



NEURODIVERSITYHUB

JOB READINESS



**A workbook
for autistic
jobseekers**



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Introduction to the Job Readiness Workbook

Traditional interview and recruitment processes can be challenging for candidates on the autism spectrum. Interviewers evaluate a candidate's social and communication skills and their ability to answer behavioural style interview questions, which is not really suited to the autistic style of thinking.

Some common interview challenges for autistic candidates are:

- Difficulty recognizing and understanding implied communication: body language, facial expression, vocal tone and social expectations
- Inability to predict what the response the interviewer is looking for
- Struggling to process information – brain can go completely blank
- Feeling anxious
- A difficulty with focus on oneself
- Grappling with the ability to acknowledge and articulate achievements, capabilities, competencies, and strengths

Unfortunately, a lot of importance is placed on interview performance, even though it is a poor predictor of work performance. It is therefore really important to be as well prepared as you can for an interview. This might mean that you have to practice interview techniques to perfect it, but that is ok. Most people have to spend time and effort to be 'job ready'.

This workbook is designed as a guide to prepare autistic jobseekers to:

- Understand their strengths
- Set employment goals
- Write a resume and cover letter
- Understand what kind of accommodations they can ask for at an interview
- Manage their interview anxiety
- Understand the interview process
- Become familiar with interview questions and prepare responses
- Weigh their options to disclose or not disclose their autism diagnosis
- Prepare for the first day on the job
- Not give up if they don't get the job



Getting to know your strengths and skills

As an adult on the autism spectrum, you have strengths and abilities that employers are just beginning to understand and actively seek out.

However, the first step for finding a job is to ensure that you know your interests and strengths. You need to be confident in acknowledging and demonstrating your strengths and achievements to an interviewer. Remember, this is hard for everyone not just autistic people. The end goal in completing this template is to identify your strengths and skills, as well as the experiences and environments, where you thrived, to help you find a job that is the right fit for you.

Work experience or internships (List any paid work you have done.)	
Volunteering experience (This can be at school, university, mowing your neighbours' lawns, serving in the canteen at the football club, helping family members set up their computers. You may not have been paid for it, but the experience could still be relevant.)	
School work experience, work trials or traineeships. (Did you do a school work experience program, a work trial, or a school based traineeship?)	
Awards or achievements (These can be from school, work, university or the community.)	
What are your interests? (For example, do you love reading, animals, movies, art or dancing? Do you follow a sporting team? Are you fascinated by trains or Dr Who?)	

<p>What are your strengths? (Be creative! Are you always punctual? Do you quickly detect patterns or errors? Are you a confident reader or writer? Are you friendly? Do you love serving customers? Are you good with animals?)</p>	
<p>What are 3-4 jobs that you would love to do? (If you are not sure you could look on seek.com and see what jobs are listed that might interest you AND/OR do the JobsOutlook Career Quiz on the next page)</p>	
<p>Can you list 3-4 organisations that you would like to work for?</p>	
<p>What are some jobs you know you <u>don't</u> want to do?</p>	
<p>How do you prefer to work? (for example, do you like to work on your own, or in a team, do you like creative roles or prefer repetitive tasks)</p>	

Now do the Career Quiz on the next page to get insight into what roles you are likely to find enjoyable.

JobsOutlook Career Quiz

It is important to understand the right job match for you. For autistic jobseekers, “employment opportunities that leverage an individuals’ preferred interests could lead to successful professional experiences and contribute to an individuals’ overall well-being”¹. Therefore, it is important to factor in your interests, skills, learning style and preferred work environment to identify the right opportunities.

The Australian Government created this [Career Quiz](#) to help job seekers understand their interests and work styles to match them to roles that may be fulfilling. This assessment looks specifically at which activity/task is the most appealing to you. The goal of the quiz is to help identify what you enjoy doing and your preferred work environments are, to help you understand where you thrive – which you can investigate after completing the survey before researching possible careers.

Take some time to reflect on the results you got from the resources above. Write down some of your key learnings, what interested you? What surprised you? It is okay if you do not agree with some of the results you get – in fact, write about it!

1. New York University. "Adults with autism see interests as strengths, career paths." ScienceDaily. ScienceDaily, 1 February 2017

Record work achievements and positive feedback

Use this template to keep an updated record of positive feedback you have received from an employer or customer, or any awards or special work achievements. You may have gone above and beyond what is expected of you or come up with a process improvement that has benefited the organisation. Or you may have given excellent customer service resulting in repeat business. List these achievements here so you can easily remember them when you have an interview.

Category	Example
Customer Service (List positive feedback you have received from customers)	
Process Improvement (List process improvements you have implemented to improve work outcomes)	
Dealing with conflict (List times where you have had to negotiate with a customer or colleague for a mutually agreeable solution)	
Going above and beyond (List when you have gone above and beyond to get a project or task done)	
Demonstrated adherence to safety and OHS (List safety training attended; actions you have taken to ensure safety. Have you participated in a practice fire evacuation at work?)	
Any further training of specific skills set obtained (Have you acquired specialist skillsets? Have you become a subject matter expert in a particular aspect of your job?)	
List any other feedback or achievements?	

Goal setting

Goal setting is essential when you are exploring your career options. By setting attainable and realistic goals, you will not only have something to strive for, but a better understanding of how to get there. Goals can be big or small. The important thing is that you set SMART goals. That means that your goals are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timed. Use the template on the next page to document an employment goal, what you can do to accomplish your goal, how you can achieve your goal and how long it will take to accomplish it.

Example:

What do you want to accomplish?

S	SPECIFIC	<i>Example:</i> Apply for marketing roles in the next month.
----------	----------	--

How will you know when you have accomplished your goal?

M	MEASUREABLE	<i>Example:</i> Apply for TWO marketing roles
----------	-------------	---

How can you accomplish your goal?

A	ACHIEVEABLE	<i>Example:</i> Do an online search (for example SEEK and LinkedIn) to find two marketing roles that are a match for my skills and interests. Update my resume and write cover letters that demonstrate my experience and the unique qualities that I can bring to the role. Apply for two positions within a month.
----------	-------------	--

Is accomplishing this goal possible? Explain why and how it is possible.

R	REALISTIC	<i>Example:</i> Ensure resume and cover letter demonstrate my experience in previous marketing positions and my study at university. Also outline my transferable skills, such as contributions to team success, problem solving, motivation and time management.
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How long will it take to accomplish your goal?

T	TIMED	<i>Example:</i> One month – by the end of June.
----------	-------	---

SMART Goal Example above: Isabel wants to apply for two marketing roles in the next month. This goal is specific in what Isabel has to do (apply for marketing positions). Measurable because she wants to apply to two. It is achievable and realistic because based on her skills and interests, Isabel knows that it is possible and likely that she can attain a marketing position. Finally, the goal is timed because she gave herself one month to complete her goal. That gives her roughly two weeks per application.

Try creating a SMART goal for yourself below!

What do you want to accomplish?

S	SPECIFIC	
----------	----------	--

How will you know when you have accomplished your goal?

M	MEASUREABLE	
----------	-------------	--

How can you accomplish your goal?

A	ACHIEVEABLE	
----------	-------------	--

Is accomplishing this goal possible? Explain why and how it is possible.

R	REALISTIC	
----------	-----------	--

How long will it take to accomplish your goal?

T	TIMED	
----------	-------	--

Now that you have established your goals, work towards achieving them!

Transferable skills

You may think that a lack of relevant, industry-specific experience will stop you from getting a job, but this is not always the case. Employers also look for *soft skills* or *transferable skills*, such as being able to communicate effectively in a variety of situations, showing initiative, teamwork and having a good work attitude. These are valuable skills in any industry. It is very important, therefore, that you sell your potential by demonstrating any transferable skills that you have developed already.

