

THE NEURODIVERGENT-FRIENDLY GUIDE TO JOB INTERVIEWS

Whether you're going for your first part-time or full-time job, or a new role, this guide is here to help you feel **prepared** for, and more **confident** during, your **application** and **interview** process.

We understand how overwhelming job-seeking can feel, with so many unknowns and unwritten rules. That's why we're here to demystify the process, through a neurodivergent-friendly lens.

Created by a neurodivergent team, this guide will take you step-by-step through the job application and interview journey, as well as sharing helpful perspectives from employers.

Think of it like your practical toolkit, which you can come back to any time you feel anxious, stuck or uncertain.

When things feel scary, remember **courage is a muscle**. It gets **stronger** when you work it.

If you have questions about anything in this guide, email **info@futurecreators.org.uk**

Almost everyone finds new situations and opportunities scary at first.

The more you get out there and practise your application and interview skills, the less intimidating the process will feel. Your **'courage muscle'** will get stronger, just like all muscles get stronger with exercise.





1 | PREPARATION

How do you know if a job is **right** for you?

As well as going for jobs that match your **passions** and **interests** – like working with animals, being outdoors, or helping people – it's also a good idea to think about your **sensory**, **processing**, and **energetic needs**.

Let's say you're applying for a job in a **restaurant**...

You struggle with bright lights, loud noises and crowded spaces, and prefer a regular, predictable schedule for your work.

THE WORK ENVIRONMENT HAS GOT TO BE RIGHT FOR YOU, NO MATTER THE JOB TITLE

✕ NOT THE RIGHT JOB

If you got a job at an always-**busy**, **bright**, **noisy**, city centre restaurant, where your **shifts would vary** week to week, it's likely you'd hate it!

✓ THE RIGHT JOB

A job at a **slower-paced** restaurant with **low lighting**, **soft music** and lots of **space**, working the **same shifts** each week could be perfect.

Before you start applying for jobs, make a **list** of your **workplace needs**:

- **What are your sensory needs?** *e.g. noise level, lighting, open-plan vs. private work spaces*
- **What working style suits you best?** *e.g. fixed or flexible hours, teamwork or independent working, going to a workplace or working from home*
- **What types of communication do you find easiest?** *e.g. writing things down or having conversations, going to meetings or emailing*
- **What pace of work do you enjoy most?** *e.g. a fast-paced role that's different every day, or something slower-paced and predictable*

When you're deciding whether to apply for a job, **refer back to your list** to help you decide if it's right for you.

Getting clear on your needs now will also give you **helpful questions** to ask in your **interview**.

UP NEXT: PREPARATION TIPS ▶▶

PREPARATION TIPS

Get a **personal email**

You won't always have your school or college email, so get a **personal email address**. This is free with **Gmail by Google**.

Go for something simple and professional, like **yourname@gmail.com**. If your full name is taken by someone else, add a number after it, such as your year of birth (e.g. harrysmith08@) or something relevant to the job roles you're applying for (e.g. sarahjonescreative@).

Get on **LinkedIn**

Many employers will check **LinkedIn** to find out more about job applicants. Use your LinkedIn profile to give an overview of your experience and skills, and connect with people in the industry you want to work in. Plenty of industry experts share helpful tips and insights on LinkedIn, making it a great place to learn and expand your knowledge, as well as your professional network.

Get your **references** sorted

If your application is successful, you'll be asked for **references** from past employers. If this is your first job, you could ask teachers, tutors, youth workers, or anyone you've volunteered for. You might be asked to provide written references, or employers might ask for your referee's contact information so they can speak with them. It's a good idea to be ready with both.



"We look for attitude, kindness, curiosity and willingness to learn. Skills can be taught, but these things are much harder to teach. Beyond what's on their CV, we look at how candidates communicate, approach challenges and show initiative. The questions they ask, the research they've done and how they talk about previous experiences often tell us more than a CV can. Team fit is also important. We want people who want to do good in the world and will be passionate about their work.

