

JOB INTERVIEW

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Introduction

The purpose of this document is to help you preparing for a job interview. At the end of this document you'll know what to expect in a Dutch interview, how to prepare and some do's and don'ts.

Preparing for an interview takes a lot more than Googling a list of common interview questions. You have to make a great first impression appearance-wise (no wrinkly suits here), have a great knowledge of your target company and its product, and, of course, know exactly how to convey that you're the perfect fit for the job.

Interview Preparation

Some things to do:

- Check out the website, annual reports, newsletters, fact sheets, search programs and so on.
- Try to talk with people who work(ed) for this organization. They can supply relevant information that's not on the website.
- Have a look at sites as Glassdoor.com and Indeed.nl to learn more about the organization and their interview methods.
- Explore the procedure. How many interview sessions can you expect, who are the interviewers (check their LinkedIn profiles, Google them), do you have to do an assessment and so on.
- Based on the job requirements, make an Inventory of possible questions you may expect to answer.
- Prepare some good 'STARE' examples (read the explanation of STARE later in this document). This method is widely used.

Of course they will ask you questions. But you will have questions, too. Prepare a few (smart) questions. Show that you've done your homework when it comes to researching the company and the specific job you're after. Some examples:

- What are your ambitions for the next five years?
- What are the main issues that I will be working on?
- Where are the bottlenecks? And what are the challenges? What is the highest priority?
- When are you satisfied? What results should then be achieved?
- Imagine we are six months from now. How do you know that you've hired the right person?
- What makes working at ... attractive?
- What are the less pleasant aspects of working at ... ?



Practice the conversation with an acquaintance and ask for feedback.

The job interview itself

Phases of a job interview

The job Interview has several phases. A commonly used three-way phase is as follows:

1. The informal opening (5 minutes)

You become acquainted with each other and usually there is just small talk. Questions such as "did you arrive well?" are just meant to make the candidate feel at ease.

2. The formal part (30-60 minutes)

The employer introduces the agenda. They will say something about the organization, their own role and the job and then will ask you to tell something about yourself. Sometimes it is a one-sided interview, in which they will ask the questions and you will answer them. At the end of the interview you get the opportunity to ask your questions. Quite often it is a more balanced conversation in which alternately both the employer and yourself ask questions and give answers. It is important to bring in well prepared questions. See it as an opportunity to showcase yourself. Even if you experience it as a one-sided interview, try to ask questions during the interview. Do not wait till the end, especially where it concerns jobs like Project manager, Policy maker, Team leader. These jobs need people who can take the lead, so please show that you are that person!

3. The informal closure (5 minutes)

At the informal closing they will be briefly indicating how the further application process runs. If they are not telling you, then ask for it. You may specify what you think of the interview and you can also ask what they thought of it. You can also ask if there were any points in your answers that need some extra clarification. Finally: thank for the interview and state that you found it enjoyable. Do not say: see you next time. This can be perceived as too bold. Instead: I really hope that we will meet again.

Key questions

The following three main questions must be answered during the formal part of the interview:

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Can you handle the job? | Show your education, knowledge, experience, skills, achievements, ability to learn. |
| 2. Do you want the job? | Tell them about your motivation for the job as well as for the organization and industry. Show them your working attitude and energy level. |
| 3. Do you fit in the team and organization? | Is there a 'chemistry'? What are your values, your personal style, how do you communicate, what about your general interest, presentation, appearance. |

Useful suggestions concerning your attitude

First impression

The impression that one gets in the first three minutes of the interview, weighs heavily in the outcome. Give a firm handshake and introduce yourself clearly. If you walk into the room with the interviewer, you can demonstrate your interest in the organization by example to make a compliment about the building or other things that occur to you.

Listen actively

Listen actively and show your interest. Active listening is done with the ears, the eyes, the mind and the heart. When you are in an interview with more than one person, make sure that you make eye-contact with every participant. Even if they do not ask any question, you want them to feel part of the conversation too.

Your attitude

Be alert to your nonverbal reactions, they are interpreted as well. Do not just tell that you're enthusiastic, but show it as well. The interviewers react on your non-verbal signals, too.

Question and answer

Do not answer too prompt, if you do not understand a question. Ask for further clarification or repetition of the question. Do not be afraid of silences and take time to think about your answer. You're not an answering machine. Be concrete in your answers and keep it short and concise. See open questions as an opportunity to sell yourself.

Equivalent

Do not act too submissive, but also watch out not to be speaking constantly. Ask questions about the team, culture, background, digits, personal opinions and so on. Both parties must be able to decide whether they want to continue together. Try to make your conversation more equal than just a question-and-answer game.

Be yourself

Be yourself during the interview. When you feel most at ease, the best comes out. Any form of stress is understandable. After all, you are talking to a stranger about something that is very important to you. An interviewer understands that. When nervousness dominates, the best thing to do is to tell them you feel a bit nervous (because you really want this job so much). That often takes already some of the tension away.