Transferable skills are skills and abilities that are important and valuable across different areas of life: socially, professionally and in education. They are *portable skills*. You can develop transferable employment skills throughout school, university, at home, in the community and in the workplace.

If you are going to highlight transferable skills in your cover letter or résumé they should relate to the position for which you are applying. Below are just some examples of common transferable skills:

Team Work: Can you give examples of how, as part of a group, you worked on decision making and problem solving? Use examples from previous work experience, from education or from being a member of a social or sports group.

Initiative and leadership abilities: Think about examples when you have demonstrated your capability to lead in certain situations, you have helped others or have led others to accomplish goals.

Time Management: Give examples that demonstrate how you have structured and arranged your time and resources to achieve outcomes. Think about how you use time management skills on a daily basis.

Listening: In many job roles you will be required to understand and process important information as not listening effectively can lead to potentially costly mistakes, and misunderstandings. Can you give examples of when you have used listening skills effectively?

Written & Verbal Communication: Think of examples of when you have communicated ideas and information effectively through writing or verbally. In education you may have produced essays or project reports or have examples of your writing ability from past work or voluntary experience.

Research and Evaluation: It may be appropriate to demonstrate your ability to research, analyse and critically evaluate information. You may well have used such skills during your time in education.

Numeracy Skills

You may not be applying for a job in mathematics but most jobs will require some numeracy skills. You could demonstrate that you can work with figures, make calculations, understand graphs, charts and simple statistics.

Personal Development

By demonstrating that you are keen to learn and progress, you are likely to be seen as enthusiastic and willing to take on new challenges. Give examples of study, developmental courses, or other self-learning activities undertaken for personal development and growth.

The above are just some of the many transferable or soft skills that are helpful and relevant throughout many different areas of our lives. Think back on your own life and experience to identify other personal skills you possess that are not included here.

². Skills you need, helping you develop life skills. <https://www.skillsyouneed.com/general/transferable-skills.html>

Deciphering a job advertisement

Being able to interpret a job advertisement is an important skill every job seeker needs to have. When you can translate what an employer is looking for, you are better positioned to know whether you are a good fit for the job, and if the job meets your experience, preferences and employment goals. You will also be able to tailor your cover letter and resume to the job ad and increase your chance of an interview.

Job Description Summary

This is the introduction of the job ad and usually contains the job title and basic description, including the location of the role. It can also include a company profile, describing the culture of the organisation.

What to consider:

- Is the location suitable for ease of travel?
- Do the hours meet your requirements (full-time, part-time, contract, etc)?
- Are you familiar with the company? If not, do some research to learn more about their history, values and the industry.

Duties and Responsibilities

The employer will briefly describe the main tasks or the key responsibilities of the role. This is designed to give a clearer picture of what the day-to-day routine would be.

What to consider:

- Does this sound like a position that will fit into your career plan?
- Would you be interested in performing these duties on a daily basis?
- Have you performed similar duties in the past?
- Can you illustrate in your cover letter or CV a time when you've excelled in any of these duties or responsibilities?
- Are your transferable skills relevant to these duties?

Experience, Qualifications and Proficiencies

This section will usually detail the skills and experience you will need in order to qualify for the job. It will highlight the employer's requirements, such as previous work experience, education or certifications, the need for a driver's licence, computer software and hardware proficiency and more.

What to consider:

- Are you qualified for this position? While it's important that you meet the mandatory requirements, for example you cannot become a doctor without the required qualifications, you should not be discouraged if you don't meet every requirement in the 'preferred skills/experience' section. Even though this is an employer's ideal wish list, it is likely that very few candidates will possess all of the skills and experience. Focus on the requirements where you know you excel.
- Phrases like "you must have" or "you need" usually mean that there is no point in applying if you don't have these skills. But words like "preferably", "preferred", "ideally" or "desired" suggest some flexibility.
- When tailoring your resume to meet these requirements, make sure you include volunteer work, study and other relatable experience. In your cover letter, talk about how certain attitudes, personality traits and transferable skills you possess can help you gain competency in the areas you might not have had any previous experience.

Application Instructions

Finally, you'll be given instructions on how to apply for the job and the date that applications close. You may also be given details on what form of contact to expect back from the employer.

What to consider:

- Following these instructions inaccurately is often the number one reasons employers dismiss a potential candidate. Make sure you apply for the job exactly as per the instructions, and include any of the additional material requested in the advertisement.
- Look out for instructions such as "No phone calls", "Apply by email", "Include three samples of your previous work – submit as PDFs", or "no more than 2 pages"

Creating your cover letter

The purpose of a cover letter is to introduce you, briefly summarise your experience and demonstrate your suitability for the position you are applying for. “It can be helpful to think of it as the bridge between the past and the future that explains what you hope to do next and why.” Your cover letter should grab the reader’s attention and make them want to read your résumé and learn more about you. “Think of it as an opportunity to sell your transferable skills”.

Your cover letter should be no more than one page. It is supplementary to your résumé and should not just repeat what is in your résumé. It should demonstrate how the experience listed in your resume translates to the role that you are applying for and emphasize your personal value. This is an opportunity to highlight and provide evidence of the things that set you apart from other candidates. If the job ad asks for a cover letter, make sure you provide one or your whole application could be rejected.

Your cover letter should include:

1. Header – including your contact information. Your email address should be professional and be an account you check regularly. Try to stick to a “normal” email address (eg. first name and last name) to make sure you are taken seriously. Bad email examples are: stupidboy@youmail.com or lazygirl@hotmail.com
 - Date of your application
 - Greeting the hiring manager
 - Statement or reference highlighting the position you are applying for
 - Opening paragraph - grab the reader’s attention with 2 to 3 of your top achievements
 - Second paragraph - explain why you are the perfect candidate for the job
 - Third paragraph - explain why you are a good match for the company
 - Formal closing

There are a lot of templates available on the internet to give you inspiration. The Australian Government has developed this example: <https://jobsearch.gov.au/jobsearchtips>

Additional resources for examples: <https://time.com/4206709/cover-letter-tips/>,
<https://www.themuse.com/advice/how-to-write-a-cover-letter-31-tips-you-need-to-know>,
<https://www.themuse.com/advice/cover-letter-examples-every-type-job-seeker>

Addressing Selection Criteria

Job ads can sometimes ask you to address key selection criteria points in your cover letter or on-line application. This means that you need to be very specific in outlining your skills and behaviours and how they relate to the key selection points outlined in the job advertisement. This can often have a stipulated word or page count that you must stay within.

Tips for addressing selection criteria:

1. Do some basic research on the mission, vision and purpose of the organisation and make a note of key phrases or statements. You can refer to how you and your experience aligns with the organisation's goals and mission by using the key phrases in your selection criteria responses.
2. Read the job ad and required selection criteria carefully and highlight key words or phrases that your skills and experience support.
3. Respond to each selection criteria individually. If there are 5 selection criteria you should ensure you respond to all 5. If you don't answer each of the 5 criteria with evidence of your work experience addressing the criteria you will not be considered for an interview. For example, if one of the criteria is Demonstrated ability to work collaboratively within a team, and you do not give a direct example of your teamwork experience you will not have addressed the requested criteria.
4. Stick to the word count
5. Ask someone to proofread to make sure you have addressed each of the criteria sufficiently.

A recruiter uses the selection criteria method as a way of determining the best-qualified or most experienced candidate from all of the applicants – so it is important to take the time to prepare your responses to represent your skills and experience adequately.