– **James Armstrong** | Co-Founder & Creative Director
Social Firefly

WHAT EMPLOYERS SAY

UP NEXT: APPLICATIONS



2 | APPLICATIONS

If you struggle to "sell yourself" and your skills, you aren't alone. It's easy to tell ourselves we aren't "good enough" or "experienced enough" – especially if we're comparing ourselves to other people with *more* experience.

The thing is, most of the time, we're not only *good enough* – we'd actually be brilliant!

Job adverts are a **wishlist**, not a checklist

When a job advert lists the experience and skill set an employer is looking for, it doesn't mean they'll only hire someone who ticks every box.

Even if you don't have experience in a particular type of role, it doesn't mean you won't have the skills they need. You might have learnt those exact skills in other places, doing other things.

These are called **transferable skills** – the skills you've gained from lots of different places that can be applied to different situations.

EMPLOYERS FREQUENTLY CONSIDER APPLICANTS WHO MEET AROUND 70% OF THE QUALIFICATIONS THEY LIST.

– Indeed Survey, 2026



"We have hired people with no formal experience, especially for internships. What we look for more than anything is a willingness to learn and develop skills, and to try your best, with the interests of the organisation at heart. We're looking for strong work ethic, kindness, team working and initiative. We have a brilliant induction programme, and we prioritise learning and development, so there are plenty of opportunities for us to help train and develop people. We just ask that people give it their best shot.

– **Amy Lishman** | Head of Member Engagement & Deputy CEO
Brighton Chamber

WHAT EMPLOYERS SAY

UP NEXT: TRANSFERABLE SKILLS



TRANSFERABLE SKILLS

What are **transferable skills**?

These are the skills you've built through **school**, **work**, **volunteering**, or **hobbies** which are also useful in the workplace. To identify your transferable skills, think about projects you've worked on, clubs you're part of, caring responsibilities you have, or ways you got involved in your community.

THINK ABOUT + NOTE DOWN WHERE YOU'VE SHOWN SKILLS LIKE...

COMMUNICATION
Speaking, writing, listening, and presenting

PROBLEM-SOLVING
Analysing problems and finding resolutions

LEADERSHIP
Motivating others, delegation, leading projects

ADAPTABILITY
Learning quickly, navigating changes and challenges

ORGANISATION
Planning tasks, meeting deadlines, prioritising

TEAMWORK
Working well with others to achieve a positive outcome

DIGITAL SKILLS
Using software, analysing data, or creating with tech

CREATIVITY
Thinking outside the box and bringing new ideas

THESE ARE ALL VALUABLE WORKPLACE SKILLS.

Digital Badges by **Future Creators** are a great way to show the skills you've built outside of traditional employment: **futurecreators.org.uk/programmes/creativity/digital-badging**

UP NEXT: APPLICATION FORMS

APPLICATION FORM TIPS

Some employers will ask you to complete an **application form** instead of, or as well as, sending your CV.

Application forms ask **specific**, **in-depth questions** about your relevant experience for the job, *so don't just copy and paste information from your CV.*

Read questions **carefully** and don't leave answers **blank**

Read through questions a few times, and spend time thinking about your answers. Your goal is to show you understand the role and explain why you're confident you can do it. If a question feels confusing, ask someone else how they would interpret it. If you still aren't sure what to say, write something and explain your thinking around your answer.

Don't **rush** – take a break if you need to

Don't rush your application. Most applications don't need to be submitted instantly. Save your progress, step away, and come back to it in a day or two. It can be easier to spot mistakes and improve your answers after taking a break.

AI can help you – but don't use it to write everything

It will be obvious if you've used AI to write your entire application – employers won't like that. That doesn't mean you can't use it to check spelling and grammar, or help you phrase things in a clear or more confident way. AI can also help shorten your answers if you're struggling to stay within the word limit.



"Applicants stand out when they let their personality shine through. We also look for people who have prepared well for the interview, done research on our organisation and understood what we do. We want to hear examples of the skills we're looking for – but it doesn't have to be a work example! We want to know the candidate has understood the role and what we're looking for.

– **Amy Lishman** | Head of Member Engagement & Deputy CEO
Brighton Chamber



COVER LETTER TIPS

When you apply for some jobs, you may be asked to send a **cover letter** along with your CV.