Anticipate the Interview Questions

Even if you're a well-oiled interviewing machine, it's essential to spend time thinking carefully about what skills, accomplishments and interview answers will resonate with your interviewers most. Your management abilities? Your creativity? The examples you share will probably be slightly different anytime.

Have an answer to **"tell me about yourself"** ready to go. Interviewers nearly always ask this question, and you want to be sure to nail this first part of the interview. On YouTube you'll find video's about this subject.

Don't be thrown off by the classic, **"What's your biggest weakness?"** One foolproof method: Think of something that you struggle with but that you've already started improving. For example, maybe you've never been strong at public speaking, but over the past few years, you've taken on leadership roles and volunteered to run meetings to help you be more comfortable when addressing a crowd.

You can easily find lists of **common interview questions and answers**. Make use of AI tools (see paragraph below) to tailor them for your cv and the job you applied for.

Don't forget about the numbers! Finding some numbers, percentages, increases, or quotas you can use when talking about your responsibilities and accomplishments really sweetens the deal and helps you tell a hiring manager about your results. Not knowing the exact figure for things is often a big deterrent for using numbers in resumes and interviews. It's perfectly fine to not know exact numbers.

Two examples:

Don't: 'I am responsible for supervising undergraduate researchers.'

Do: 'I supervise 7-12 undergraduate research students each year who have all since gone on to graduate school in astrophysics, physics, or mathematics.'

Don't: 'I completed first editing pass on articles.'

Do: 'I reviewed and evaluated 40-50 topical articles per week and made the decision to either pass articles to the editorial team or send articles back to authors for further revisions.'

It's likely you'll get asked about **your motivation**. Why you're interested in this particular role and company. Consider why you're interested in the function and identify a couple of key factors that make it a great fit for you and how it aligns with what motivates you.

E.g., 'I love customer support because I love the constant human interaction and the satisfaction that comes from helping someone solve a problem'.

Your presentation is important. Don't just think about how you'll answer certain questions; practice looking in the mirror and answering them out loud. This prep work will help you clarify your thoughts and make you much more comfortable during the interview.

How to make use of AI tools in your preparation

You can effectively use AI tools such as ChatGPT, Perplexity or Google Gemini to prepare for a job interview. For example, you can ask them to generate potential interview questions related to the position or request a list of the most common interview questions and answers. You can insert the job description or your CV alongside your query. When inserting your CV, ensure you remove any personal information.

The quality of the responses you receive will largely depend on the prompts (instructions) you provide. Therefore, carefully consider the desired output. Additionally, verify that the information you receive is still current and realistic. While AI is a useful tool, it is essential to critically evaluate the accuracy of what you read.

You can use the STAR method to create a prompt (instruction).

S Situation: What is the situation?
T Task: What is the task/role of the AI tool?
A Action: What action should the AI tool perform for you?
R Result: What is the specific desired result?

Some examples:

S I am preparing for a job interview, please assist me.
T Act as a professional career coach/recruiter/hiring manager from the department/HR advisor/CEO.
A Analyze the job description (and possibly the CV) that I copy below.
R Generate 30 sharp questions that could be asked during the job interview for this position, and provide suitable answers.

OR:

Come up with 5 good questions that I, as a candidate, can ask during the interview based on this job description.

OR:

Analyze the website of company X. Give me a good summary of the work they do.

OR:

Can you give me the five main competitors in the Netherlands of this organization and indicate the differences and similarities between these five organizations and company X?

OR:

I am attaching my CV. Please analyze my CV and give me three examples of a pitch I can use to introduce myself in five sentences at the beginning of the interview. The tone of the pitch should be professional yet friendly.

Include specific numbers, such as "a pitch of three sentences," "give 10 examples of interview questions that focus on the required qualities."

Once you have received an answer, you can always continue by asking additional questions to get even better suggestions from the AI tool you are using. For example, "Give me five additional questions related to the quality 'results-oriented thinking that is mentioned in this job description.'" "The five Dutch competitors provide a good overview. Can you also list the ten main competitors abroad?"
And so on.

Extra examples of AI prompts

Behavioral Interview questions

Act as an expert career coach. I am [mention the problem you're facing in detail with context]. Imagine you are the interviewer. I am preparing for a behavioral interview for a [job title] position at [company name]. Can you ask me a series of questions that assess my experience with teamwork, leadership, problem-solving and conflict resolution? Please include follow-up questions for each topic to delve deeper into my responses. I want you to [mention how you want the output in detail with examples].

STAR method practice

You are an expert career coach. I am [mention the problem you're facing in detail with context]. Help me practice answering interview questions using the STAR method (Situation, Task, Action, Result). Provide a series of questions where I can respond using this format, and give feedback on how I can improve each of my answers. Tailor these questions to a [Job title] role in the [Industry name] industry. I want you to [mention how you want the output in detail with examples].

Technical skills evaluation

You are an expert career coach. I am [mention the problem you're facing in detail with context]. I am preparing for a technical interview for a [Job title] role at [company name]. Please simulate a technical interview by asking me questions related to [specific technology or skill, e.g. Python Programming, data structures, networking]. After each question, offer detailed explanations of the correct answers or best practices. I want you to [mention how you want the output in detail with examples].

