



A GUIDE FOR NEURODIVERGENT PEOPLE

Requesting Accommodations for Interviews

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A Guide for Neurodivergent People: Requesting Accommodations for Interviews

Introduction

Navigating the interview process can be challenging, particularly for neurodivergent individuals. Ensuring the process is accessible and supportive can make a significant difference in showcasing your skills and strengths. This guide provides practical steps to help you confidently request and utilise accommodations or adjustments during job interviews.

Why Interview Accommodations are Important

Interviews often favour neurotypical communication and interaction styles, which may not align with how neurodivergent individuals process information, respond to questions, or express themselves. Adjustments level the playing field, ensuring you can present your skills and experience without unnecessary barriers.

Accommodations can help:

- Minimise sensory overwhelm in the interview setting.
- Create clarity and reduce ambiguity in questions.
- Provide you with the time or tools you need to respond effectively.
- Provide you with sufficient time for preparation.

Understanding Your Rights

Please note: it is important to check up-to-date information regarding your legal rights and ensure you are familiar with the law in your country.

In the UK, the Equality Act 2010 requires employers to provide *reasonable adjustments* to ensure equal access for disabled applicants, which includes neurodivergent individuals. Employers cannot legally discriminate against you for requesting adjustments, and they are obligated to make accommodations as long as they're reasonable and do not impose undue hardship on the organisation. In the United States The ADA prohibits discrimination against qualified individuals with disabilities, including neurodivergence (e.g., autism, ADHD, dyslexia, etc.), in all stages of employment, including interviews. It requires employers to provide *reasonable accommodations* to ensure an equitable hiring process and applies to employers with 15 or more employees.

Disclosing your neurodivergence is a personal decision. If you've chosen to share this information, the company has a legal and ethical duty to support you throughout the hiring process.

Checklist for the Stages Involved in Requesting and Preparing for Adjustments

1. Reflect on Your Needs (refer to the checklist below to help you identify accommodations or adjustments that you might find helpful):

Consider the aspects of interviews that might pose challenges for you. Some questions to ask yourself:

- Do I find it easier to respond in written form or with more time?
- Are sensory environments like bright lights or noisy spaces overwhelming?
- Do I need the interviewer to structure questions more clearly or provide prompts?
- Do I need detailed information about the interview arrangements?
- Reflect on past interviews – what worked well and what caused difficulties?
- Consider how your neurodivergence affects areas like communication, sensory processing or focus in pressurised situations.

2. How to Request Accommodations

- Notify the company of your neurodivergence as soon as possible—ideally when confirming the interview. I have attached a file, in word format, which you can use (or adapt) as an introductory email.
- I have created a document called “Inclusive Interviews: A Guide to Supporting Neurodivergent Candidates” which you can send the interviewer, if they request additional information.
- Clearly explain what adjustments you’re requesting and how they will help. Use simple language to focus on practical needs (e.g., “I perform best when provided with questions in advance”).
- Focus on how accommodations will benefit both you and your employer (for instance, by allowing you better how to showcase your skills or ensure you have provided clear examples that demonstrate your past experience).

3. Prepare for the Interview:

- Ask for details about the interview format and structure. Will it be in person, virtual, or involve multiple stages? Who will be present?
- Rehearse common interview questions with a trusted person or by yourself. Practice advocating for your adjustments if needed.
- Bring any tools or aids that help you stay focused, regulated, or comfortable (e.g., fidget items, notes, or noise-cancelling headphones).

4. During the Interview:

- Don’t hesitate to remind the interviewer of your agreed adjustments if something hasn’t been implemented.
- Take your time and ask for clarification or a moment to think if needed.

- Focus on showcasing your skills and how you can contribute to the company rather than on trying to fit a mould.

5. After the Interview:

- Reflect on how the adjustments worked for you. If the interview process continues, consider if there are further tweaks you'd like to request.
- Follow up with the employer if you feel that promised adjustments were not provided.

Additional Tips for Success

- **Advocate for Yourself:** Asking for accommodations is not a weakness—it's a way to ensure you're given the same opportunity as others to succeed.
- **Know Your Strengths:** Focus on how your neurodivergence can be an asset, such as unique problem-solving approaches, creativity, or attention to detail.
- **Be Honest and Authentic:** If you feel comfortable, share how the adjustments allow you to show your best self—it helps create understanding and mutual respect.

