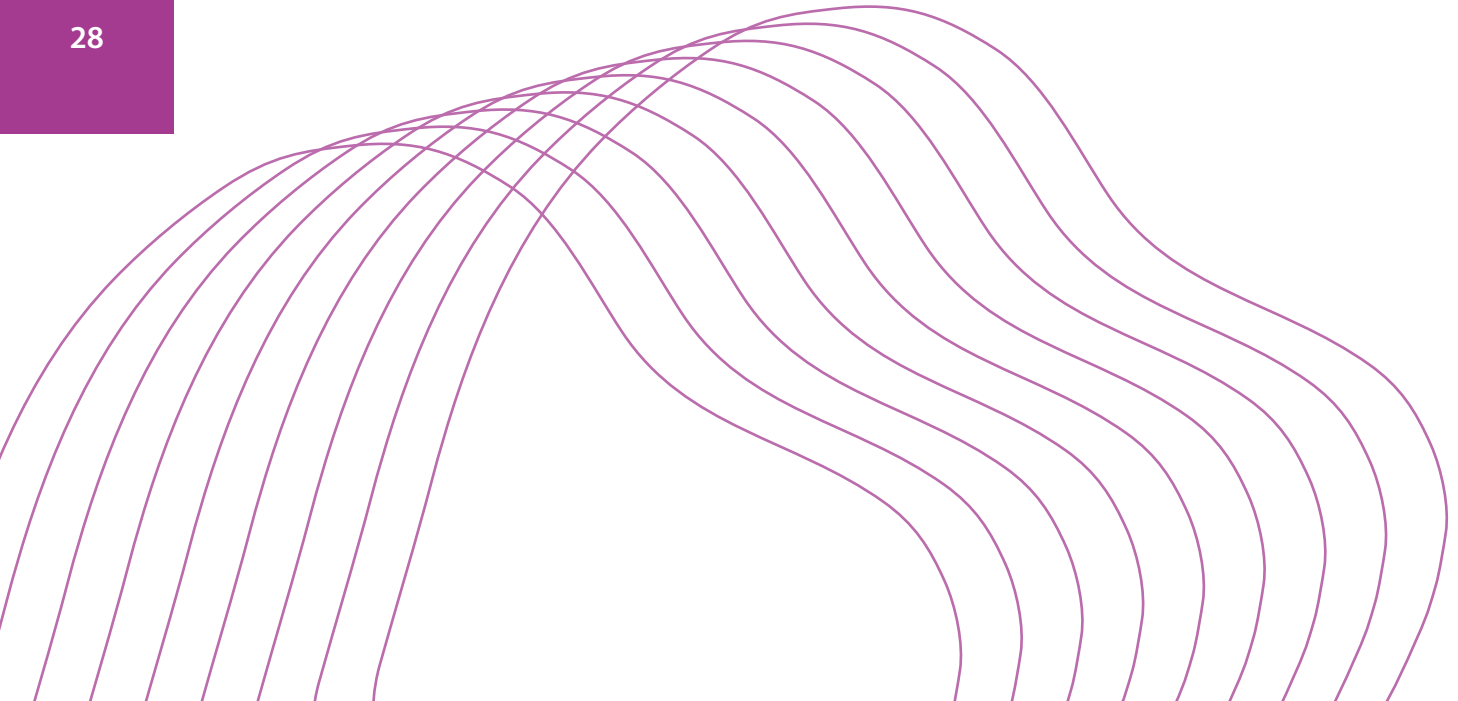


Tip: Learn and practise self-marketing and storytelling skills online

You can also learn and practise self-marketing and storytelling skills online in coursera.org, skillshare.com or in domestika.org.

Resources for further reading

Boris, V. (2017). What Makes Storytelling So Effective For Learning? <https://www.harvardbusiness.org/what-makes-storytelling-so-effective-for-learning/>





5. How to support building self-confidence?

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This chapter focuses on understanding and promoting self-confidence in young job seekers. It explores how self-confidence relates to self-awareness and self-esteem, and offers practical tools for youth workers to help job seekers build these essential skills. The chapter includes practical exercises and tips designed to foster self-confidence through discussions, activities, and coaching strategies.

What you will learn:

- Understand the importance of self-confidence, self-awareness, and self-esteem in young job seekers, and how to stimulate strengthening of these.
- Be able to identify and address the strengths, weaknesses, and potential shyness of job seekers.
- Gain strategies to help job seekers manage stress and foster relaxation techniques.
- Develop effective coaching and mentoring skills that build self-confidence in job seekers, focusing on feedback and motivation.

5.1 Self-confidence

The realistic knowledge of oneself and personal abilities, linked to full awareness is an essential task that begins in adolescence and ends in young adulthood. Self-efficacy and self-confidence are key variables in the development of adolescents' self-concept and influence the achievement of well-being and self-fulfilment in adulthood, including vocational development and career planning (Zimmerman & Cleary, 2006).

