



Advocate for Accommodations



The **Inclusive**
Workplace

As a job coach, you play an important role in providing support and guidance to businesses. You can advise them on how to provide accommodations to candidates and employees. Accommodations can help candidates apply for jobs and perform well in an interview, and they can help employees do their jobs well. This, in turn, helps businesses to be successful.

Disclaimer: This is not legal advice.

What's an accommodation?

- An accommodation is a modification or adjustment to the application process, the selection or interview process, the job, or the work environment.
- Accommodations may involve adapting a workplace policy, adjusting the work environment, or applying equipment or technology.
- Accommodations help employers tap into the full potential of their employees.



What's the purpose of an accommodation?



DURING THE JOB APPLICATION PROCESS

To assist job seekers to access and be considered for employment opportunities.



DURING THE SELECTION AND INTERVIEW PROCESS

To assist candidates to showcase themselves and their skills.



IN THE WORKPLACE

To allow employees to meet the requirements of their job and to work to their maximum potential.

Who can request an accommodation?



APPLICANT, CANDIDATE OR EMPLOYEE

Accommodations can be requested by an applicant, a candidate, or an employee.



YOU (THE JOB COACH)

They can be requested by you, on behalf of, and with the permission of, an applicant, candidate, or employee.

A note about the term **accommodation**

Not all workplace adjustments are formal accommodations.

Accommodations for people on the autism spectrum or with an intellectual disability may look different than the kinds of workplace adjustments we might typically think of when we think about the word **accommodation**.

When we think about workplace accommodations, we often first think about adjustments made to the **physical environment**, such as ramps, automatic doors, or desks to accommodate mobility devices.

People on the autism spectrum or with an intellectual disability may process information, interact with their environment, communicate, and learn in different ways. The accommodations needed may sometimes be less physical and more **relational** or **communication based** (for example, adjustments may involve changes to how information is conveyed, shared, and communicated).

Many of these adjustments are easy to make and require **minimal** to no time and resources. For example:

- Ensuring that work schedules or important project details and expectations are conveyed in clear writing.
- Having more frequent face-to-face check-ins.
- Building breaks into long staff meetings.

In fact, these kinds of adjustments often benefit **everyone**.



Examples of workplace adjustments or accommodations

Here are examples of accommodations you may work with a job seeker, candidate, or employee to request.

Remember, every individual on the autism spectrum or with an intellectual disability is **different** and may have different support needs.

- Some employees may require a job coach at work.
- Others may not require any workplace accommodations.
- Some modifications to the workplace may require a formal workplace accommodation request.
- Some may simply involve a small adjustment to existing practices or ways of working.



The job application

“ The business asks applicants to apply online. As an accommodation, can the business accept an applicant’s **paper** application?”

Highly structured online applications can mean that response choices to key questions are narrow and restrictive and do not provide the opportunity to capture different experiences or skill sets. Standardized forms are, by design, not created to capture diversity!



Interview and pre-screening

“ The business calls candidates for a pre-screening phone interview. As an accommodation, can the interviewer share the pre-screening **questions** with the candidate and schedule the call?”

Suitability tests



“ The business asks candidates to do a suitability test (for example, a personality test). As an accommodation, can the business consider **alternatives** to the test? Candidates on the autism spectrum or with an intellectual disability may think in concrete or literal terms. Tests like these often require intuitive thinking, requiring candidates to make inferences and understand situational nuances. As such, test results may not give the business an accurate picture of the candidate’s suitability for the job. Instead, can the candidate give the business a list of their personal attributes and an example of each?”

Prior to the job interview



“ Can the candidate please have the list of interview **questions** before their interview so they have more time to think about the information?”



“ Can the interview be done with **fewer people** to lower the candidate’s anxiety?”



“ Can the interview be scheduled for **more time** so the candidate can take their time thinking about their answers?”



“ Can you please send the candidate some short **videos** before the interview so they can see what your office building looks like? This way they can see what your reception area looks like. And they can see the room where their interview will be.”

During the job interview

- “ May I **join** the interview as a support person for the candidate?”
- “ Can the interview be a **Zoom** meeting instead of in person (for example, for health and safety reasons)?”
- “ Can the interview be in a room that **won't** have distractions or interruptions?”
- “ Can the interview be in a room that has **soft light** that doesn't flicker?”
- “ Can the interview be in an **informal** setting, rather than a boardroom, so it's a more comfortable setting for the candidate?”
- “ Can the interview take place while going for a **walk**, rather than in a boardroom? The candidate thinks better when they are moving.”
- “ Can small talk be kept to a **minimum** at the beginning of the interview? The candidate processes information and communicates differently.”
- “ Can your interview questions use **short, plain, direct language**? The candidate processes information differently.”
- “ May the candidate **write** down their answers to your questions before they say them? This lets them process the question and think about their answer.”
- “ Can the interview allow the candidate to **perform** some parts of the job so they can show their skills and strengths, rather than trying to explain them while answering questions?”