Creating your résumé

Many individuals on the autism spectrum can find articulating their work experience and their strengths in a resume or cover letter, a daunting task. But once you have developed your resume it can be updated for any future job applications.



There are many résumé templates and examples of résumés available online for inspiration. Talk to family and friends about their résumé and ask if you are able to view theirs for inspiration. It is always good idea to have others check over your résumé for any spelling mistakes or formatting issues.

The Australian Government has developed an example here: <https://jobsearch.gov.au/jobsearchtips>

Your résumé should be a concise document created to give the reader a summary of your work experience, education and achievements. Your résumé should be no more than 1 to 2 pages.

A well-written résumé highlights contributions that you have made in your previous workplaces and showcases how your different skills can be useful for the position you are applying to. It should also list your education and any awards and work related achievements that you have.

The résumé should be accompanied by a cover letter which states your intent for applying for the job.

What to include on your résumé:

- Full name
- Contact information. Your email address should be professional and be an account you check regularly. Ensure you have a work appropriate voicemail setup on your phone.
- A summary of your experience or your employment profile or objective. This is an optional component to help your resume stand out from others.
The goal of the profile is to provide the employer with a few sentences about why you would be a valuable employee
- Work experience
- Education
- Volunteer experience
- Languages and proficiencies
- Achievements, awards and certifications
- Interests (keep this work appropriate)
- Contact details for referees who would provide positive feedback on your work experience and/or character. More information on selecting your referee is in this workbook.
- A link to your LinkedIn account (if you have one)

Submitting an online automated application

A lot of large companies use an automated system to screen candidates for their job opportunities. Companies use these systems to automate and store hiring documents online so they don't have to read through hundreds of emails or paper copies. When doing an online automated application there are a few important tips to remember:

- 1. Thoroughly read the job description.** Make sure your experience matches the role advertised.
- 2. Create an original cover letter.** If the company asks for a cover letter, make sure you write one specifically to address the job description.
- 3. Identify key words and tailor your resume.** Find the key words in the job description and make sure you indicate (in both your cover letter and resume) how your accomplishments address those requests.
- 4. Make sure your responses are on the right track and error free.** With digital applications, mistakes in content live on at that company. Try to avoid industry jargon and abbreviations in your application as they are difficult for automated systems to translate.
- 6. Fill out ALL fields within the online application process.** If you leave fields unanswered you may not be included in the recruiters' filtering processes for the position.
- 7. Ensure your social profile is current.** Companies do view social profiles such as LinkedIn or Facebook during their online application process. Make sure your LinkedIn account is up to date and do not have any inappropriate material on social media platforms such as Facebook or Instagram that would deter the company from hiring you.
- 9. Review all the information you imported before submitting.** Before hitting the submit button, review your responses and your cover letter and resume.

First impressions are important. Make sure you are not 'filtered out' due to not answering all questions or for making errors in your responses.

Selecting your referees

A **referee** is someone your potential employer can contact to find out more about your past work experience, skills, character and conduct. Your referees can be contacted to confirm what you've said on your resume and interview is true.

Usually when you apply for a job or attend an interview, you will be asked to provide the name and contact numbers for one or two referees. Referees are normally people who can attest to your work ethic, reliability and work performance (either at school, university or work). Your referee could be a teacher, a university lecturer, a person from a volunteer role. If you have worked previously, ask your supervisor or manager or someone you worked closely with to be your referee. It is not appropriate to use parents or family members as your referees, as they will likely be biased towards you, and say you are great no matter what. For a personal character referee it would be appropriate to use a family friend, or a contact from your church or a sporting club. Ideally the referee will know you well and have had a positive experience with you.

You should always get consent from your proposed referees before putting their details on your résumé. Let them know every time you apply for a job and that they may get contacted. Usually, you list the name of your referee, their title, and phone number and email address at the end of your resume. Or it can be emailed to the interviewer after you have attended the interview.

If your interviewer calls your referee it is usually a good sign. It means that they were impressed with your interview performance, and now want to double check what you said in your interview is true.

The purpose of an interview

The purpose of the interview is two-fold:

- (1) The employer needs to find the best candidate for their job and
- (2) the candidate needs to find out if it is a good opportunity for them.



In an interview, the interviewer usually asks each candidate the same questions to give everyone the same chance to provide important information about themselves to demonstrate that they are the best candidate for the job. The interviewer often writes down your responses to their questions to ensure they don't forget them. Sometimes, responses to interview questions are given a score depending on how well the question was answered. The person who receives the highest score for their answers is given the role, which can eliminate any biases interviewers may have.

Preparing for an interview

By being prepared for your interview you will:

- Be less anxious at the interview
- Be ready with an answer to different questions
- Be more confident
- Be more in control
- Be less likely to stumble over answers
- Demonstrate that you are interested and motivated.

STAR Template

To help you to connect the process of translating your work experience documented in your resume into interview examples/responses we have provided a STAR template.

The **STAR** method is a structured way of responding to behavioural interview questions. It enables you to give a detailed response, discussing a specific **Situation**, **Task**, **Action**, and **Result** of the situation you are using as your interview example (see example on the next page). It is good interview practice to answer questions in this way.

SKILL: (choose one skill that is listed on the job add or job description)	
Write out a specific example of you using this skill here. <ul style="list-style-type: none">This can be from a previous job, volunteer work, or another part of your life.	
Using the above example, break it down into 3 parts: <ol style="list-style-type: none">the situation or task (where you are, what was happening)the action you took (this is you using the skill)the result (what happened because you used your skill)	
SITUATION OR TASK	
ACTION	
RESULT	

Star Template completed example

SKILL: (choose one skill that is listed on the job add or job description)

Customer Service Example

Write out a specific example of you using this skill here.

- This can be from a previous job, volunteer work, or another part of your life.

Example: *I was working at a supermarket and a customer couldn't find any toilet paper on the shelf and asked me where the toilet paper was. I took them to the correct aisle and there was none there, I asked if they could wait and I could check out the back. They said yes. I checked out back and found a few packets and brought them out. I thanked the customer for their waiting and gave them the packet of toilet paper. I found my supervisor and let them know the toilet paper shelf was empty and there was more out back. They said they would get the shelf re stocked*

Using the above example, break it down into 3 parts:

4. the situation or task (where you are, what was happening)
5. the action you took (this is you using the skill)
6. the result (what happened because you used your skill, say what skill you used)

SITUATION OR TASK

Example: *I was working at a supermarket and a customer couldn't find any toilet paper on the shelf and asked me where the toilet paper was.*

ACTION

Example: *I took them to the correct aisle and there was none there, I asked if they could wait and I could check out the back. They said yes. I checked out back and found a few packets and brought them out. I thanked the customer for their waiting and gave them the packet of toilet paper. I found my supervisor and let them know the toilet paper shelf was empty and there was more out back. They said they would get the shelf re stocked.*

RESULT

Example: *Using my customer service skills I understood what they needed, I helped them get what they needed in a polite manner. I also helped future customers by ensuring the shelf was restocked.*

Preparing responses to common interview questions.

Interview questions are intended to help interviewers to learn about your education, work experience, work ethic and personality. Interviewers want to select a candidate who both fits their work culture and who has the motivation to learn, and the skills and experience required for the job. The interview is your chance to tell them what makes you stand out from all the other applicants and what value you will bring to the company.

To be successful in an interview you need to do your preparation and your research. Employers like to see candidates that are well prepared for the interview. Most people get nervous during an interview. By completing this workbook and being prepared and you are less likely to stumble on your answers in an interview.