- **Self-confidence** refers to the belief in one's abilities to succeed in specific situations or accomplish tasks. It plays a crucial role in job seeking, as confident individuals are more likely to present themselves effectively in interviews and pursue opportunities without fear of failure. For young job seekers, self-confidence can make the difference between securing a job and missing out due to hesitancy or self-doubt.
- **Self-awareness** is understanding one's strengths and weaknesses.
- **Self-esteem** relates to how one values themselves overall.

For job seekers, it's important to balance all three: recognizing their unique qualities, valuing themselves appropriately, and having the confidence to act on those insights.

Self-confidence plays an important role in the decision-making process and in the growth path of job seekers as it functions as the founding basis for confidence in general, for deep-knowledge, and for self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997).

- **Self-efficacy** is the personal confidence in successfully completing a given objective and influences self-perception. Thus, self-efficacy is an essential variable that contributes to the well-being and academic success of adolescents, with important effects on career choices, career adaptability (Guan et al., 2014, Chuang et al., 2022) and the ability to find a quality job.

A strong self-efficacy significantly improves adolescents' health by acting as a protective factor against failure and a decline in self-esteem and self-perception. Self-confidence is thus an essential psychological mediator in the personal and professional quality of life of individuals, which is vital to monitor and enhance.

Most studies on the relationship between self-efficacy and life skills suggest that enhancing life skills through specific training significantly improves self-confidence, self-esteem and increases the chances of individual success.

The role of youth workers is therefore crucial for job seekers as a guide, a motivating factor and as a means through which to stimulate learning and the strengthening of constructs such as self-confidence, self-esteem and self-efficacy. Through pro-activity stimulation techniques, team games and simulations, youth workers are able to stimulate participation and a willingness to engage in active seeking and believing that they can succeed.

As a youth worker, how can you support job seekers in building their confidence?

- Increase self-knowledge, stimulate self-reflection, and help job seekers evaluate themselves effectively, by introducing self-assessment sheets and providing subsequent feedback.
- Work on motivation through thinking about personal and professional goals and working together in structuring the time and effort needed to achieve them. Finding one's own founding values and identifying the expectations one has with respect to the desired profession will help job seekers towards a more targeted job search, and keep motivation firmer as it is anchored in personal values and significance, rather than tied to fashions or significant others.

Exercise: Identifying strengths and weaknesses

Goal: Help job seekers become more self-aware of their strengths and areas for improvement.

Preparations: Provide a worksheet where job seekers can list at least three strengths and three weaknesses, along with real-world examples.

Description:

1. Ask job seekers to reflect on past experiences (jobs, internships, education, hobbies) and identify what went well and what could be improved.
2. Afterward, lead a discussion where job seekers share their findings and receive feedback.

Resources and materials: Worksheet or blank paper for listing strengths and weaknesses.

Exercise: Johari Window

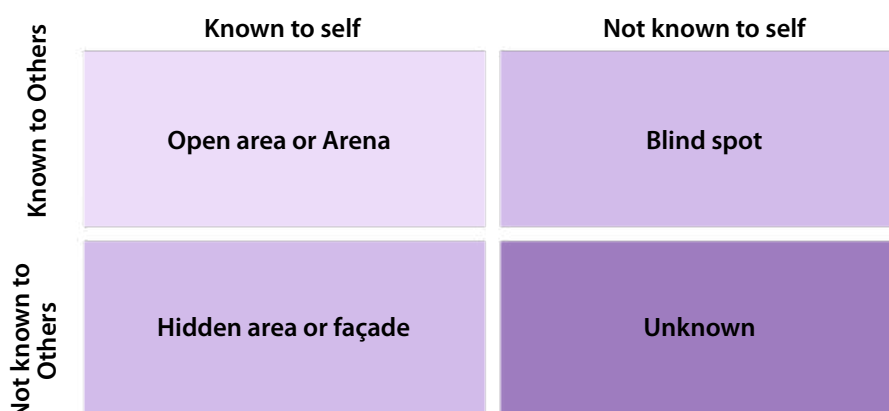
Goal: Help job seekers become more self-awareness

Preparations: The Johari Window is a matrix that highlights various levels of awareness that are present in all of us and at the same time is an excellent tool for shedding light on the behaviours and attitudes that we enact when interacting with others. It consists of four quadrants: open area, blind spot, hidden area and unknown. Provide a worksheet for job seeker.

Description:

1. For the stimulation of self-awareness, the construction of the Johari Window can be proposed as an activity. Introduce the four quadrants: open area, blind spot, hidden area and unknown. The 'open area' represents what others see in you that you also recognize yourself. The 'blind area' represents what others see in you but you don't recognize. The 'hidden area' consists of what you know but keep private. Lastly, the 'unknown area' includes aspects of yourself that are undiscovered by both you and others, representing untapped potential.
2. Provide job seekers a few minutes to reflect on all four areas.
3. Discuss and reflect together on their thoughts. It is important to respect the job seeker regarding what they are willing to share and what not.

Resources and materials: see the figure below and use it.



