

Preparing for your application and interview

Before you begin your application take a moment to read this advice sheet thoroughly. Spending a little time to get your application and interview right can make all the difference.

You should:

- Read all the instructions and guidance provided (including the job description and the Defra behaviours appropriate to the job grade you are applying for)
- For written applications, use the full word limit available on the application form; sell yourself. Very short submissions may be discarded without even being read
- At interview, listen to the question being asked: if necessary, ask for it to be repeated
- Talk about yourself and your actions. Don't waste words on background information or the actions of others
- Concentrate your evidence on the action you took and how this satisfies the selection criteria
- Use the past tense
- Use active voice (e.g. "I wrote the report") rather than passive voice (e.g. "The report was written by me").
- In your example say what you did, rather than what 'we' did.
- Structure your evidence logically: any story should have a start, middle and end. When asked to give an example that illustrates something use the acronym STAR (Situation, Task, Action, Result) as the basic structure for your evidence, both written and spoken:
 - **Situation** – briefly describe the context and your role.
 - **Task** – the specific challenge, task or job that you faced.
 - **Action** – what you did, how and why you did it.
 - **Result** – what you achieved through your actions.
- Prepare several examples for each behaviour being assessed

You should avoid:

- Generalised comments, such as “I’m a really good communicator” or “I make decisions on a daily basis”. Give a specific example, not throw away lines.
- Paraphrasing the criteria. e.g. “I displayed tact and diplomacy”.
- Assertions e.g. “It is very important to deal with complaints promptly”.
- Wasting precious words, especially on the written component of the process.
- Excessive use of jargon or acronyms; the selection board may not be made up of vets, or the vets may not be from a clinical background.
- Trying to cram several examples into one behaviour. The word limit is tight enough for a single example.
- Theoretical or incomplete examples. Telling us about what might happen if your project takes off is pointless: we want to hear about what you have done, how you did it and why it did (or did not) work out.