Preparing responses for interview questions is important to minimise anxiety from ambiguity and uncertainty at the actual interview.

During interviews, many individuals on the autism spectrum can have difficulty with:

1. anxiety, mind goes completely blank
2. interpreting questions, understanding the response that the interviewer wants, and
3. understanding how to connect personal experience to the interview question.

By practicing these common questions you should be able to build your interview confidence, be ready with responses to different questions and be more in control during your interview.

Interviewers will generally start with **contextual interview questions**, such as “Why do you want to work for us” or “Tell me about yourself”. These questions help the interviewer get to know you a little better and get a ‘feel’ for why you have applied for the job.

They will also ask **behavioural questions** such as “give me an example or describe a situation from your work experience” to get an insight into your potential on-the-job behaviour and how you might apply your knowledge and skills to the role they are recruiting for.

On the following pages there are some common contextual and behavioural interview questions to prepare responses to. **Disclaimer** – this is not a comprehensive list. It is 22 sample questions meant to prepare you with an understanding of the sort of questions to expect. Some of the questions have example responses provided using the STAR format.

Tell me about yourself

This is not an invitation to ramble on about your personal life. Think of it as an introduction to enable the interviewer to get to know a bit about your character and your strengths. Provide only a few key points about yourself that are interesting. Take some time in advance to think about yourself and what you have done well and the aspects of your personality, interests (relevant to the role) and/or background that you'd like to promote or feature for your interviewer.

List interesting information about yourself.

How would you describe yourself?

Interviewers ask this question because they want to know how you perceive yourself and how well you'll fit into the company if you're hired. This can be a shorter answer to question (1) *Tell me about yourself*. Keep it simple for example: I am reliable, I am focused and I am a problem-solver.

Add simple points about how you would describe yourself.

Why do you want to work for us?

It's rare for an interview not to include a version of this question. Most companies want to recruit people who are enthusiastic about the company and its products. This is your chance to show why working for the company is important to you and why you think you will fit in.

This question is your chance to make the most of the company research you have done. You can use this opportunity to add comments that show you understand the company's position in the marketplace, its values and any challenges it may be facing.

Add comments about the organisation and why you would like to work there.

Why should we hire you?

This is the time to tell them what makes you different from all the other applicants. The key is to highlight your strengths and the benefits you can bring to the company. Avoid sounding desperate or arrogant. As preparation, you should refer back to the job advert and also listen carefully during the interview, to make sure your answer meets the needs of the interviewer. It's really worth practising your answer to this question before the interview.

If you have chosen to disclose your diagnosis of autism, this question could be a good opportunity for you to showcase your unique skill set that a non-autistic candidate may not possess.

Make a list of the positive aspects you could bring to add value to a role.

What are your strengths (what are you good at)?

Most people find it hard to tell people what we're good at. Telling people what you are good at, without appearing arrogant, is one of the most common interview difficulties. This is a question that requires forethought and preparation and may need the help of others to ensure you list the many and diverse strengths that you have. Make sure your answer can be made relevant to the workplace. Saying that your strength is sleeping or spending money is not a transferable work skill! You should already know your strengths from doing the "Getting to know your strengths and skills" template earlier in this workbook.

List your strengths

What are your weaknesses (what do you need support with?)

This is not the place to admit your biggest flaws, for example saying you regularly sleep in, or that you are unorganised. It's also not the time to pretend you don't have any development areas. It would make you look either conceited or as though you can't evaluate your own performance. If possible, choose a development area that doesn't affect your ability to do the job for which you are being interviewed. It's usually a good idea to make the 'weakness' something small.

Avoid topics such as 'organisational skills' or 'time management'. Be ready to turn your 'weakness' into a positive.

Example answer: '(weakness) I often take on more than my fair share of work because I want to ensure the project is done well. (positive) However, I am also a team player, and try to delegate tasks and work well with others'.

List any growth areas

What are your biggest accomplishments?

Keep your answers job related. You might begin your reply with **example** 'I am proud of my involvement with . . . I made my contribution as a part of that team and learned a lot in the process. We did it with hard work, concentration, and an eye for the bottom line.' It is ok to use non-work-related examples such as 'my children, my degree, or saving money and being able to purchase my first home' as these demonstrate your ability to achieve major accomplishments.

List personal achievements

What environments allow you to be especially effective?

This question is important for those who wish to disclose their diagnosis of autism. It should be carefully considered before an interview. Placing yourself in a work environment that will cause stress or sensory overload is not a good outcome for you or the employer. You can state that you work best with a few minor adjustments such as the ability to wear headphones at work or having a desk in a quiet space. It is absolutely okay for you to ask for reasonable adjustments like these in the workplace. More information on common interview accommodations are available in this workbook.

Potential workplace accommodations

Provide an example of when you have had to prioritise tasks to meet a deadline

Time management is crucial to perform well at any job. What the employer is looking for with this question is to see if you know how to prioritise and meet deadlines. Your answer should demonstrate how you plan your day to meet commitments and if you can adjust your plan if priorities change.

**** STAR response example:**

I work in a busy workplace and we need to be adaptable to the demands of our customers. I start each workday by writing a list of the tasks I need to complete, and list them from highest to lowest priority. I enter all deadlines and scheduled meetings into my outlook calendar to ensure that I don't miss important deadlines. This helps me to keep on track of what needs to get done by when and can be easily reorganised if other more important deadlines arise.

Time management and organisational capabilities

When have you had to follow safety protocols in a previous job?

Your interviewer will be interested in assessing your familiarity with safe work practices, particularly if your job will be performed in a hazardous or public environment. Safety is a key concern in every workplace. Formulate your response to show your adherence to safety protocols and itemise actions that you took to address any of the threats to you or other employees' health or safety in the past. It could be appropriate to use non-work examples (for example if you volunteer for a sporting club).

**** STAR response example:**

In my role working in a busy kitchen, I noticed that the new staff were not following the kitchen's safe food handling procedures. This was putting the health of our customers at risk. Where appropriate I would remind staff of the correct food safety protocols, showing them where they could find the training materials if needed. I also spoke to our manager who organised training for all staff, as strict adherence to food safety was important for the business. The training improved and reinforced everyone's knowledge of the safety procedures, and this was a good outcome for customers as well as the business.

Adherence to and understanding of safety protocols:

When have you worked with a diverse group of people?

Diversity includes:

- Cultural diversity
- Racial diversity
- Religious diversity
- Age diversity
- Sex / Gender diversity
- Sexual orientation
- Disability

Employers are looking for team players and are seeking people who work well with a diverse range of people. Combining teamwork and inclusion will make you a desirable candidate. If possible, give specific examples of how you have developed your diversity skills. Be sure to include things like diversity training, travel abroad, hosting an exchange student or being a member of a diversity organisation. If you speak a second language or have any relevant skills, this is the time to share them. An employer will be impressed with solid evidence showing you understand and appreciate diversity.

**** STAR response example:**

In my role working at a library, I was employed at the front counter assisting with general library enquiries. During my shift I would be required to assist a diverse range of customers with their queries. For example, we have children's story time, meet up groups for elderly customers as well as craft groups for people with English as a second language. During a recent shift a Somali customer was having difficulty communicating their request to me in English. I was able to help her by directing her to the information brochure in Somali, which provided her with the information she needed to know. The customer was grateful for my guidance and felt very much connected and welcomed to our library.

Ability to work with a diverse group of people, and understanding of inclusive practices

Provide an example of when you have had to keep information confidential?

A number of workplaces require strict confidentiality in handling information. Confidentiality in the workplace means keeping sensitive business and personal information secure and private. This interview question is to see if you understand the importance of secure handling of confidential information and that you recognise when and how to keep information private.