Exercise: Thinking together

Goal: Help job seekers to improve self-awareness, self-esteem and self-confidence

Preparations: Provide a worksheet.

Description:

1. To stimulate self-esteem, self-confidence and self-knowledge, have job seekers reflect on or transcribe situations experienced in their contexts that they define as successful, situations defined as unsuccessful and situations of partial success.
2. Together with the youth worker, an analysis of these will then be attempted according to the following criteria:
 - a. Results that were essentially dependent on me.
 - b. Results that were partially dependent on external causes.
 - c. Results that were essentially dependent on external causes.

5.2 Stress-coping and relaxation

The term stress describes a series of mind-body reactions triggered by environmental events that have the function of energising the body and predisposing it to react to them. Activating events are generally called stressors. Our reactions to different events or stressors is individual. The same environmental event may elicit a response of different intensity depending on how it is perceived and interpreted.

Affective reactions and active intervention

The role of affective reactions in the stress response is very important. Through cognitive appraisal, each individual primarily assesses the environmental stimulus by defining it as threatening or non-threatening and activating behaviours and attitudes in line with the assessment made. In the case of a stimulus deemed threatening, the evaluation process continues by assessing one's ability to cope with the threat. Parallel to the psychophysical response, the coping process is also activated.

Lazarus & Folkman (1984) identify two forms of stress-coping:

- **Emotion-focused coping.** Aims to regulate affective reactions such as anxiety and tension, e.g. by avoiding thinking about the threat (denial) or reappraising it (reappraisal) by trying to interpret it in a less threatening manner. This form of coping, however, does not intervene directly in the reality of the external threat.
- **Problem-focused coping.** Concerns attempts to obtain information on the most appropriate ways to deal with the threat and actions to try to reduce it. This form of coping represents an active intervention in the external reality perceived as threatening and is what the person should focus on in order to extinguish the problem at source.

As a youth worker, how can you support job seekers?

As a youth worker, it is precisely in problem-solving coping direction that the first intervention and support for job seekers should take place, and then work on the related emotions in the long term. Since the perception of stressors is absolutely personal and individual, supporting jobseekers means stimulating in them the capacity for self-awareness, self-confidence and imaginative visualisation of the future. Anticipating stressors, imagining the unexpected and constructing possible and applicable solutions together help to create a mindset that will be activated when the perceived threat arises.

Exercise: Mindful Breathing for Stress Relief

Goal: Help job seekers manage stress through simple and effective mindful breathing techniques.

Preparations: Create a calm environment, either in a quiet room or by encouraging participants to find a peaceful spot.

Description:

1. Guide job seekers through a mindful breathing exercise. Have them sit comfortably, close their eyes if they feel comfortable to do that, and focus on their breath. Instruct them to inhale deeply through the nose, hold the breath for a few seconds, and exhale slowly through the mouth.
2. Encourage them to repeat this process for 5–10 minutes.

Resources and materials: None required, but a comfortable seating arrangement or mats can help.

Tip: Practice relaxation before important events

Encourage job seekers to practice breathing or mindfulness exercises right before an interview or a challenging task to calm nerves and increase focus.

Exercise: Visualise the future together

Goal: Developing imaginative capacity and the appropriate mindset to respond to the perceived threat/stress

Preparations: Provide a worksheet

Description:

1. Ask the jobseeker to imagine one of the events related to the job search that worries them the most at the moment. Help them by breaking the event down into so many small parts as to identify the most threatening causes and moments.
2. List the emotions this event generates and imagine at least 3 different possible solutions to be activated, including contingencies.
3. If possible, simulate the event and the application of the preferred solution at the end.

5.3 Feedback and Coaching

Coaching is a process where a coach provides guidance and support to help someone achieve specific goals, such as securing a job. Mentoring, on the other hand, involves a longer-term relationship where a mentor offers wisdom and advice based on personal experience.

Coaching is particularly useful for job seekers as it helps them develop self-confidence, address weaknesses, and prepare for real-world job challenges.

Through structured feedback and goal-setting, coaching encourages job seekers to recognize their abilities, tackle insecurities, and make measurable progress. A youth worker acting as a coach can offer personalized feedback, focusing on strengths while identifying areas for improvement. This consistent encouragement helps job seekers gain confidence in their skills, especially when facing the uncertainty of job hunting.

Youth workers can practice coaching by setting clear, achievable goals with job seekers, then providing regular feedback to track progress. They should focus on active listening, asking probing questions that help job seekers reflect on their actions and thoughts. When mentoring, youth workers can share their own career experiences, offering insights that inspire and motivate young job seekers. Both methods foster a trusting relationship where job seekers feel supported in their journey.

Feedback should be constructive, balanced between praise and suggestions for improvement. Regular check-ins and open discussions ensure that the job seeker feels involved in their development process. Additionally, feedback helps maintain motivation, allowing job seekers to see their progress, adjust their strategies, and stay focused.

Exercise: Coaching with the GROW model

Goal: Learn to use the GROW model to support a person in learning and problem-solving around a current challenge in a person's life.