After the job interview

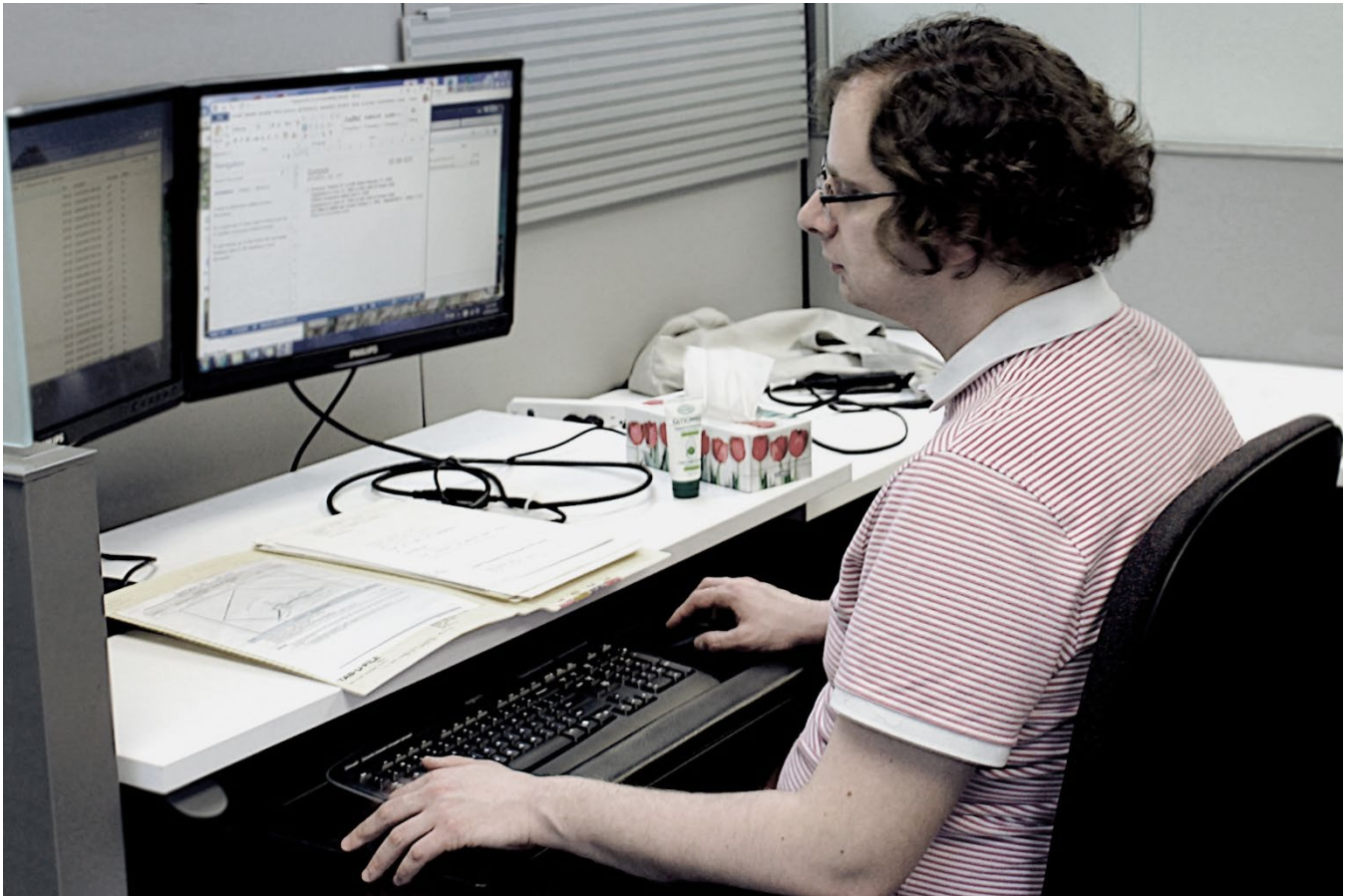
“ As an accommodation, can the candidate be supported to complete the **background check**?”

Onboarding

“ As an accommodation, can you please send the new employee some short **videos** so the candidate can see the workplace before their onboarding starts?” For example:



- How do they get to the lunchroom and what does it look like?
- How do they get to their workstation and what does it look like?