This is your opportunity to **personally introduce yourself** to the employer, explaining why you're applying for this particular job, why you think you'd be a great choice for the role, and why you want to work for this company.

It's important to **match** your cover letter to the **specific role**

Don't copy-paste the same cover letter for every job you apply for. Making your cover letter specific to both the role *and* the company you're applying to will make your application stand out.

KEEP YOUR COVER LETTER TO AROUND ONE PAGE & FOLLOW THIS STRUCTURE:

PART 1 | INTRODUCTION

Introduce yourself, explain why this role interests you, and say why you want to work for this particular company. You will need to have done some **research** about the company and what they do in order to write this part.

PART 2 | WHY YOU?

Look at the qualities, skills, and experience listed in the job description. Explain how you meet the criteria, using specific examples from your experience where you can. You don't need to cover everything in the job description, **focus on the skills you're most confident in and your most relevant experience**. It's much better to make two or three strong, relevant points than try and cram in everything you've ever done into one page.

PART 3 | SIGN OFF

End your letter in a professional, friendly way. For example: *"Thank you for considering my application, I hope to have the opportunity to meet with you at interview."*

UP NEXT: INTERVIEW PREPARATION ▶▶



3 | INTERVIEW PREPARATION

You've got an **interview** – congratulations!

If the nerves are setting in and you want understand more about what to expect, it's OK to ask for more information in advance.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

If you struggle to think on the spot, it's OK to ask for questions or discussion topics in advance to help you feel more confident and less anxious.

INTERVIEW VENUE

As well as accessibility info, details of the interview location, such as whether it will be in a private space or open office, can help you mentally prepare.

INTERVIEW FORMAT

Knowing how long it will take and what you'll be asked to do, such as tasks or presentations, can reduce anxiety.

INTERVIEWER NAMES & ROLES

It can feel less intimidating to know who will be in the room and how many people will be there.

What should you **wear** to your interview?

There's no 'right' answer. It depends on the company and role. For example, you probably don't need to wear a suit unless you're going for a corporate job. The most important thing is that you're **clean**, **tidy**, and feel **comfortable**. However, there are some **general guidelines** you can follow.

✕ WHAT NOT TO WEAR	✓ WHAT TO WEAR
• Ripped or baggy jeans, shorts, leggings, joggers, hoodies • Flip-flops, sandals, Crocs, scruffy trainers • Short skirts, low-cut or cropped tops, low-waisted trousers • Football shirts or t-shirts with large logos • Baseball caps or beanie hats	• Smart jeans, trousers, or skirts • Smart, clean trainers, loafers or shoes • Knee-length or longer skirts, mid or high-waisted trousers, tops that cover shoulders, stomach and chest • Plain shirts, tops or blouses • No headwear *(unless religious or cultural)*

If you're **still feeling unsure**, look at the company's **website** or **social media** to get a sense of how people dress there, or message before your interview and ask.

NEXT: MORE INTERVIEW PREPARATION TIPS ▶▶



INTERVIEW PREPARATION

Research the company you're applying to

Take some time to look at the company's **website** and **social media** before your interview. You don't need to know *everything* about them, just enough to help you **answer questions confidently** – plus, it looks great that you've shown an interest.

HELPFUL RESEARCH PROMPTS

- What does the **company do**?
- What are their **main products or services**?
- Who are their **customers**?
- What are their **company values**?
- What about this company **stands out** to you?
- What would you like to **learn more about**?

It's OK to **take notes** into your interview with you. In fact, this makes you look **prepared**!

Know your **strengths** (and **weaknesses**)

In most job interviews, you'll be asked about your **strengths**, **experience**, and **why you want the role**. If you feel you might struggle with this in the moment, it's helpful to spend time reflecting on your strengths in advance.

PROMPTS FOR IDENTIFYING YOUR STRENGTHS

- What am I **good at**? What do people come to me for help with?
- What has **gone well** in something I've done – at school, in a project, volunteering, or at home – and **what was my contribution** to that?
- Why do I think I would be good at this **specific job**, at this **company**?
- What would I bring to this team that's **unique** or **unusual**, but **valuable**?