**** STAR response example:**

In my role working in a bank, I was often working with our customers personal information. I ensured that whenever I left my desk I would put all customer personal documentation in my lockable filing cabinet, and would lock my computer screen so that other staff were not able to view customer information. A recent audit done by the bank showed that I scored a perfect score on maintaining the confidentiality of customer information.

Understanding privacy and confidentiality in the workplace

Provide an example of a situation where you didn't meet your goals or objectives.

What interviewers are looking for with this question is an example of where objectives weren't met and what you did to rectify the situation. Better still, provide an example of where things almost went wrong and what you did to prevent it. It is not a good idea to say 'I can't think of such a situation' as this makes you either seem unbelievably perfect (arrogant) or unable to spot and avoid potential disaster.

**** STAR response example:**

In my current role, I have both a direct line manager and a senior manager. I recently had my primary role interrupted due to another critical piece of work arising from my senior manager. My direct line manager was ok with me working on this request for the senior manager, however it meant I was late in delivering my primary project. I was able to complete the critical project for the senior manager and then come back to my primary project, but it ended up being over a week late due to the diversion. I set up a meeting with my direct line manager to come up with a contingency plan should this happen again. We have decided to train another staff member in the team to help cover these types of situations in the future.

Examples of when things almost went wrong but you were able to prevent it from going wrong.

Provide an example of a situation where you faced conflict

Most people experience conflict at work at some point. Conflict interview questions are common because employers want to hire someone who will work well with others as part of a team. The interviewer is looking for someone who can have professional relationships with colleagues, can respect differing opinions, can accept opposing views without getting upset and can work with others to achieve a mutually agreeable solution. We have to be really careful how we relay examples of conflict in an interview. This is not the time to tell the interviewer how much you hate your current boss or colleagues (even if you feel that way). They want to hear how you professionally and productively resolved conflict with a difficult person or situation. Don't feel that you have to provide an answer that gives you full credit for the solution. It can be more powerful to demonstrate how you worked with others to find a solution. Practise your response to this request as it is difficult to think of an appropriate example 'on the spot'.

**** STAR response example:**

My previous manager did not communicate tasks to me in a way that I found logical or easy to understand. This meant that sometimes I did not do the task to the standard that she wanted, and it led to conflict and a strained working relationship. I asked my manager if I could set up a template for her to give me work instructions, that could be used whenever she was allocating new work to me to ensure I did the work correctly. My manager found the template helpful and decided to use it with the whole team. This led to the team being a lot more accurate and efficient with their time and I had a much better relationship with my manager.

Examples of conflict and the mutually agreeable solutions.

Provide an example of when you have worked to an unreasonable deadline

Interviews contain a question like this to see how you cope under stress. This is a really useful situation to prepare some examples for, before an interview. The interviewer will want to see how you react when put under pressure. Think about the positive things you did. Depending on your career history, this is another situation where it's acceptable to use an example from outside work, as long as the skills are clearly transferable to your new role.

**** STAR response example:**

I was given a deadline to produce a customer product in a very short turnaround time. To please my boss, I assured him that I could create the product as well as do the workload I already had. But I miscalculated, the customer product was a lot more complicated than I thought and I realised it was not going to be completed by the deadline, plus I was unable to do the work I had already agreed to. I had to contact my manager and explain that I needed an extension. I told him that I would call the

customer and explain why it was taking longer than expected. I learned that it would have been better to say that I couldn't do it in such a short time and suggested a more achievable timeframe. I also learned that I needed to investigate the workload more thoroughly prior to saying I can do it, as well as giving myself a buffer in case unforeseen issues arise.

Examples of when you have coped under stress.

Tell me about a special contribution you have made to your employer.

Before an employer makes their decision to hire you, they will need to know how you have performed in the past and any other special contributions that you can bring to the company **example** 'In my last job, I ran the charity fund raiser for three years. I believed it was an important cause, and I knew it was difficult for the company to find volunteers.' You don't give long responses, instead focus your answers on the actions you took and the positive results that you obtained.

List any recognition for positive contributions

Give an example of how you have handled an unhappy customer?

How you react when others lose their temper or become upset is important in most positions, especially in service industries. The interviewer will be looking for evidence of your ability for work that involves contact with the public. Give an example of when you were faced with a difficult person and how you handled it.

**** STAR response example:**

My position at a fast food restaurant involved occasionally dealing with unhappy customers. A customer recently told me that they were unhappy with their service. When it happened, I initially talked to them calmly, in order to focus on what their issue was and try to resolve the situation. However, the customer was particularly unhappy, so I politely asked the customer to wait while I got my manager. The manager was able to resolve the customers issue and he left the store happy.

Examples of handling difficult customers to a positive resolution. Remember customers can also be other workmates or supervisors.

Give an example of when you provided excellent customer service?

This is a common question in interviews. It is designed to identify if candidates share the same customer service philosophy as the company.

Customer service is the support you offer to customers to help them to have an easy, positive and enjoyable experience with you/your workplace. A customer can be individuals purchasing your products or services or it can be your manager or colleagues.

Customer service in jobs can vary, however there are basic principles of good customer service that are important for every employee to follow regardless of where you work.

Your response should demonstrate your commitment to service, your commitment to keeping the customer happy and in the ongoing success of your company. Your answer should explain why customer service matters and give examples of good service.

**** STAR response example:**

I was previously employed as a greeter at a large retail store. My role was to greet customers as they entered the store and make them feel welcome. I also answered their questions and gave directions to the relevant areas. During the two years I was employed there I was able to obtain a thorough knowledge of the products at the store, where they were located, and could easily direct customers to where they needed to go. It was important that I was efficient with directions as the store could get really busy and crowded, especially at Christmas time. I was able to work with a wide range of people and received many compliments on my friendliness, willingness to assist both customers and other staff and my comprehensive store knowledge. A lot of customers knew my name and would say hello whenever they came to the store. Due to my high level of customer service the Manager asked me to train new 'greeters' whenever they started at the store.

Examples of when you have provided good customer service

Give an example of when you worked with a team to achieve a positive outcome.

Teamwork is an important aspect of business. It is necessary for colleagues to work well together, trying to reach a common goal or to complete tasks and meet deadlines in the most effective and efficient way. Your response should demonstrate your responsibility for the part you play in the team. Utilising the strengths of everyone in the team in working towards a common outcome. You can also mention organising or participating in work events with your team.

**** STAR response example:**

I prefer working as part of a team, because I believe that the best ideas are developed in partnership with others. I am comfortable being a team member and a team lead. A few months ago, I was selected to lead our team in a deadline-critical project. Because of our great team effort, we were able to deliver the project well before the deadline.

Teamwork examples

Do you have an example of when you have made a process improvement?

This question is trying to discover if you have made a difference in your previous roles by trying to improve the efficiency of the way things are done? The interviewer also wants to see if you are able to think for yourself, identify a process issue, whether you are comfortable making suggestions, and whether your ideas have been valid and led to improvement. Describe the problem that existed before you took action and talk about the initiative you took to solve the problem.

You could refer to your notes on the *“Record work achievements and positive feedback”* section of this workbook for your response.

Process improvements

What are your employment goals?

‘Ummmmmm ... I don’t know.’ This is not a good response. What an interviewer is looking for with this question:

- Are you serious about working?
- Do you know where you want to go?
- Your motivation and commitment levels
- How does this job fit within your longer-term plans? Is this job just an in-between job?

This question is a good opportunity to show your commitment to the role and knowledge of the company's structure and vision.