Strengths and weaknesses

Act as an expert career coach. I am [mention the problem you're facing in detail with context]. I need to practice answering questions about my strengths and weaknesses for an upcoming interview for a [job title] position. Can you ask me a variety of questions that explore different aspects of these traits? Also, give me tips on how to frame my weaknesses as opportunities for growth. I want you to [mention how you want the output in detail with examples].

Leadership and management

You are an expert career coach. I am [mention the problem you're facing in detail with context]. I am preparing for a leadership position such as [Job title] at [company name]. Please ask me questions that assess my management style, ability to lead a team, handle conflicts, and drive projects to successful completion. Include follow-up questions to explore my leadership philosophy in detail. I want you to [mention how you want the output in detail with examples].

Competence Focused interview - STARR methodology

A widely used method of selection during interviews, the criterion based interview. The idea here is that the best predictor of behavior from the past is the future. The employer sets specific competencies required for the position in a row and raises questions for each competency and results in the past.

So go after examples from work experience, extracurricular activities, internships or other events to illustrate your competence. Questions you can expect from the selector are: "Can you give an example, what did you do exactly, what was your role?" And so on.

Imagine you call 'planning and organization' one of your qualities. Make sure you have ready the appropriate success in support of your skills and abilities in this area. Do this concise and "to the point". A good tool for this is the Starr methodology.

STARR state:

- the **S**ituation you were in
- the **T**ask or role you fulfilled herein
- the **A**ctions you've taken
- the **R**esults arising there from
- and possibly even the **R**eflection: what have you learned.

When competence 'planning and organization' someone might mention the following experience.

- **Situation** - the company you worked then grew very fast
- **Task** - arranging moving to another, larger building
- **Action** - select a project team moving, making a scenario, daily update action, communication over the relocation bulletin to all concerned
- **Result** - moved smoothly with satisfied employees and customers in a day.
- **Reflection** - what you especially have been taught that communication via the bulletin was extremely crucial to ensure a smooth operation for all parties.



You can practice with STARR in the home assignment.



On YouTube you'll find several videos of STAR examples.

Completing an application process

The rejection

It may happen that you are rejected.

Maybe you do not understand or you do not think it's fair. Maybe you would prefer to forget as soon as possible. However, we recommend to give a call to find out why you're not hired. It's important information for the next application. Perhaps it was because of your presentation, or you need to stress other experiences a next time.

Call when the first disappointment has sunk in so that the other does not get the idea you want retaliation. Clearly, it is important for you to know on what grounds the decision is taken. You have the right to know.

Job interview; second interview

A second interview is meant to clear up any ambiguities about the first interview and to provide a basis for the final round. A second interview usually will be more strict to the test and will be deeper function addressed. Quite often you get the chance to meet some of your colleagues.

Remained vague backgrounds will be further deepened, practical topics discussed and they will look sharper if you'll fit in the organization.

They can ask you for one or two references. This means, that they can call them and ask information about how long you worked there, your role and your work attitude. Ask your referees whether they are willing to serve as a reference. Give them brief overview of your plans and applications. And ask them what they might tell about you.

Assessment

Sometimes an assessment is part of the selection procedure. A selection assessment is always set up in the context of an application process with the aim to find out your chance of being successful in the job.

The length of an assessment can vary from an hour to two days and may contain the following elements:

- one or more practical simulations or role plays
- interview with one or two assessors
- intelligence tests
- personality questionnaires

While preparing, focus on the job description, the required competences and the profile of the organization. We recommend you to practice some tests on personality, intelligence and probably specific competencies.

On the Internet you can find lots of information and examples about the kind of tests that you can expect. E.g. Jobtestprep, assessmentday, 123test.

Salary, additional conditions and benefits

Then finally comes the moment when it is clear that you are an interesting candidate for the position. It's time to prepare for the negotiation about your salary, additional benefits and working conditions. It is important to prepare this part seriously.

What would you like to earn, what salary is competitive and what other income components are common in this branch? You must have a good understanding of the components and details of your current income so you can quickly make a good comparison. Think of holidays, bonuses, pension scheme, car, laptop, 13th month, profit sharing agreements, temporary of permanent contract, group insurance for healthcare, hybrid working, career development, education.

Your current salary partly determines the strategy, as well as your position in the application process. Are you the only remaining candidate or are e.g. four others in the final round?

It's good to know that flexible working is a trend. It means that more and more employers offer individual additional benefits. They offer a so called 'cafeteria model' or 'choice model' from which choices can be made from additional benefits.

To give you a good understanding of your value on the market we suggest to look for Collective Labor Agreements in your specific field, have a look at sites such as www.intermedair.nl or Glassdoor, check with colleagues or recruitment agencies.

Cheekyscientist.com facilitates a free e-book: salary negotiation guide for PhD's.

Sites about applying and working in the Netherlands

Of course you can find your way on the internet or ask colleagues or people you know in the Netherlands, but here are some suggestions where to look for information about working here and how to apply.

Academictransfer
IamExpat
Undutchables
Expatica
Workinholland