On the flip side, you might also be asked about your **'weaknesses'** – the things you find difficult, or areas you want to develop more skills. Talking about a **specific challenge** you have experienced and **how you overcame it** will show you've really considered this question, for example:

"I can struggle with **remembering verbal information**, so I make sure I take notes or use an AI notetaker to record meetings"

"I'm dyslexic and can struggle with **written communication**, so it's better for me to **talk tasks through** with my colleagues."

NEXT: MORE INTERVIEW PREPARATION TIPS

INTERVIEW PREPARATION

Remember, you're also **interviewing the employer**

An interview isn't just an employer deciding whether you're right for a job. It's also your chance to decide **whether the job is right for you**. Before your interview, note down any questions you have about the job, working environment, workplace vibes, your specific needs – or anything else.

HELPFUL QUESTIONS TO ASK AT YOUR INTERVIEW

- What does a **typical day** or **week** look like in this role?
- How does the team **communicate** – are there a lot of **meetings** and collaboration, or do people tend to work **independently**?
- What does your **onboarding process** involve?
- Do you offer **flexible working**, like working from home days?

If you feel comfortable, you may want to prepare to ask questions about any **reasonable adjustments** you might need during your interview. *See **Section 6** of this guide for more information.*



WHAT EMPLOYERS SAY

"At interview, we want to see genuine interest in the company. We're a local retailer, so candidates stand out when they have made the effort to visit the shop beforehand. We have hired people without retail experience, because they've done volunteer work that demonstrates the kind of skills we're looking for. We also look for applicants who can can show vulnerability in interview, and say "I don't know" – this shows you're comfortable asking for help when you need it, and that's a very important trait when you're part of a team.

– **Harriet Dean-Orange** | Founder
Harriet's Of Hove

UP NEXT: THE INTERVIEW



4 | THE INTERVIEW

Forget the image of sitting in front of a panel of stern, scary strangers in a boardroom. Most interviews, especially in **creative**, **startup**, or **small** organisations, are far more informal these days.

Many people get nervous before their first interview because they don't know what they're 'allowed' to do, or what to expect.

HERE ARE THE MOST COMMON QUESTIONS ABOUT JOB INTERVIEWS, ANSWERED.

CAN I TAKE MY OWN DRINK?

Yes! Take water, tea or coffee with you, or ask for a drink when you arrive. Lots of people get a dry mouth when they're nervous – plus, taking a sip can help you pause if you need a moment to think or steady yourself.

CAN I TAKE TIME TO THINK?

"Could I have a moment to think about that?" is a normal and professional thing to ask at an interview. Not many people can answer questions immediately, especially when they're feeling nervous.

WHAT IF I DON'T KNOW THE ANSWER TO A QUESTION?

Say that you don't know the answer. It's always better to be honest than make something up. You could say something like: *"I don't know the answer to that off the top of my head, but here's how I would find out..."*

WHAT IF I DON'T UNDERSTAND A QUESTION?

You can ask for something to be repeated or explained if you didn't understand it. For example, you might say something like: *"Before I answer, can I confirm that what you meant was... [share your understanding of the question]."*

REMEMBER – IT'S OK TO TAKE NOTES WITH YOU!

If you're worried you'll forget something, take a **notepad** or **note cards** with prompts on – this is also a good move because it makes you look prepared!

UP NEXT: INTERVIEW TIPS

INTERVIEW TIPS

Be **yourself**

Your interviewer wants to get to know who you are as a person. They're not just focusing on your answers to their questions, or the skills on your CV. They're wondering if you'd fit in with the team and enjoy working there.

You don't need to "perform" a version of yourself you think they want. If you end up getting the job, you want to feel safe and comfortable being *who you are* – not pretending to be someone else. In the long term, masking the real you and putting on "work persona" will feel exhausting and affect your happiness at work.

Ask for **feedback** after the interview

You're entitled to ask for feedback on your interview. Not all employers will be able to offer feedback – *but many will, and they'll be impressed that you asked!* If you don't get the job, feedback about what you did well and where you could improve can be really helpful for your next application and interview.