Preparations: Familiarise yourself with the GROW model by Whitmore (Bates, 2015).

Description:

1. Goal – where do you want to be? The coaching session starts with identifying a targeted goal or desired outcome.
2. Reality – where are you now? The next step is to start identifying the current situation of things.
3. Options – what could you do to get there? Discuss and consider different options and steps with an open mind.
4. Will – what will you do? Encourage job seeker to come up and phrase concrete and realistic steps with a timeline and write them down. E.g. "I will look for three new job ads this week that interest me - one on Monday, second on Wednesday and the third on Friday. I will look for these from the following career websites...".

Tip: Give Balanced Feedback

When offering feedback, start by highlighting the job seeker's strengths, then move to areas where they can improve. Always frame constructive criticism as opportunities for growth.

5.4 Mock interviews

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

Mock interviews are a commonly used method, and are also used in training communication in other professional fields, and it is an easy way to test how ready one is for the real interview. The research generally indicates that the use of mock interviews may bring a number of benefits for job seekers (Reddan, 2008; Wilkie & Rosendale 2024):

- Understanding of the interview process and the importance of preparations
- Developing communication skills
- Awareness of one's own strengths and weaknesses as a professional
- Improve active listening skills
- May improve an individual's perceived self-efficacy in interviews
- Improving confidence

In addition to the academic research, online career guides (Indeed.com, 2024c; Careerflow.ai, 2024) will typically highlight the following the benefits of practicing with a mock interview:

- The job seeker will become more familiar with the situation of being in an interview.
- The job seeker gets to learn the most common interview questions and how to formulate answers to them.
- The job seeker gets to practice speaking and presenting their answers to an interviewer.
- The job seeker can get feedback on their answers from the interviewer and gain understanding of their own readiness.
- The job seeker's confidence will be improved with more practice and with awareness of how the interview works.
- The job seeker will quickly find out which questions they struggle with and will be able to come up with better answers to them.
- The mock interview provides a good situation for also training non-verbal language.

Lastly, as with any simulated training, the mock interview provides a situation where job seeker can practice interviews without having to worry too much about making mistakes, as there won't be any serious consequences if something goes wrong.

How to practice using a mock interview?

- Help job seeker to prepare a list of common and relevant interview questions.
- If the job seeker is preparing for an interview at a specific company, make sure they research that company well first.
- Suggest practicing the interview in a space with no distractions.
- In case you don't have the time to be the interviewer, suggest to the job seeker to find a person who may be a good interviewer. Perhaps they know someone who has had that role before? Or, they can ask one of their former colleagues, friends or family members.
- For the interview, remind the job seeker to take their time when answering the questions.
- If you are the interviewer, consider also adding some unexpected questions, to see how the job seeker will handle those situations.
- Suggest that the job seeker tries using certain interview techniques such as the STAR method when answering the mock interview questions.
- Suggest that the job seeker records the interview, for example with their smartphone (video, or sound only), and review it later.
- Suggest that the job seeker discusses how the interview went with their interviewer, to receive feedback on their performance. Alternatively, suggest that they bring their recordings to the next session that you have together, so that you together can review and discuss how the mock interview went.
- Discuss with the job seeker how it may be a sensitive situation to review one's own interview performance. Encourage them to try out in a safe environment. For insecure and inexperienced job seekers, this might be harder, and they might need more support. Be respectful and give options - you can always start with having a mock interview with only 1-2 interview questions and increase the number of questions with time.
- Encourage practicing mock interviews several times to build up familiarity with the interview situation, and for allowing the job seeker to develop their answers to the interview questions.
- After the interview, make sure to follow up with these questions: What questions did they answer well? Were there any questions where you felt that the answers could need improvement? How would you describe your impression of the job seeker during the interview?

Tip: Replicate the setting of an interview

Suggest preparing for the mock interview by to some degree replicating the setting of an actual interview. Consider finding a suitable location, dressing up for the occasion, entering the room with greetings and sitting down, putting away your phones or anything else that could distract you from the interview, thinking about posture and how to present oneself, and having any documents ready that might be needed during the interview.

Tip: Software apps for practicing mock interviews

Software apps can help with practicing mock interviews. Technology-mediated mock interviews using AI or VR technologies are becoming more common these days. The pros and cons of using technology vs. in-person interview training are discussed by Wilkie & Rosendale (2024), but the two approaches do complement each other.

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 (supported models are Quest 2, Quest 3, Quest 3S and Quest pro).

There are also other VR-apps on the market, such as the Job Interview Simulation from Bodyswaps (Bodyswaps, 2024) and the AI enabled VirtualSpeech that also includes a job interview scenario (VirtualSpeech, 2024). However, these solutions may not be available for free, and have a limited number of supported languages.

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/>).