This process is about creating an interview environment that allows you to shine on your terms. By preparing thoughtfully and advocating for your needs, you can navigate interviews with greater confidence and ensure your talents are seen in the best light. Remember, any company worth working for will value your contributions and respect your need for adjustments.

Checklist for potential accommodations

The list below includes accommodations that are helpful for many neurodivergent people. It is designed so that you can request those that apply to you. It might also be that there are accommodations that are not included below that would be helpful for you.

The first step in asking for accommodations is to work through the list below and identify which accommodations you feel would be helpful to you. It might also be that there are adjustments or accommodations that you feel would be helpful and which are not listed below, which you should also take a note of.

Interview Accommodations for Neurodivergent People

1. Environmental and Sensory Accommodations

- The interview is conducted in a private or sensory-friendly environment to help me focus and perform at my best.
- Harsh or fluorescent lights are adjusted or dimmed and that natural lighting is used in favour of artificial lighting, if possible.
- I have a choice between an in-person, virtual, or phone interview.
- Environmental distractions, such as background noise or interruptions, are minimised.
- On-screen distractions, such as avoiding busy virtual backgrounds, are minimised during an online interview.
- I have the option of using noise-cancelling headphones during a virtual interview.

2. Communication Accommodations

(At the end of this guide you will find examples of the types of questions that are commonly asked in interviews, and alternative suggestions to make them easier to

understand. You will find these questions repeated in the “Inclusive Interviews: A Guide to Supporting Neurodivergent Candidates” document).

- Interview questions and topics are shared in advance of the interview to allow time for processing and preparation.
- I am offered alternatives to traditional question-and-answer formats, such as:
 - A practical skills demonstration or work sample.
 - A written assessment.
 - A portfolio of previous work.
 - A pre-recorded video submission.
 - A focus on my work record “in post”, if I am applying for a position in the same organisation.
- I am given the option of providing written responses instead of verbal answers.
- Multi-layered questions are avoided, in favour of an initial question and follow-up questions as required.
- Vague questions are avoided in favour of questions that ask me to provide examples based on my experience.
- Open-ended questions are avoided in favour of questions that ask for a definite answer or example.
- On-the-spot problem-solving questions are avoided in favour of questions that ask me to reflect on a specific example and which are followed-up with additional questions.
- Questions which explore how I interact socially are rephrased so that I can provide specific examples of workplace relationships.
- I am invited to ask whether I need a question to be clarified or rephrased. This should take place throughout the interview and at the end of the interview.
- Reducing or avoiding high-pressure, rapid-fire questioning styles.
- I am allowed to use communication devices or aids, such as text-to-speech apps or AAC tools.
- I am asked to provide additional or alternative questions if the interviewer feels I have not fully or directly answered the question.

- I am given sufficient time to answer a question, which might include me taking a pause to allow me to process what has been asked.
- I am given sufficient time during the interview to accommodate my communication preferences and needs.
- The purpose of the question being asked is explained so that I understand the context of the question.
- I am offered a choice regarding my preferred format for post-interview feedback, including written rather than verbal feedback.
- I am invited to share additional information or clarify responses via email after the interview if I feel I didn't fully express myself.

3. Process Accommodations

- I am offered a degree of flexibility regarding scheduling, in order to align with optimal energy levels or focus times.
- I am offered an alternative interview format, if possible, including a one-to-one session instead of an interview panel.
- I am allowed to bring a support person, such as a mentor, job coach or interpreter, to the interview.
- The interview is structured in a clear manner, with clearly defined and communicated expectations for each stage of the interview.
- Timed tests are avoided in favour of alternatives, unless a timed test is considered truly essential.
- It is indicated clearly to me when I will receive a response regarding the outcome of the interview and how the response will be communicated to me.

4. Regulation Accommodations

- I am allowed to bring self-regulation tools with me to the interview, such as fidget items, weighted lap pads or small comfort object.

- I am given additional scheduled breaks during longer interviews or assessments. These should be discussed with me in advance.
- I am given flexibility around taking additional breaks if required and should be invited to ask for a break if I require one.
- I am allowed to stand up, stretch and move around if I feel it would help me self-regulate.
- I have the option of an alternative seating option if I feel it would help me self-regulate.
- I am able to bring water and small snacks with me into the interview room.
- If I engage in “stimming” behaviours, such as moving repeatedly, touching an object or making a noise, this should be normalised and accepted.