For example, you might email after the interview and say something like:

Hi [Name], it was a pleasure to meet you today.

Thank you so much for your time and consideration. I'd value any feedback you're able to share on my interview, as I'm keen to keep improving.



"It's always good to ask for feedback after a job interview, as feedback from employers can be incredibly valuable for personal development. Even if you don't get the role, understanding what went well and what could be improved helps you perform better in future interviews. It also shows professionalism and a growth mindset. Sadly, a lot of employers don't offer feedback if a candidate doesn't succeed, but many do. We always try to, so it's always worth asking.

– **James Armstrong** | Co-Founder & Creative Director
Social Firefly



5 | NAVIGATING REJECTION

Rejection is part of the job-seeking process

It's far more common to be rejected after an interview than it is to be offered a job, especially in industries which are very competitive.

Not getting a job **doesn't mean** you're not good enough

It just means this particular role or company **wasn't the right match**.

A 2024 SURVEY OF JOBSEEKERS BY STANDOUTCV.COM FOUND

THE AVERAGE JOB SEEKER NEEDS TO MAKE 27 APPLICATIONS TO LAND JUST 1 JOB INTERVIEW.

AN AVERAGE OF 6 CANDIDATES ARE INTERVIEWED FOR EVERY VACANCY – A 1 IN 6 CHANCE OF SUCCESS.

BASED ON THESE FIGURES, IT TAKES ON AVERAGE 162 APPLICATIONS TO GET A JOB.

Don't be disheartened if it feels like you're not getting anywhere after sending a lot of applications – **it's a numbers game, so keep trying.**

After you experience **rejection**...

- **Let yourself feel disappointed.** It's okay and totally normal to feel gutted, especially if it was a job you really wanted.
- **When you're ready, ask for feedback**. It can turn a rejection into a helpful learning experience and boost your confidence. *See **Section 4** for guidance on how to do this.*
- **Don't let one rejection put you off applying for similar roles.** Fit, timing, and company politics all play a part – these are all out of your control.

UP NEXT: IF REJECTION FEELS TOO MUCH ▶▶

IF REJECTION FEELS LIKE TOO MUCH

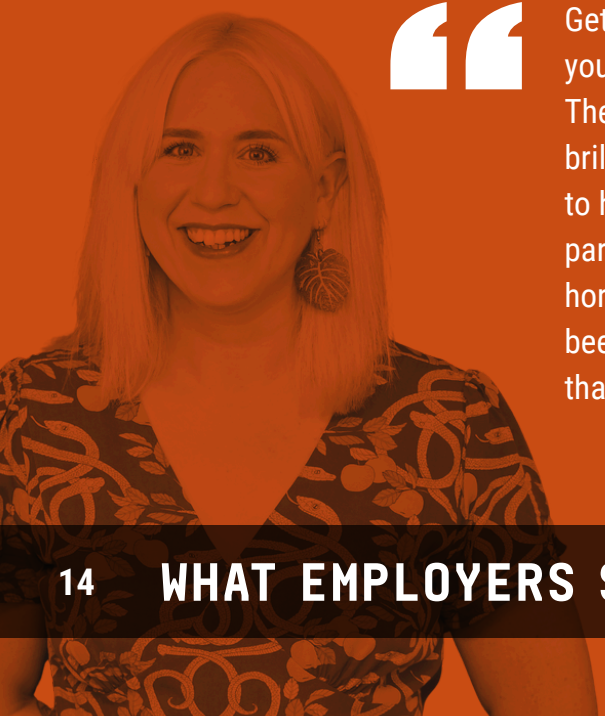
Many neurodivergent people experience **Rejection Sensitive Dysphoria** – also known as RSD.

This is a way to describe **intense feelings** in response to rejection or criticism, which to others, might seem disproportionate to the situation.

If you feel like this sometimes, it's **completely valid**

Here are some things that can help when those feelings flare up.

