
Disability Disclosure

Disclosing your disability means sharing information about your disability in order to receive accommodations. Students often think of this related to their classes, but it's also important to think about employment, especially when interviewing for an internship or job or starting a new position.

Disclosing is a Personal Decision

If you have a disability, it's your personal decision whether or not you share information regarding your disability with an employer. Disclosure is not required, and there is no standardized way to do so.

Your Rights as a Job Seeker

If you can navigate the hiring process and perform the essential functions of the job without accommodations, disclosure may not be necessary. However, in order to receive accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), you may want to consider disclosing. The ADA prohibits job discrimination against people with disabilities and requires employers to provide reasonable accommodations not only to employees, but also to applicants with disabilities (unless such accommodations would pose an undue hardship.)

If you are considering disclosing a disability, the steps below will help you decide what will work best for you.

Step 1: Should you disclose your disability?

In general, disclosing your disability may be a good idea when there is a workplace barrier that is preventing you from competing for a job, performing a job, or gaining equal access to a benefit of employment.

Other things to think about:

- What are the advantages and disadvantages of disclosure?
- What are your feelings about sharing your disability with others?
- What is the (potential) employer's history with disability services?

Step 2: When to Disclose?

Below are some advantages and disadvantages about the timing for you to consider when to disclose.

Time of Disclosure	Potential Advantages	Potential Disadvantages	Other Considerations
On a resume, cover letter, and/or employment application	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transparency – you've been upfront with the employer. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May draw attention to your disability rather than your skills. • Employer's preconceptions may hinder your progress in hiring process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generally not recommended. • However, some companies have employment programs specifically for applicants with disabilities; you will likely need to disclose your disability during the application process to be considered for these programs.
When the employer contacts you for an interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transparency – you've been upfront with the employer. • Allows you to secure needed accommodation for the interview. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May distract the interviewer from your skills and abilities to do the job. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May be necessary if accommodations are needed during the interview process. For example, if you use a wheelchair, you will want to make sure the interview site is accessible.
During the interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunity to time the disclosure and to disclose in a positive manner. • Opportunity to read employer body language. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employer may not be prepared to respond with appropriate questions. • Could cause you additional stress prior to the interview. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is recommended to prepare and rehearse your disclosure script in advance (see step 3).
After the interview, before the offer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive relationship has already been established with the employer. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employer may feel that you have been dishonest in the application process, which may erode trust. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You can address this concern by indicating you needed to learn more about the essential functions of the job prior to disclosing.
After the offer, before you accept	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the offer is rescinded, you may have legal recourse (can take action to remedy a legal difficulty). • There is time to get accommodations in place before the job starts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employer may feel that you have been dishonest in the application process, which may erode trust. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You can address this concern by indicating you needed to learn more about the essential functions of the job prior to disclosing.

Step 3: How to Disclose?

Who to Tell?

You may choose to only disclose your disability to those who need to be involved in the accommodation process. This may include:

- **Recruiter or hiring manager (if in the interview process)**
- **Human Resources**
- **Your Supervisor**
- **Employee Assistance Program Counselor** (Especially if you're already working, have started experiencing problems, and need assistance determining how and to whom to disclose).

What to Say?

To help you plan out exactly what you want to say and feel more comfortable with the disclosure process, it is recommended to write out and practice what to say in advance.

This should include:

- A brief description of your disability
 - Be concise. Avoid using clinical or technical terms.
 - You do not need to thoroughly discuss your diagnosis
- An emphasis on your job-related skills and abilities
 - You want to remind the employer that you're a qualified candidate with great skills - who also happens to have a disability. Do not focus solely on your disability
- A description of the functional limitations related to your disability that may interfere with your job performance
- Suggestions for accommodations

Utilize the following guide to prepare what to say:

- "The key skills and abilities I possess related to this job are..."
- Brief description of your disability
- "This is more difficult for me..."
- "The accommodations I need include..."

Now, combine the sections above to create your "script." Here's a few sample disclosure scripts for additional ideas:

"I have (provide the preferred term for your disability). I have (list your key skills/abilities) and can perform the essential functions of this job, but sometimes (indicate your functional limitations) might interfere with my ability to (describe the duties you may have difficulty performing). It's helpful if I have (describe the specific accommodations you need)."

"Have you ever heard of a screen reader? I have a learning disability and have difficulty reading in the traditional way. My screen reader, which reads electronic information aloud using a computerized voice, has enabled me to succeed in college and I know it will be useful for this job."

Additional Support

If you have any questions or concerns regarding disclosing your disability to a (potential) employer, or would like to practice disclosing your disability in a mock setting, you can find support in the Knowlton Center by scheduling an appointment through Handshake. You can also meet with our colleagues in the Academic Resource Center.