Resources for further reading

The skill of self-confidence (Dr. Ivan Joseph, TEDxRyersonU) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w-HYZv6HzAs>

Changing Perspective from Shame to Self-worth (Sue Bryce, TEDxPepperdineUniversity) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5_Tq5A0m7_U

How to stay calm when you know you'll be stressed (Daniel Levitin, TED) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8jPQjjsBblc&list=PLOGi5-fAu8bHaEGV52hSzl8QeUM4933Xy>

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



6. How to design training programs?

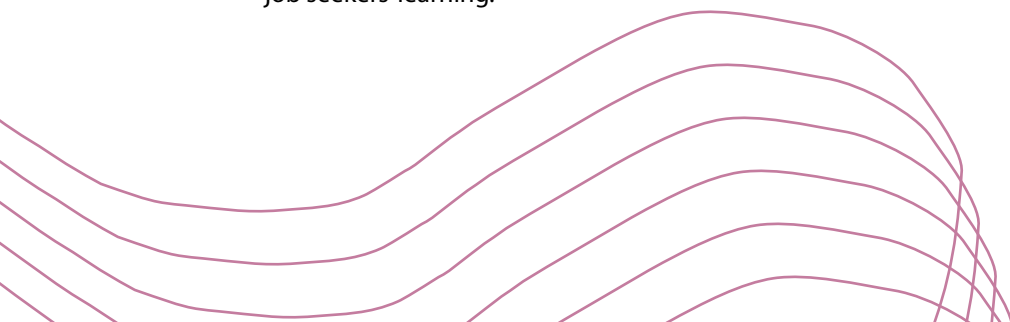
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In this chapter, we focus on how to design an effective training program for example for a group of young job seekers to support their entrance to the job market and getting a job. A training program can be short or long, and formal or nonformal in style. It can be arranged face-to-face, online or as a self-learning course.

What you will learn:

- Understand what key factors make a training program purposeful and effective.
- Learn approaches and gain strategies to design a training program step-by-step.

Learn how to integrate digital tools into a training program in a useful and effective manner to support young job seekers' learning.



6.1 Key factors of effective training program

We all have experiences from participating in some form of training – in school, related to hobbies, in college or university. If we pause to reminisce, memories from enjoyable and not-so-enjoyable moments may come into our minds. In some training occasions, we feel we learned just a few things, in others, we learned a lot, and in some maybe we did not learn anything.

A training program or a course usually focuses on increasing certain knowledge, skills, and competencies of participants based on identified skill gaps and preset learning goals or objectives. Therefore, it can be said that training is efficient when it succeeds in participants acquiring the preset skills from the training.

However, sometimes training can spark something unexpected and good outside the original scope. These can be identified by training evaluation in the end with a question like ‘what did the participant learn’. Evaluating the training by asking feedback from participants, and reflecting on it as the teacher or instructor, can reveal the successful things – and also the aspects that require focus and development for the next round of training.



STARTING POINT

What knowledge, skills, and competencies does a person have before training?

Does a person have motivation and feeling of self-efficacy?



DURING TRAINING

What knowledge, skills, and competencies are being presented to a person during the training?

How motivating is the training to a person?

Is a person in an optimal zone for learning?



EFFECTIVE AND SUCCESSFUL?

Did a person feel it was worth their time?

Did a person learn the skills written down in the learning objectives?

Did a person succeed in something that required applying the skills (e.g. got a job)?

Did a person learn also something else that was not planned?

How do we learn?

There are different kinds of theories about how people learn, such as behaviorism, the humanist approach to education, cognitivism, constructivism, and social constructivism. Many of them are tied to psychology and the developmental learning of infants, children, and young adults. According to these theories learning happens in different ways throughout our lives through developmental processes, everyday life, formal education, and individual ways of learning - when we are in interaction with new information. (Saunders & Wong, 2020.)

For adult learners, it can be beneficial and motivational to recognise their previous experiences and abilities to be more self-directed by inviting them to actively participate and influence the methods and content of training (Knowles, 1988). They can be involved in training co-design as well as in the training implementation.

Senses and brain

In learning, we utilize our senses and brain in individual ways to gather and process information. According to research in neuroscience, our learning is greatly enhanced by the following six factors:

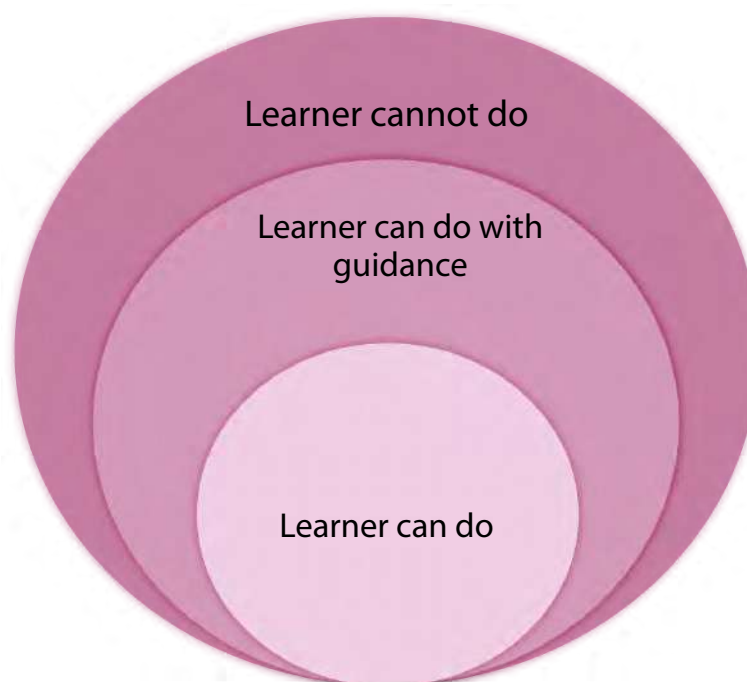
- focusing attention,
- being alert,
- sleeping well and in between,
- repetition,
- taking breaks,
- and making mistakes ([Brain Hack: 6 secrets to learning faster, backed by neuroscience | Lila Landowski | TEDxHobart](#)).



These aspects are important to consider when planning and designing training. How can we create interesting learning opportunities and materials that spark attention and focus in participants? How can we offer suitably sized learning chunks or modules divided into multiple learning occasions? How can we create an atmosphere where making mistakes is okay and preferred as part of the learning process?

Learning is social

Learning happens in social interactions and requires dialogue, writing and reflection (Rosser-Mims et al., 2017). The concept by the psychologist Vygotsky, the zone of proximal development represents the optimal area for the learner, where they can learn with guidance of others.



Motivation and self-efficacy

Motivation and a person's belief in their self-efficacy towards learning new things and reaching a certain goal are important aspects of learning as well (Saunders & Wong, 2020). Intrinsic motivation is something that comes from within the person when their feelings, values, interest and curiosity drive them towards learning and achieving goals. Extrinsic motivation is driven by external forces and factors such as grades, money and career success that drive for action. Intrinsic motivation is often seen as a stronger and more effective driver. Self-efficacy is affected by previous experiences and can be supported by building self-confidence and getting new experiences where one succeeds in achieving goals.

Psychological safety

Additionally, perceived psychological safety creates an environment where the learner can feel safe to practise and learn, and make mistakes. This will lead to increased confidence, creativity, productivity and trust. Watch the video: [What is Psychological Safety, and why is it important?](#)



Knowing your potential participants, getting to know them, what motivates them, how they see their self-efficacy, and where their optimal zone for learning something new might be, are all valuable information for you when starting to plan and design a training.

Tip: Understand how individuals learn differently

Read more about different learning styles: <https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/career-development/types-of-learning>. However, be mindful that science has also shown that we learn best when we use as many sensory channels as possible and make learning as active as possible.



Exercise: Reflect on your own experiences

Goal: Identify and build on your own experiences

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

Description:

1. Draw a horizontal line on the paper. Write on the left side the title Memories of Great Training you have participated in (as a student or facilitator/teacher). Write on the right side the title Memories of Bad Training.
2. Then start listing all the things that come to your mind. Think about your experiences from childhood and school years, youth and adulthood, and possible experiences from different adult or employee trainings. Consider both formal and non-formal training occasions. Write anything that comes to your mind.
3. Start circling words that feel important to you on both columns.
4. Finally write a finish to these two sentences: In a training planned by me, I will make sure to include...
In a training planned by me, I will make sure to not include...

Resources and materials: Paper, pen.

6.2 Design process

So, how to start planning and designing a training? Many training design or instructional design models comprise following elements (InstructionalDesign.org 2024):

- 1. Start by learner analysis and defining learning objectives.** Training design usually starts with some idea of a skills gap and desired skills for the participants to acquire, analyzing the current skills of the potential participants, and clarifying the (learning) objectives for the training.

Who is participating? What knowledge and skills do they already have? What are participants able to do after training? What types of learning constraints exist among participants? What are the delivery options? What are the pedagogical considerations? What is the timeline for the training?

- 2. Then comes the design part.** It can be drawn in a mind map, or the form of a process, training script, or a storyboard. The idea is to document the plan – what happens, when and in which order it happens, and how it happens.

Where will the learning happen? How will the learning happen (e.g. readings, tasks, exercises, discussions, group work, practicing, etc.)? How will the learner move from topic to topic? What kind of visual design would support learning? What kind of technology would support learning?

- 3. Develop learning materials.** Based on the design plan or strategy, the content and material for the training are developed and gathered. These can be for example detailed notes for each training topic, slide shows to present, printables for the participants, descriptions of exercises for individuals or groups, quizzes, tests, etc.

What materials need to be developed? Who develops them and when?

- 4. Training in action: Train, evaluate, and improve.** Finally, the training is piloted and then organized as a training according to the design. Afterward, the training is evaluated to identify what went well and what are the needs for possible improvements. Evaluation can be done by asking for verbal or written feedback.

How to collect feedback after training to evaluate what went well and what could be changed? Who analyses the feedback? Who makes possible changes to the design and materials for the next round of training?