- **Name what you're feeling with kindness, not judgement.** You might say to yourself, *"I feel really disappointed, and that's okay..."*
- **Separate your worth from the outcome.** You could say to yourself, *"I just wasn't right for this particular role, it doesn't mean I wasn't good enough for it..."*
- **Do something that reminds you of your capability.** Look back on something you're proud of – it might be a project, a piece of work, a thank you message someone sent you. Create a 'smile file' of all the things like this that give you a confidence boost when you feel low.
- **Talk to someone you trust.** Tell them what you need from them. You might want advice, reassurance, or just to vent and feel heard – different people find different things helpful.



Getting a rejection after an interview is often nothing to do with your skills, capability or personality – though it can feel personal. There have been many times where I've interviewed three or four brilliant people and wished I could hire them all. The choice of who to hire often comes down to the smallest detail that suggests one particular person would be the best fit for the role. I know it feels horrible to get a rejection when your heart is set on a job – I've been there. Remember, getting to interview is a big achievement that shows you're doing something right. Keep going!

– **Alice Reeves** | Business Consultant & Fractional Director
Joyfully Different



6 | YOUR RIGHTS

As an employee in the UK, there are specific laws designed to **protect you** from being **treated unfairly**.

THE EQUALITY ACT 2010

The UK's Equality Act 2010 legally protects people against discrimination in the workplace by making it unlawful to treat someone unfairly because of their age, disability, gender, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, race, religion, or if they are pregnant.

This means if you're **neurodivergent**, you're legally protected from discrimination in both recruitment and employment – employers cannot treat you negatively or differently because of your neurodivergence.

*You do not have to tell your employer that you are neurodivergent to be protected by the law. However, employers can only make **reasonable adjustments** if you let them know what you need.*

REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS

A **reasonable adjustment** is a change an employer makes to remove or reduce a barrier you face in the workplace or during the recruitment process. For example, you may have specific needs related to your neurodivergence or a disability.



Anyone can ask for reasonable adjustments. You do not need to have a disability or a medical diagnosis. Simply explain what barriers you are facing, how the adjustments will help, and why the adjustments will benefit your productivity and well-being.

Employers *must* make reasonable adjustments for disabled and neurodivergent employees to ensure they are not disadvantaged at work. **Find out more at** gov.uk/reasonable-adjustments-for-disabled-workers

NEXT: MORE ON REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS ▶▶



REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS

Examples of **reasonable adjustments** you can ask for

Remember, you don't need to have (or disclose) a disability or medical diagnosis to ask for reasonable adjustments. You can **describe what you need** and **why it helps** without using any labels, for example:

AT INTERVIEW STAGE

- Being sent the **interview questions** in advance if you find it hard to process information and respond 'on the spot'
- Having **extra time** to complete any tasks or tests, or answer questions, if you get anxious or flustered under pressure
- To be interviewed in **quiet room** if you have sensitivity to noise or struggle to hear
- To have information or instructions communicated in a **different format**, such as audio instead of written if you find it difficult to absorb written information

IN THE WORKPLACE

- **Flexible working** hours/location or hybrid working if you work better at different times of day
- **Written instructions** for tasks instead of verbal if you find it difficult to remember spoken information
- **Noise-cancelling headphones** to help you focus if you are sensitive to certain noises
- Use of a **quiet, more private area** to work or decompress if you need to regulate yourself after certain situations or tasks
- **Regular check-ins** with a buddy or manager if extra reassurance helps you work better

What is **Access to Work**?

Access to Work is a **government scheme** offering practical and financial support to help people with disabilities – including neurodivergence or mental health challenges – start or stay in work.

It can fund things like **specialist software** or **equipment**, **travel** to work if you can't use public transport, or a **support worker** or **job coach**.

You apply directly to Access to Work as an individual – you don't need to wait to ask an employer, and you can apply before you start a new job.

AS OF JUNE 2026, ACCESS TO WORK WAIT TIMES CAN BE UP TO A FULL YEAR, SO IT'S BEST TO APPLY AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

UP NEXT: DISCLOSING



DISCLOSING DISABILITY

You are **never legally required** to disclose a disability

Whether you're at the application stage, at interview, or in the role. Disclosure is always **your choice**.

Some people choose to disclose because it helps them get the support they need, and they trust that their employer will be understanding. Others prefer not to, because they're worried they'll be treated differently. **Both choices are valid.**

If you **do want to disclose** a disability or neurodivergence...