5. Accessibility Accommodations

- The interview is held at a location that is accessible for my physical needs and sensory sensitivities.
- I am given detailed written information about the interview process in advance of the interview. This information should be written in a detailed way, including information about where the interview room is located, how many people will be present during the interview, what the parking arrangements are at the interview venue.
- I am invited to ask any questions in advance about the logistics and practical arrangements for the interview.
- Any online platforms used for virtual interviews are accessible and user-friendly.
- Alternative assessment methods are made available offered if the role involves timed or standardised tests.

6. Executive Function Support Accommodations

- I am sent reminders for interview appointments (email, text, or calendar invites).

- I receive a clear written outline or agenda for the interview to minimise uncertainty.
- I receive additional time for any pre-interview tasks or assessments.

7. Memory and Processing Accommodations

- I am allowed to use notes or prompts during the interview.
- A slower pace is adopted during the interview to reduce processing pressure.
Additional time should be scheduled into the interview to accommodate this.
- I am encouraged to ask clarifying questions or ask for additional explanations or instructions.
- A summary of key points or follow-up details are sent to me after the interview.

8. Post-Interview Support

- I am given feedback about my interview performance in written form, following the interview.
- I am offered a follow-up meeting to discuss any additional questions or clarifications.
- I am allowed time to consider and respond to job offers, without requiring immediate decisions.

Examples of alternative questions that recognise neurodivergent communication patterns

1. Multi-layered or Overly Complex Question

Difficult:

Can you tell me about a time when you had to manage conflicting priorities, explain how you navigated the situation, and describe the outcome?

Alternative (break the question down into individual questions which the candidate can answer and which lead to the next question):

Can you describe one situation where you had multiple tasks or priorities to handle?

Follow-on question: *What steps did you take to manage them?*

Follow-on question: *What was the result?*

Why the Alternative is Better:

Breaking the question into smaller parts makes it easier for the candidate to process and respond, while reducing the cognitive burden of juggling multiple elements.

2. Hypothetical or Abstract Question

Difficult:

"How would you handle a situation where a team member disagrees with your approach to a project?"

Alternative:

"Have you worked on a project where someone had a different approach or opinion?"

Follow-on question: *How did you communicate or resolve the difference?"*

Why the Alternative is Better:

The rephrased question draws from real experience, making it more concrete and less reliant on imagining hypothetical situations, which can feel overwhelming or unclear.

3. Open-Ended, Vague Question

Difficult:

What are your greatest strengths?

Alternative:

Can you tell me about one or two skills you're most confident in?

Follow-on question: *How have you used those skills in your previous roles?*

Why the Alternative is Better:

The alternative focuses the question, offering a clear starting point and guiding the candidate to provide examples.

4. Behavioural Question with Unclear Expectations**Difficult:**

Tell me about a time you took initiative at work.

Alternative:

Can you share an example of a task or project where you noticed something needed to be done, and you acted on it?

Follow-on question: *What steps did you take?*

Why the Alternative is Better:

The clearer framing of the alternative reduces ambiguity and specifies what kind of situation the interviewer is asking about.

5. Abstract Question About Self-Reflection**Difficult:**

How do you define success in your role?

Alternative:

In your previous roles, what was something you achieved that made you feel proud or satisfied?

Follow-on question: *What made it feel successful to you?*

Why the Alternative is Better:

The alternative provides a concrete anchor (previous roles and achievements) rather than leaving the candidate to formulate a broad definition.

6. Social Interaction Focused Question**Difficult:**

How do you build rapport with team members?

Alternative:

Can you describe a time you worked with a team?

Follow-on question: *What did you do to collaborate effectively with others?*

Why the Alternative is Better:

It avoids subjective language like "rapport" and focuses on tangible examples of teamwork, making it more practical and less abstract.

7. High-Pressure "On-the-Spot" Problem Solving Question**Difficult:**

How would you improve our company's current product or service?

Alternative:

Have you noticed anything about our product/service that you think works well?

Follow-on question: Can you describe what you've noticed?

Have you noticed anything about our product/service that you think could be improved?

Follow-on question: *Can you tell me what you think could be improved?*

Why the Alternative is Better:

The alternative removes the pressure of offering a perfect or groundbreaking idea while inviting constructive feedback in a more relaxed, approachable way.