Exercise: Practise designing a training

Goal: Make a first version of a training program design

Preparations: Find yourself a quiet space or a space where you are not disturbed for 15-20 minutes.

Description:

1. Choose a title for your training e.g. 'A training for young job seekers to enhance their job interview skills' or 'A training for young job seekers to enhance their communication skills'
2. Copy and write down the phases of the training design on paper or digital document. You can make it into a list, mind-map, or draw it as a process with steps.
3. Start answering the questions in each phase. Notice that there are no right or wrong answers. Also, you may not know all the answers yet, so if you like you can write down your best guesses.

Resources and materials: Paper and pen, or open a new document on your digital device. See InstructionalDesign.org for more information on different training design models.

Tip: Apply Universal Design of Learning (UDL) to support different types of learners and inclusion

The Universal Design of Learning (UDL) is a framework of Guidelines that are developed to support learner agency. Learner agency refers to a person's or learner's ability and possibility of deliberate, independent action or refraining from it. The goal of these UDL guidelines is to ensure opportunities for learners to engage in learning from their perspective and be motivated, support different types of learners by providing options for representation, and encourage learners' interaction, expression, and communication (The UDL Guidelines 2024).

Get to know the UDL Guidelines in more detail to support learning for all kinds of learners: <https://udlguidelines.cast.org/static/udlg3-graphicorganizer-digital-numbers-a11y.pdf> & [cast- -key-questions-to-consider-when-planning-lessons.pdf](https://udlguidelines.cast.org/static/udlg3-graphicorganizer-digital-numbers-a11y.pdf)



6.3 Integrating Digital Tools and Virtual Reality

Digital tools such as mobile apps, software, online tools, and digital and educational platforms are increasingly used in education and training (Haleem et al., 2022). Learning can be enhanced and made more interesting to the learners through digital tools that use multimedia, social media, games, and collaborative and learning platforms for interactive learning for individuals and in groups.

There are many benefits of digital tools in learning and training. Digital tools offer ways to make learning more engaging, flexible, and time and cost-saving. The learners can have a more proactive role and approach learning at their own pace, and learning can be made even in the form of gamification. Additionally, there are positive environmental impacts of using fewer printable handouts, books, and other materials. From a trainer's point of view, using digital tools can save time and help with analyzing and evaluating. (Haleem et al., 2022.)

To use digital tools, however, we need digital devices such as computers, laptops, mobiles, tablets, projectors,

screens, Virtual Reality (VR) headset, etc. Additionally, many times an internet connection is required to use digital tools with devices. Sometimes the device and connection are required from the learner, and at other times, shared devices are provided by an organization offering the training. When considering integrating digital tools, the aspect of digital safety, digital tool security, and security of personal data, also need to be taken into account.

DIGITAL DEVICES (mobiles, laptops, tablets, VR headset, projectors, etc.)	DIGITAL TOOLS (mobile apps, VR apps, software, online tools, platforms)	SECURITY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do we have shared devices in our organisation? • Is 'Bring your own device' (BYOD) an option? • Do we have internet connection/wifi? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost or free of charge? • Easy to use or needs introduction or training? • Only for trainer to use and demonstrate? • For individual learning or group work? • Integrated to face-to-face training or online training? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the digital tool trusted and secure? • Are we allowed to use the digital tool in our organization? • Security of any personal data is in accordance to General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

Tip: Research for different kinds of online training tools

Here are some links to get you started. Based on your findings make a list for yourself of the most interesting online tools that could be useful for you. [The 16 best training tools you can't do without](#), [6 Digital Tools for Trainers to Make your Workshops Shine - Panda Education and Training](#) & [54 great online tools for workshops and meetings!](#)



Virtual Reality

Virtual Reality (VR) is a computer generated simulation of an artificial environment in which you can immerse yourself with using a VR headset or entering a specially designed room with multiple large screens. VR is used in games, educational purposes for example in medical, safety, and military training, in businesses for training, virtual meetings and conferences, and even in youth work (Verke 2023; Burdea & Coiffet, 2003).

The immersive experience in VR is created through images that are realistic, and utilizing sounds and other sensations (touch, smell, taste) to simulate for the user the real-time physical experience of being present in a virtual environment (Burdea & Coiffet, 2003). The benefits of VR in education, training, and work life comes from opportunities to practice and gain experience from situations that feel real, but are not.

There are different kinds of VR headsets to purchase. With the VR headsets you can access various free and purchasable VR applications. Learn more about the science behind VR: <https://youtu.be/G9ETzbC57u8>



Exercise: SWOT analysis before integrating digital tool into training

Goal: Gain experience from evaluating the benefits and challenges of a digital training tool.

Preparations: Find yourself a quiet space or a space where you are not disturbed for 10-15 minutes. Familiarize yourself with SWOT analysis by researching online: SWOT is a tool to support decision-making, where S=strengths, W=weaknesses, O=opportunities, T=threats.