Example: 'In five years, I would like to have progressed to the point where I have management responsibility and the chance to lead process improvement.'

List any short and/or long-term employment goals

Why did you leave your last job?

Have a prepared response for this question because it is challenging to answer. Your best bet is to keep your answer short. Be honest but frame your response in a way that puts you in a good light.

Interviewers ask this question because it reveals whether you left the position voluntarily or were fired or laid off. Regardless of whether you left on your terms or you were fired make sure your response is professional.

If you were fired from your previous job, it's important to keep your responses as positive and simple as possible. Try not to blame yourself or your previous employer. Give a brief answer, a sentence—maybe two— then move the conversation forward. If possible, try to frame your departure in positive terms.

Example answer: "I was laid-off from my last position due to downsizing, so now I am actively seeking employment"

If you chose to leave without having another job to go to some **examples** of responses are:

"I left my last position in order to further my study. I have completed my studies and I am looking for employment again"

"After many years of working in the same office, I felt that it was time for a change, and it seemed like a good time to move on"

If you have had a gap in working you may be asked why and what you have been doing while not working. Prepare your responses in case you get asked this question. Be honest but remain positive. Often gaps in employment are not by choice. **Example:** "I have been actively looking for work but had not found the right role as yet. There has not been many roles suitable for my experience recently"

These responses all work because they just state the facts without emotions or negativity.

What Not to Say

Avoid negativity: Do not speak poorly about managers, colleagues, or the company. You may speak negatively about a co-worker and then learn that they are a friend of the interviewer.

Unprofessional comments: Don't say you were bored at work, or that you were underpaid or didn't get a promotion. These things may all be true, but you don't need to overshare or get really personal about your motivations for departing the job. The interviewer might worry that you are going to feel the same way at their workplace.

Your reasons for leaving past jobs?

Multi part interview questions

Some interview questions can have 2 or 3 parts within the question. For **example**, "Tell me about a time when you had to make a difficult decision, what was the issue? Explain the process you took to overcome the issue?"

It is common for most people to stumble with this format and it is important to be prepared for this. Some tips if you are asked a multi-part interview question are:

- Repeat the question back to the interviewer to make sure you understood the question
- Or, ask the interviewer to repeat the question to make sure you understand the question
- Feel free to take a moment to think of an example
- Refer to your notes – you could print out your responses to “Record work achievements and positive feedback” form on page 8 and bring them to the interview.
- Ask the interviewer if you could answer each part of the question separately. For example for the example provided above provide your answer for “when you have had to make a difficult decision” and then ask the interviewer to re-ask the second part of the question which would be “what was the issue”

It is ok to ask the interviewer if you have given sufficient information in your response by asking “Have I provided enough information in my answer”

Remember multi part questions are difficult for most candidates.

Interview accommodations

Think beforehand about whether you want to disclose your diagnosis of autism. If you are asking for accommodations for the interview – disclose the reason. You can ask for interview accommodations to ensure you have an environment that allows you to present the best version of you. You can ask for the accommodations when you are invited to attend an interview, for example, during the phone call telling you of the interview, or by replying to an email from the interviewer.

Some common interview accommodations are:

- (1) Ask for the interview questions the day before to enable you to prepare your responses
- (2) Ask for an on-line interview, for example Zoom, if that is a more comfortable option for you
- (3) Ask for the interview to be held at a specific time that is more suitable for you
- (4) Ask for extra time for timed tests
- (5) Ask to have a subsequent 1-1 interview rather than a group interview if group interviews are overwhelming for you
- (6) Ask if you can have a support person at the interview to help lower anxiety, to provide prompts on appropriate work examples to give, and to rephrase questions if needed.
- (7) If you have a therapy dog ask if it is ok to have the therapy dog at the interview. Explain that your therapy dog can provide sensory support and a calming focus to help minimise stress.
- (8) Photos of people who will be interviewing you.

Mock Interviews

Preparing for your job interview can make the difference between getting the job or not getting the job. The Australian Government have created video examples of interviews for 26 different roles. Watch these interviews with real employers to hear the common interview questions they ask, plus some tips and tricks on how to nail your next interview.

<https://jobsearch.gov.au/interview-practice>

Further information can be found here: <https://www.consultingcase101.com/>

The goal of mock interviews is to help you to feel more comfortable and prepared in a real interview.

Interview hints and tips

Phone interviews

It is just as important to be prepared for a phone interview as it is for a face-to-face interview. Research the company and have your preparation notes and job application handy to refer to during the interview. Be ready to take the call at the designated time and make sure you are in a quiet place. Answer the call professionally for example “Hello, this is _____ speaking”. Make sure you have a professional voice message in case your call goes to your message bank for any reason.



Tips for preparing for the phone interview:

- Google the business or company. Take some basic notes about the company, for example, where it is located, how long it has been operating, the main services or products the company offers
- Write down any questions you have beforehand so you don't forget them.
- Have a pen and pad handy to write down important information during the interview, for example the start date, the salary, or the contact details for key people.

If you are asked to have an online interview, via Zoom for example, ensure that you will be professionally dressed and in a quiet, well-lit location. Consider using headphones if you live with others and need to block out any noise. Also check that everything in the camera view is professional. Before the interview ensure you have downloaded and tested the platform your interview will be done on, and check that the camera and audio works.



Prepare!

Everyone needs to prepare for interviews. You are putting yourself at a disadvantage if you don't prepare. Some tips to get yourself ready are:

- Google the business. Write down some key points about the company: history, mission, their products or services.
- Write down any questions you have so you don't forget them
- Understand your strengths, and relevant work experience by completing the "Getting to know your strengths and skills" section of this workbook
- Practise your prepared common interview questions in this workbook. Do mock interview practice <https://jobsearch.gov.au/interview-practice> or practice interview questions and answers with someone you trust.
- A day or two before the interview, travel to the location where you will be interviewed. Learn the best way to get there and familiarise yourself with the location. This way you will know exactly where to go and how long it will take you on the interview day. This is especially important if you will be taking public transportation.
- Arrive early to give yourself time to collect your thoughts and read your notes before the interview.
- Practice greetings and eye contact. If eye contact makes you uncomfortable, look in the direction of the interviewer's face (at their ear or forehead, or the wall behind them). See more information on eye contact in the next section of this workbook.
- Check in with the receptionist/secretary on arrival (if there is one)
- Be ready to smile, say hello and shake hands with the interviewer when you meet.

Managing interview anxiety

It's totally normal to feel anxious or nervous before or during an interview. While there's no single best way to manage feelings of anxiety, being prepared will help to minimise anxiety. Implementing some simple plans that work for you, may also help you to be more confident and calm for your interview, for example:



Before the day of the interview:

- Do a visit to the interview site beforehand to minimise anxiety about where the site is, where to park, what bus to catch, how long it will take etc.

The day before the interview:

- Go to bed early and get a good night sleep the night before the interview
- Have your interview clothes washed, ironed and ready to go. Choose clothes that are not scratchy or uncomfortable and are likely to distract you during the interview

The day of the interview:

- Eat a healthy meal beforehand
- Have money for transport or have petrol in your car
- Take a simple snack and a water bottle to the interview just in case you are hungry or thirsty
- Arrive early so you are not rushed and hot and flustered
- Allow time to sit quietly and review your notes and practice your examples in your head.

If you are nervous when you arrive find a quiet space to do 5 minutes of deep breathing. Or do a simple grounding meditation, think about:



- 5 things you can see



- 4 things you hear



- 3 things you can feel



- 2 things you can smell



- 1 thing you can taste

Eye contact

Difficulty maintaining eye contact is a common characteristic of individuals on the autism spectrum. Eye contact can be highly uncomfortable for some people on the spectrum. Due to differing cognitive abilities, it can be challenging to coordinate listening and looking behaviors, while receiving and processing information, especially in a high stress situation, like an interview.