Here are some sentence starters that might be helpful.

"I'M [AUTISTIC / NEURODIVERGENT] AND IT WOULD HELP ME A LOT IF I WAS ABLE TD..."

"I PERFORM BEST WHEN I HAVE [INSERT NEED] IS IT POSSIBLE TO ARRANGE THAT?"

"I SOMETIMES FIND [SPECIFIC TASK] DIFFICULT. INSTEAD OF [THIS] COULD WE...?"

You **don't** need to share specific information

You don't need to share any details of your diagnosis, disability or medical history – **even if your employer asks for more information**. Don't let anyone pressure you into sharing more than you're comfortable with.

There is no '**right time**' to disclose

Some people choose to **disclose early** at interview, or before they start their new job, to make sure they have the support they need in place from the start. Others **wait until they've built trust** with their employer.

And plenty of people **never disclose** formally and manage with informal adjustments. *It's up to you.*

UP NEXT: MORE ON DISCLOSING ▶▶

DISCLOSING DISABILITY

If an employer **responds negatively** to your disclosure

If you disclose your disability or neurodivergence and your employer's response is dismissive, unhelpful, or negative in any way, there are steps you can take.

WHAT TO DO NEXT

- Keep a **written note**, or **email chain**, showing what you asked for, when, and how the employer responded
- Talk to the your employer's **HR department** or your union representative (if you have one)
- Contact the **Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS)** for free, confidential advice: **acas.org.uk**
- The **Equality Advisory and Support Service (EASS)** can also advise on discrimination under the Equality Act: **equalityadvisoryservice.com**

REMEMBER: YOU HAVE DONE NOTHING WRONG BY ASKING FOR WHAT YOU NEED.

If an employer refuses a reasonable adjustment request without good reason, or treats you negatively because of your disability, neurodivergence or any other protected characteristic under the Equality Act, this may be unlawful discrimination.



We understand many neurodivergent people mask at work or during recruitment because they're worried about how they'll be perceived. That's why it's important to us to create an environment where those conversations feel safe. As part of the interview process, we have an adjustments form which asks candidates about their preferences and needs. Not only is this more equitable, but it means we make better hiring decisions because we're assessing someone's ability to do the job, rather than their ability to manage anxiety and uncertainty, or navigate barriers.

– **Thomas Woodhams** | Senior Talent Acquisition Partner
Sony Sports Technology



7 | STARTING YOUR NEW JOB

The **education** to **work** transition

The transition into the workplace from school, college, or university can be difficult – especially when you're neurodivergent.

While most schools and colleges have strict rules and structures everyone follows, such as class timetables, break times and assignment due dates, most workplaces will expect you to manage your own workload, deadlines and schedule independently. This change in environment and expectation can feel *very different* – and it can feel both freeing and scary in equal measure!



IF YOU NEED HELP WITH MANAGING YOUR TIME OR ORGANISING TASKS AT FIRST, IT'S OK TO ASK FOR HELP.

Your employer will understand that you need time to find your feet. You won't know everything straight away, be able to do everything perfectly, or get everything right first time – **and you won't be expected to**.

IT TAKES MOST PEOPLE 3-6 MONTHS TO SETTLE INTO A NEW JOB. BE PATIENT WITH YOURSELF – YOU WILL GET THERE!



WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN YOU START A NEW JOB

When you start a new job, over your first few days, weeks, or even months depending on the role, you will go through the company's **onboarding process**. During this time, you'll get a clear sense of what's expected of you within your role, such as:

- What are your **main responsibilities**?
- What is expected of you **daily**, **weekly** and **monthly**?
- How will your **performance** be measured?
- Who should you go to with **questions**?

If you're unclear about any of these things at any time, **ask your manager or team**. They'll expect plenty of questions in your first few days and weeks.

UP NEXT: ADVOCATING FOR YOURSELF AT WORK

ADVOCATING FOR YOURSELF

Advocating for **yourself** and **your needs**

When you start your new job, you might find some tasks difficult. If you find yourself thinking *"this task would be so much easier, if..."* this is when to practice **self-advocacy**.