Description:

1. Choose a digital tool for training that you are interested in.
2. Reflect on **strengths** of the digital tool: things the digital tool is good at. Write these in the upper left hand corner.
3. Reflect on **weaknesses** of the digital tool: things that the digital tool is less good compared to other tools. Write these in the upper right hand corner.
4. Reflect on **opportunities** of the digital tool: potential benefits for learning when using the digital tool. Write these in the lower left hand corner.
5. Reflect on **threats** of the digital tool: risks from using the digital tool. Write these in the lower right hand corner.
6. Finally, see how many positive aspects you have written on the left (strengths and opportunities) compared to negative aspects on the right side (weaknesses and threats). Would it be a good idea to integrate this particular digital tool to your training?

Resources and materials: Paper and pen, or open a new document on your computer or mobile.

Resources for further reading

Watch the video to understand how beliefs also affect our learning and how we can guide others to strengthen their learning skills: [Glenn Dakin: How We Learn is More Important than What We Learn | TED Talk](#)



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.

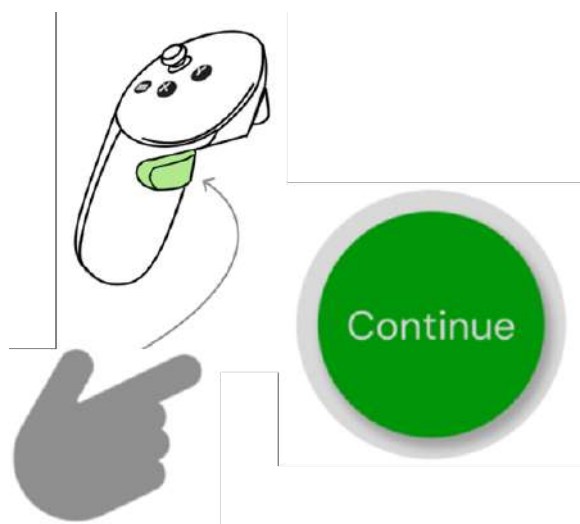
You can use the app for practicing either by yourself, or together with for example your youth worker.

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.

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Do that by pressing either the trigger button, or the middle finger button, on the hand controllers.

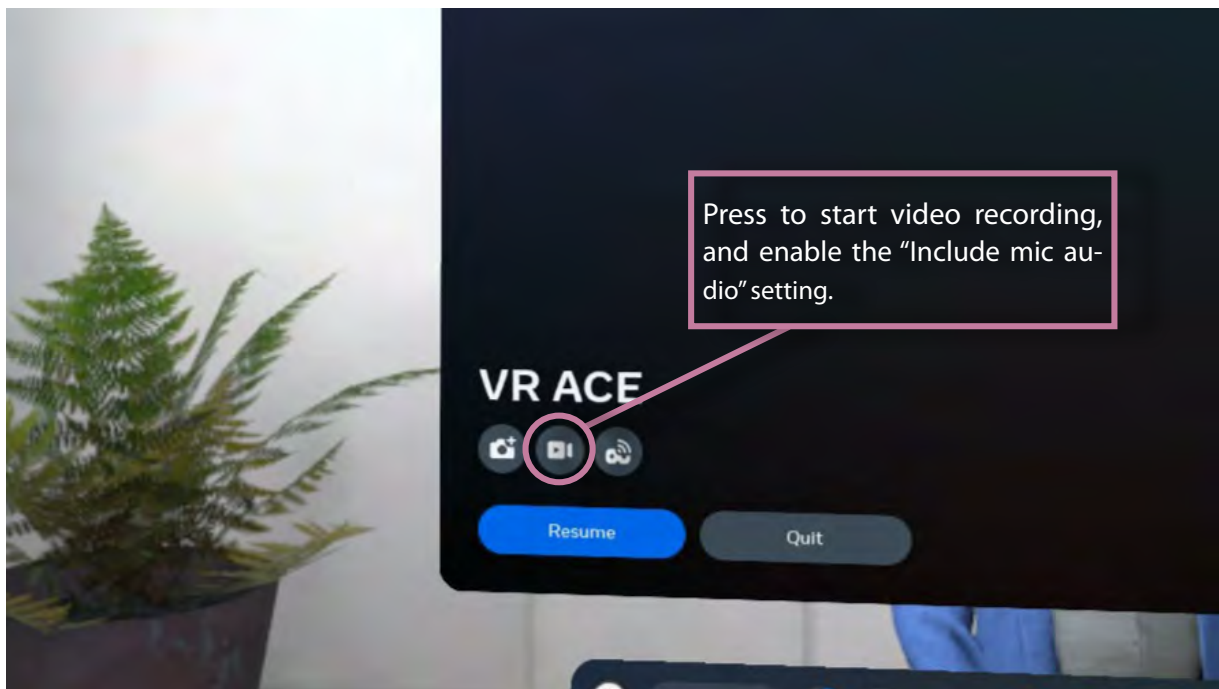
By pressing the side button on the hand controller, you can extend the index finger of your virtual hands.

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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