However, a failure to make eye contact can be misconstrued by interviewers as disinterest or inattention (if they are unaware that this is a characteristic for some on the spectrum).

In a job interview it is important to try and make eye contact. Here are some suggestions for finding a way around something that may be naturally difficult for you.

You don't necessarily have to look someone directly in the eyes, you could:

- look at other parts of the face when someone is talking, such as their ear or forehead
- look to the side or behind the person who is talking, for example look at the poster behind them
- face the person talking (even if you are not looking them in the eye)
- try to make fleeting eye contact

Before the interview, try and practice these strategies to learn what strategy works best for you.

Preparing for the Interview

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pc05g8zRhtA>
- https://hwpi.harvard.edu/files/ocs/files/interviewing_1.pdf
- <https://cdn1.sph.harvard.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/36/2016/06/Guide-to-Acing-the-Interviewing-June-2016.pdf>

Strategies to Make a Good First Impression During the Interview

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PCWVi5pAa30>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cFLjudWTuGQ>

How to answer interview questions?

Remember to use the STAR (Situation, Task, Action, Result) format in answering questions

- <https://www.themuse.com/advice/star-interview-method>
- <https://foster.uw.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/star-instructions.pdf>
- <https://careercenter.lehigh.edu/node/145>
- <https://theundercoverrecruiter.com/understanding-interviewer-questions-and-techniques/>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WRLF8ULhZmw>

- Avoid answering questions with a yes or no answer, unless specifically asked to only answer with a yes or no
- Make sure that when you explain something, explain in a way that your interviewers will understand. Remember, everyone may not be familiar with jargon or acronyms from different industries or firms. We want to make sure they understand what you are saying, which can be achieved by keeping things clear and simple
- When asked about yourself, keep your response professional and relevant to the role
 - <https://www.themuse.com/advice/tell-me-about-yourself-interview-question-answer-examples>
 - <https://www.careercontessa.com/advice/tell-me-about-yourself/>
 - <https://hbr.org/2019/08/how-to-respond-to-so-tell-me-about-yourself-in-a-job-interview>
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MmFuWmzeiDs>
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kayOhGRcNt4>
- Keep answers focused to the question and the role you are applying for
- If you didn't understand a question, ask for further clarification
 - <https://englishwithkim.com/clarifying-confirming-understanding/>
- If asked about interests or favourite activities be appropriate and keep responses succinct
- Prepare to answer questions about your weaknesses
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ubE405nVkZg>
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2mc2B8NZhvY>
- Avoid 'um' or 'oh' or 'I don't know'
- Remember restraint – use short but informative answers. Try not to go off-track.

What not to talk about in an interview

- Personal views on topics like religion and politics (unless it relates to the role)
- Personal information about you or your family
- Never use offensive language
- Never make jokes or unprofessional comments about any form of violence, racism, sexism or make discriminatory remarks
- Don't be negative about the role or the company
- Do not make derogatory remarks about past bosses or workmates...or yourself!
 - <https://www.themuse.com/advice/30-things-you-should-never-say-in-a-job-interview>
 - <https://www.scienceofpeople.com/worst-things-say-interview/>
 - <https://blog.shrm.org/blog/what-not-to-say-in-an-interview-top-12-things>



To disclose or not disclose

It is always your personal choice whether to disclose your diagnosis of autism to the job interviewer. However, if you do disclose you may want to highlight some of the advantages autistic minds have over neurotypical (non-autistic) minds.



For example, you could say that you have the ability to “hyperfocus” on specific tasks better than most people, which makes you more productive. You can say that doing repetitive tasks doesn’t bother you at all, no matter how often you do them. Whatever it is, you can find an advantage that autism has for you and spin it into a benefit for the company.

- <https://www.forbes.com/sites/quora/2017/07/20/research-shows-that-people-with-autism-have-a-stronger-aptitude-for-focusing-on-tasks/?sh=14a831ec2e82>
- <https://opendoorstherapy.com/workplace-social-skills-hyperfocus/>
- <https://www.bsms.ac.uk/pdf/research/autism-symposium/rachel-fricker-broadeningperspectives.pdf>

Some reasons to disclose can be:

- To have a more understanding and supportive work environment
- To be part of a diversity program
- Autism may give skills relevant to the job or role
- To ask for accommodations during the interviews and/or assessment process
- Promotes the fact that your disability does not hinder your employment capabilities

Some reasons NOT to disclose can be:

- Fear of discrimination or stigma
- Privacy, do not want to share personal information about yourself
- Workplace adjustments are not required
- Do not believe autism will have any impact on work performance
- Do not consider the condition as a disability
- No accommodations are required

Not disclosing can carry risks. Not disclosing can mean that you will miss out on valuable workplace accommodations, and staff understanding and support, that will give you a better chance of success at work.

What to Wear to an interview

Make sure you are well presented for your interview.

How you look gives the first impression of you.














- Be clean with a simple, professional hairdo and dressed in neat and professional clothes. This means arriving clean and wearing clothes that are wrinkle-free. You want to impress by showing that you are presentable and professional.
- Wear clothes that are not going to be a distraction to you during the interview. Avoid clothes that are scratchy-feeling or too tight.
- Have clean shoes.

More reading here:

- <https://www.themuse.com/advice/the-secret-to-a-perfect-interview-outfit-stalk-the-companys-social-media>
- <https://www.bu.edu/careers/networking-interviews/interviewing-the-big-picture/dress-for-the-interview/>
- <https://career.berkeley.edu/Handshake/RecrAttire>
- <https://ocs.fas.harvard.edu/dress-success#:~:text=In%20following%20with%20our%20colleagues,otherwise%20instructed%20by%20the%20employer>

Tips for during the face-to-face interview

Before the interview:	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure to have at least 1 hard (paper) copy of your resume with you for the interview, in case the interviewer doesn't have a copy
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure your phone is turned off or on silent.
Making a Good First Impression:	
	<p>When you first arrive at your interview you should begin with a smile and the greeting 'Hello, my name is _____ and I am here to see (interviewer's name) for an interview.' Try to look at the face of the person as you greet them. Often interviewers shake your hand when they meet you.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See above "Strategies to Making a Good First Impression During the Interview" • This is also the time to ask for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Directions to the restroom, if needed ○ A glass of water; remember to bring a bottle just in case
Some tips for during the interview:	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Looking in the direction of someone's face may be better than trying to focus on eye contact. If eye contact is uncomfortable for you try looking at your interviewers' ear, forehead or even at a picture behind them.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watch your body posture. Try to avoid crossing your arms, leaning on the desk or slouching. Having your arms by your side or in your lap is ideal.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If possible, find your 'neutral' face, for example relax your face.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal questions may not start straight away, there may be some small talk and questions like: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How are you? ○ How is your day going so far? ○ Did you find our building easily? ○ Is it still raining? • Be prepared for this and try to offer short but polite responses.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is often a glass of water offered when you arrive. It may be a good idea to accept the water so that you can have sips during your interview if you get a bit 'dry' or need a moment to collect your thoughts before answering a question. Having a drink can also give you an eye contact break. By taking a sip of your drink, you can stop looking at the interviewer briefly.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is also okay to ask the interviewer to repeat or clarify a question or ask if you have provided enough information to answer their question.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You <u>can and should</u> take your notes to the interview. Everyone gets nervous in an interview. If you have your notes to prompt you, it will help you get back on track and present the best version of yourself in the interview. • You can say that you have notes with you as you get nervous in interviews and don't want to forget anything. This action demonstrates that you are forward thinking, organised and conscientious.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remember to answer questions using the STAR format




Appropriate questions to ask an interviewer



It is common to be asked if you have any questions for the interviewer. Some examples of questions you might want to ask are:

- Can you walk me through the next steps of the hiring process?
- When are you likely to make a decision on the successful candidate for the role?
- When do you need someone to start?
- What are the usual working hours?
- Can you tell me more about the team I'd be working on?

