



GUIDE TO REQUESTING WORKPLACE ACCOMMODATIONS

As a neurodivergent employee

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Table of contents

Introduction	2
Before the request	2
Research company policies and legal protections	3
Request a meeting	4
Preparing for the meeting	5
During the meeting	6
After the meeting	7
Monitor and adjust	8
Know your rights	8
Final thoughts	9

Introduction

Workplace environments can present unique challenges for neurodivergent individuals, from sensory sensitivities and communication differences to executive functioning demands. While requesting accommodations can feel daunting—especially if you’re unsure how your employer will respond—having the right adjustments in place can make a significant difference in your productivity, well-being, and overall job satisfaction.

This guide is designed to help you identify your needs, understand your rights, and confidently request workplace accommodations that support your strengths. Different countries have different legislation. In the UK, the **Equality Act 2010** protects your right to reasonable adjustments, and in the US the **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)** protects your rights. It’s important to check which laws protect your rights in your country as knowing your legal protections can help you advocate for yourself effectively.

By following a structured approach—preparing in advance, clearly communicating your needs, and following up after discussions—you can navigate the process with greater ease. You don’t have to disclose a formal diagnosis if you don’t want to; instead, you can focus on the practical changes that will help you thrive at work.

This guide will take you step by step through the process, from preparation to follow-up, ensuring you feel equipped to request the support you deserve.

Before the Request

Identify Your Specific Needs

Start by reflecting on which aspects of your work environment or job duties present challenges. You’ll find a separate document that lists accommodations that many neurodivergent people find helpful. Not all of these measures will apply to you and there will be others that aren’t listed, so when you’re identifying accommodations that you would find helpful make sure that you clearly identify your personal needs.

If you're unsure, think about previous work experiences and what helped or hindered your productivity. You might also track your work patterns for a week to identify recurring challenges.

Legally, you are entitled to ask for "reasonable adjustments" and, depending on the nature of your employment, it might not be possible to grant all the requests that you feel would be helpful. It's important to view this process as a negotiation between yourself and the employer and, in some areas, a degree of compromise might be required so that your needs are met as far as possible, with some limitations.

Research Company Policies & Legal Protections

Check if your workplace has a formal process for requesting accommodations. Many organisations outline their approach in employee handbooks, HR policies, or diversity and inclusion statements. If no formal policy exists, be prepared to approach your manager or HR directly.

Understanding your legal rights can also give you confidence in your request:

UK – Equality Act 2010

- Employers are legally required to make **reasonable adjustments** to remove workplace barriers for disabled employees, including neurodivergent individuals.
- Adjustments could include changes to workspaces, schedules, communication methods, or workload expectations.
- If an employer refuses to make reasonable adjustments, it may be considered discrimination. Support is available through **Acas**, **Disability Rights UK**, or **Citizens Advice**.

US – Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

- The **ADA** and **Rehabilitation Act of 1973** protect employees with disabilities, including neurodivergence, ensuring they receive **reasonable accommodations**.

- Employers must provide adjustments unless they can prove it would cause **undue hardship** (significant difficulty or expense).
- If an accommodation request is refused, employees can file a complaint with the **Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)**.

Countries such as the UK, US, Canada, Australia, and most of the EU) have **strong anti-discrimination laws** that explicitly protect neurodivergent employees and require **reasonable accommodations** in the workplace.

- **Some countries** (such as Japan, Brazil, and South Africa) have laws mandating workplace inclusion but may have weaker enforcement mechanisms.
- **Other countries** (including parts of Asia, the Middle East, and some developing nations) may have **disability protections in place**, but neurodivergence is not always explicitly recognised, and enforcement can be limited.

Researching these protections in advance helps you advocate for yourself with confidence.

Request a Meeting

A written request ensures clarity and gives your employer time to process your needs before discussing them in person. I have provided a template that you can adapt. At this stage, I would suggest keeping your request short enough to provide a general overview of any requests you would like to ask for. In the template I have provided, it mentions that a more detailed list of accommodations can be provided at this stage or brought to the initial meeting.

At this stage, it would be more helpful to state that you would like to discuss some adaptations to your sensory environment that would allow you to work more effectively than go offer detail about your request for a permanent workspace in favour of hot-desking or to wear earplugs at work. This more detailed account will be provided in advance of the meeting, or discussed during your initial meeting.