SELF-ADVOCACY MEANS ASKING FOR WHAT YOU NEED TO DO YOUR BEST WORK AND PROTECT YOUR WELL-BEING.

HELPFUL SELF-ADVOCACY SENTENCE STARTERS

- *"I'd like to talk to you about something that would help me do my job better..."*
- *"I've been finding [specific task] difficult. Would it be possible to...?"*
- *"I work best when [I have/can do X] is that something we could put in place?"*
- *"I'd like to request a reasonable adjustment for [specific task]..."*

IF A CONVERSATION FEELS TOO DIFFICULT TO HAVE FACE-TO-FACE, IT'S OKAY TO PUT IT IN WRITING.

An email to your manager or HR department is just as professional.



WHAT EMPLOYERS SAY

Our roles are mostly customer-facing, and for some neurodivergent employees, that can be a struggle on particular days. In this case, we can swap tasks around within the team. We've also made adjustments like giving people more time at the end of the day to complete closing down processes, and colour-coding our stock check list to make it easier to read. In each case, we've worked with that team member to find the right solution for them, and many of the changes we've made have been positive for the whole team. Don't be afraid to ask when you need help – if you're struggling, you may not be the only one. And adaptations can benefit everyone.

– **Harriet Dean-Orange** | Founder
Harriet's Of Hove

UP NEXT: YOUR NEEDS AT WORK



YOUR NEEDS AT WORK

Looking after your **sensory needs** at work

Work environments might feel overwhelming sometimes if you have sensitivities to things like sound, light, smell or touch.

If you're struggling with **sensory overload** – whether noises feel too loud, lights feel too bright, spaces feel too crowded, or there's too much going on – tell your manager, and ask for what you need. This is a **reasonable adjustment**.

SENSORY ACCOMMODATIONS YOU COULD ASK FOR:

- Noise-cancelling **headphones**
- To **move seats** to a different place in the office
- A **quiet space** to take regular breaks
- Using **fidgets** or **moving around** in meetings

What to do if something at work doesn't **feel right**...

There is a difference between things feeling challening because you're on a learning curve, and things feeling stressful or upsetting because you're being treated poorly or taken advantage of.

THINGS WHICH ARE NOT ACCEPTABLE IN THE WORKPLACE...

REGULARLY BEING ASKED TO DO TASKS THAT ARE OUTSIDE YOUR JOB DESCRIPTION.

HAVING REQUESTS FOR REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS IGNORED OR DISMISSED.

BEING SPOKEN TO IN A WAY THAT FEELS DISRESPECTFUL OR DEROGATORY.

FEELING UNABLE TO RAISE YOUR CONCERNS WITHOUT FEAR OF CONSEQUENCES.

If any of this is happening, refer back to **Section 6: Your Rights** for steps you can take if you are being negatively treated.

UP NEXT: A NOTE FOR EMPLOYERS & EDUCATORS



A NOTE FOR EDUCATORS AND EMPLOYERS

If you're a careers lead, teacher, youth worker, or employer reading this guide: **thank you**.

The fact that you've picked it up and read this far shows you care about supporting neurodivergent young people.

The intention of this guide is to help **young jobseekers feel more confident** in the whole process, to ask for what they need, and to know their rights.

EMPLOYER CHECK-IN

- Do you offer **reasonable adjustments** at interview stage as a matter of course, or only when asked?
- Does your **application processes** create unnecessary barriers?
- Is there a **clear**, **welcoming process** for applicants and employees to request adjustments?
- Do you have a culture where people feel **safe to disclose** without fear of being treated differently?

EDUCATOR CHECK-IN

- Are you helping young people **understand their rights** and how to **advocate for themselves** in the workplace?



IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS ABOUT THE CONTENT OF THIS GUIDE, OR ARE INTERESTED IN EXPLORING WAYS TO PROVIDE MORE SUPPORT FOR YOUNG NEURODIVERGENT JOB SEEKERS, EMAIL INFO@FUTURECREATORS.ORG.UK

THANK YOU FOR READING, WE HOPE IT'S BEEN HELPFUL.

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