Conclusion of the interview

	<p>Thank the interviewer for their time, wish them good luck in making their decision on the right candidate, and say I look forward to hearing from you. You often shake hands at the end of the interview.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• You may want to ask them for a business card or email address to send a thank you note• https://www.themuse.com/advice/how-to-write-an-interview-thankyou-note-an-email-template• https://hls.harvard.edu/dept/opia/job-search-toolkit/interviewing-and-following-up/follow-up/• https://cultivatedculture.com/interview-thank-you-email/
	<p>Then you need to wait to hear whether or not you were successful in getting the job. This can be hard! You should not contact the employer more than once (maybe twice) about the job.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• https://hbr.org/2020/11/4-ways-to-follow-up-after-a-job-interview
	<p>If you are unsuccessful in getting the job you can ask for feedback on your interview performance. Receiving feedback may help you to refine your interview technique for future interviews.</p>

Health and security checks

For some jobs, employers will do health checks to see if there are any health problems that will stop you from being able to do your job. For example, they will not want to place you in a role with a lot of heavy lifting if you have a bad back.

Some employers may do drug and alcohol tests. This is especially important if you are using heavy equipment such as in the mining industry. Employers will want to make sure you don't have alcohol or illegal drugs in your system while you are at work, as it is a safety risk (for both you and their equipment).

Some jobs require a police or security check for previous criminal convictions. If you are asked to do these tests it is important to provide honest information about yourself. These tests are usually done if the role requires you to have access to important confidential information, such as when working for the Australian Government. Employers need to make sure that you are going to be a trustworthy and honest employee.

First day on the job!

Congratulations you got the job.



The following information is helpful to know before you start your new job. It should be okay to contact your employer with questions, or you can do your own research:

- public transport options
- parking information
- information on who will meet you on the first day and be overseeing your training
- information on your work buddy or mentor if you have one
- if there is a lunchroom and refrigerator to keep your lunch in
- your training schedule for the first few days or weeks.

Make sure you have figured out how you will get to and from work prior to your first day, as you will no doubt be nervous when day one comes around.

First days can be overwhelming for everyone. Be kind to yourself. Take it easy in the days before you start and in the early days on the job. Plan ahead with things like clean work clothes, being well rested and work out your public transport options. On your first day, make sure you cover the basics – take snacks, a water bottle, lunch and money/travel card for public transport. When you get to work you can ask if there are cafés near work for buying food or coffee.

Be prepared for the weird feeling of everything being new: trying to remember all the things you have learned and trying to remember everyone's names and faces.

A helpful tip might be to take a notepad for writing down notes and people's names. Perhaps draw a floor plan with people's names and where they are seated to help you tie names to faces. If you forget names, it is okay to acknowledge that. A lot of people, when they start a new job, have difficulty remembering the names of other people and where they sit.

At the end of the day when you get home you will probably feel exhausted. You might need to debrief to a friend or have some quiet time alone. Prepare yourself for this possibility, and maybe even prepare the people you live with.

Don't forget that most people are nervous and shy when they are new to a job, but it does get better!

- <https://hr.fas.harvard.edu/pages/your-first-day>
- <https://hbr.org/2019/04/5-questions-to-ask-when-starting-a-new-job>
- <https://hbr.org/2018/08/starting-a-new-job-take-control-of-your-onboarding>

Didn't get the job

Everyone gets disappointed when they don't get the job that they really wanted. Sometimes another candidate just has more relevant experience than you and get the job. Or maybe you didn't perform at your best at an interview for a number of reasons, for example: you're too anxious or you forget your responses. This can happen to everyone.



Here are some steps to make a disappointing situation a little more positive:

1. Give yourself a few days to reflect. Assess what you think went well and what you would like to work on for the next interview.
2. If something didn't go well on the day, make a note of what it was so that you can avoid it next interview.
3. Ask the interviewer for feedback on what you did well and what you could improve on.
4. Talk to someone about the experience.

Don't give up. If at first you don't succeed, try, try and try again. Use each interview as a learning experience and try not to be too tough on yourself.

- <https://www.themuse.com/advice/this-is-the-email-smart-people-send-when-theyre-rejected-for-a-job>
- <https://www.themuse.com/advice/no-means-no-what-to-do-when-you-dont-get-the-job>
- <https://www.themuse.com/advice/so-you-didnt-land-your-dream-jobheres-what-to-do-next-besides-binge-on-ben-jerrys>

Write your interview reflection notes here:



Frequently asked questions

What do I do if I have a gap in my employment history?

It is very important that you are honest in what you communicate to employers both through your résumé and what you tell them in person (in the interview). It is also important that you have an explanation as to why there is a gap if an employer were to ask. Again, be truthful, but focus on any strengths and skills developed during this time away from employment. Examples include focusing on your studies, working on self-development activities, travel, and/or volunteer work. You may want to include this information in your profile section, but that is optional.

Some things you could do to improve your employment skills whilst not employed are:

- Join a group or club
- Do project work
- Study
- Volunteer, or non-paid work experience
- Offer to do jobs for friends, family or neighbours, for example: gardening, babysitting, jobs around the house.

A lot of these activities lead to transferable skills for employment, for example: developing communication skills, organisational skills, reliability, teamwork.

What do I do if I have no formal work experience?

If this is you, do not fear! Many young adults and recent graduates have little to no formal work experience. While it is always beneficial to have experience to demonstrate skills and abilities, it is not the only way. Fundamentally, roles vary from company to company so you will be required to learn on the job once hired. Employers are looking for employees that have the foundation to do the work. This foundation can come from numerous experiences outside of the workplace. It is important that you highlight activities that have provided you with transferrable skills. For example, some transferrable skills from school or university are: researching, writing, problem solving, meeting deadlines, using computer systems, and public speaking.

- <https://www.themuse.com/advice/no-experience-3-ways-to-show-youre-right-for-the-job-anyway>
- <https://www.personalbrandingblog.com/how-to-pass-a-job-interview-with-no-experience/>

What if my work experience is unrelated to the role I am applying for?

Depending on how unrelated your experience is, it is a good idea to look at different approaches to résumé writing. Think about what you have done, what you want to do next, and how you can connect the two. This could generate a great sentence or two to include in your profile statement. It is also beneficial to demonstrate that you are taking steps towards your new career goals. For example, if you are currently an accountant and are interested in becoming a graphic designer, list the actions you have taken to improve your skills as a graphic designer.

- <https://www.themuse.com/advice/no-experience-3-ways-to-show-youre-right-for-the-job-anyway>
- <https://www.themuse.com/advice/4-smart-ways-to-spin-a-career-change-in-your-favor-during-an-interview>

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<https://jobsearch.gov.au/jobsearchtips>

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Download a variety of resume, cover letter, and CV guides and templates
<https://ocs.fas.harvard.edu/guide-template-library>

All Case Interview Questions & Answers
<https://www.consultingcase101.com/>

Three Great questions to ask in an interview
<https://online.hbs.edu/blog/post/three-great-questions-to-ask-in-an-interview>