Preparing for the meeting

- At this point, you want to have prepared a detailed list of the accommodations you are requesting.
- When you write your list of requested accommodations, focus on the positives not only for yourself but for the company, in terms of your work productivity.
- Be specific about the type of accommodation or adjustment you require. Instead of saying “I’m affected by sensory triggers that make it hard to work”, say “I find it very difficult to work when people are talking and have the radio on and would find wearing earphones helpful in blocking out distractions”. Instead of saying, “Going to out-of-hours events makes me exhausted and I’d like to request not to go”, you could say, “There are some events, such as social nights out, that I don’t feel are necessary to my work performance that I would like to be excused from”.
- Print a copy of your requests and keep one copy for yourself and handout a copy for other people present at the interview.
- Check your legal rights and company policies regarding taking a support person to the meeting, if you feel this would be helpful.
- If you feel it would be helpful, request in advance that the meeting is recorded or that minutes are taken during the meeting.
- If you are **neurodivergent**, you can argue that taking minutes is a **reasonable adjustment** for memory, processing, or anxiety.

Example Request

Subject: Request to Take Meeting Notes for Accessibility Purposes

Dear [Manager’s Name],

I have a meeting scheduled on [date] regarding [topic]. To ensure I can accurately process and recall key points, I would like to take my own minutes during the meeting.

If this is not possible, could a written summary be provided after the meeting? I find written records essential for clarity and follow-up.

Please let me know what works best. Thank you for your understanding.

Best regards,

[Your Name]

If your employer **denies your request**, you can:

- Explain that **notetaking supports your neurodivergence** and improves communication.
- Argue that **written records benefit everyone by reducing misunderstandings**.

During the meeting

Stay Focused on Key Points

When discussing accommodations, keep the focus on the essential adjustments you need. If you feel nervous, having bullet points or notes to refer to can help keep the conversation structured.

- Begin with a brief explanation of your challenges.
- Highlight the impact these challenges have on your work.
- Propose specific solutions, rather than just describing the problem.

If you're comfortable, you can explain how neurodivergence affects your work style, but you are not required to disclose a diagnosis unless you choose to.

Supporting Information

In most cases you do not need to provide formal evidence of neurodivergence to request workplace accommodations, however whether you are asked for proof depends on your country's laws, your employer's policies and the types of accommodations you are requesting, so make sure you know your legal rights in this area. Some people prefer to

bring documentation of some kind (which often does not have to be an official diagnosis, and could include a therapist's letter, occupational health professional or doctor) in order to feel more confident about asking for accommodations.

Be Open to Discussion

Employers might have questions or alternative suggestions. Be open to discussing different solutions, but also stand firm on what is necessary for your well-being and job performance.

If your employer is hesitant, you can suggest a **trial period** to test whether an accommodation is effective. This can help ease concerns about long-term commitments while giving you the support you need.

After the Meeting

Follow Up in Writing

Once the meeting is over, send a follow-up email summarising the key points discussed. This ensures clarity and provides a record of what was agreed upon.

Your follow-up might look like this:

Subject: Follow-Up on Workplace Accommodations Discussion

Dear [Manager's Name],

Thank you for taking the time to discuss potential workplace adjustments with me. To summarise our conversation:

- We discussed [briefly list key accommodations requested].
- We agreed to [outline any confirmed changes or trial periods].
- Next steps will involve [mention any actions they or you need to take].

Please let me know if I have missed anything. I appreciate your support and look forward to implementing these adjustments.

Best regards,

[Your Name]

Monitor and Adjust

Once accommodations are in place, pay attention to whether they are working as intended. If something isn't effective, request a follow-up discussion to adjust the approach.

For example:

- If a noise-cancelling headset helps but doesn't fully resolve sensory overload, you might ask for a quieter workspace instead.
- If flexible hours improve focus but cause scheduling conflicts, adjusting break times might be a better alternative.

Accommodations should be adaptable to your needs, and it's okay to refine them over time.

Know Your Rights

If your employer resists providing reasonable accommodations, consider seeking advice from HR or external organisations:

- **UK: Acas, Disability Rights UK, or Citizens Advice.**
- **US: Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), Job Accommodation Network (JAN),** or local disability rights groups.
- **Other countries:** Check local employment laws and advocacy groups for workplace disability rights.

If necessary, you can formally escalate your request through HR or legal channels, though many issues can be resolved through open communication.

Final Thoughts

Requesting workplace accommodations can feel intimidating, but remember that you deserve a work environment that allows you to thrive. By preparing thoroughly, advocating for yourself with confidence, and keeping communication open, you can create a workplace that supports both your needs and your professional success.