On the job

- “ Can the employee have a **flexible** work schedule so they're able to start and end work at a later time?”
- “ Can the employee have a **flexible** work schedule (for example, to build in more frequent, shorter breaks)?”
- “ Can the employee have a workstation location with **fewer distractions**?”
- “ The employee has **noise** sensitivity:
- Can they be provided with headphones to reduce noise?
 - Can their workstation have noise-reduction barriers?
 - Can their workstation be moved to a quieter area?”
- “ The employee has **light** sensitivity:
- Can they wear sunglasses?
 - Can their workstation be moved to a less bright or differently lit area?”
- “ The employee is unable to wear a standard over-the-ears face mask (due to sensitivity, anxiety, or communication purposes). Can we explore **alternatives**, such as face shields?”
- “ Can you please communicate with the employee using simple, **plain**, direct language and use **pictures** that help them understand the message?”
- “ Can employees wear **clear** face coverings (masks) so the employee is able to see their mouths when they speak?”
- “ Can employees wear **lanyards** that have their name and a picture of their face? This will help the employee know what they look like without their mask.”
- “ Can **breaks** be built into longer meetings?”
- “ Can meetings be **recorded** so the employee can review important discussions at a later time?”
- “ Can the employee work from **home** instead of in the workplace?”
- “ Can the employee work from the **workplace** instead of at home?”

Coach the business (if welcomed)



Direct them to this resource

[Accommodations for Your Workplace](#)

Let them know how you can guide them through the information and process.



Discuss how accommodations are for everyone

Accommodations are not just for people on the autism spectrum or who have an intellectual disability; they can be applied to **all** applicants, candidates, and employees.



Discuss how accommodations are common

Highlight how accommodations are an easy, positive, regular part of employment. Here are some **examples**:

- Allow for changes to an employee's working hours so they are able to leave in time to pick up their child from school.
- Provide an ergonomic chair to alleviate an employee's back pain.
- Allow an employee to do their job while sitting down instead of standing, or vice versa.



Advise of the benefits of accommodations

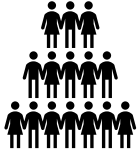
Highlight the significant **benefits** to the individual, other employees, and the business. For example:

- Hiring a candidate who is a good match for the job.
- Keeping a valuable employee.
- Having an employee who feels included and valued.
- A reduction in missed days from work.

Discuss how accommodations benefit many

Explain that accommodations made for people who are on the autism spectrum or have an intellectual disability can benefit other candidates and employees too.

For **example**:



- A candidate who experiences anxiety.
- An employee who speaks English as a second language.
- An employee with young children.
- An employee who experiences migraines.

There is a **universal** aspect to accommodations. The solutions that businesses implement can be beneficial for many or all employees—not just those who are on the autism spectrum or have an intellectual disability. Accommodations can make workplaces accessible and safe for everyone.



Address concerns and myths

Here are some common **questions** that businesses may have about accommodations. You can help dispel myths and share information.

Is the cost **reasonable**?

- Most accommodations require little or no expense.

How much **time** will it take?

- Most accommodations take little effort to implement.



What's the **impact** on business?

- Most accommodations have no negative impact on the business. In fact, most businesses benefit from implementing accommodations, as these adjustments to the workplace help businesses tap into the full potential of their employees.

Do I have to implement **all** requests?

- No. Accommodations should **not** lower the performance standards or essential tasks of the job.
- If the request takes away a necessary part of the job, is too costly, or could cause health and safety risks (called **undue hardship**), businesses may not be able to make the accommodation.

Provide tips for inclusive hiring

Help businesses make their hiring process more inclusive, even **before** they receive a request for accommodations. They can:



- Develop a formal workplace **policy** that addresses inclusion. This policy can be included on job postings and shared with candidates when setting up an interview.
- Inform **all job applicants** that accommodations are available to them, and let them know how to request them. **Interview** accommodation requests should be distinct and separate from requested **on-the-job** accommodations.

Provide tips for an inclusive workplace

Advise businesses that they can make their workplaces more **inclusive** even **before** they receive a request for an accommodation:



- They can inform **all employees** that accommodations are available to them within the organization and let them know how to request an accommodation (who to contact to make a request, such as an employee in Human Resources).
- If they notice an existing employee who may benefit from an accommodation, they can discuss the availability of accommodations with them.
- Businesses can explore providing workplace inclusion training to staff. Learning and understanding the value of inclusion in the workplace and typical workplace accommodations can be one of the most impactful accommodations of all.



Discuss how to implement and answer any questions

- Answer any questions the business may have.



Coach and advise the candidate or employee



Discuss accommodations

Discuss accommodations. Determine which accommodations, if any, will benefit the candidate. Get the candidate's feedback.

Discuss how accommodations are common

Accommodations are an easy, positive, regular part of employment. Here are some examples:



- Allow for changes to an employee's working hours so they are able to leave in time to pick up their child from school.
- Provide an ergonomic chair to alleviate an employee's back pain.
- Allow an employee to do their job while sitting instead of standing.



Discuss how to implement; answer any questions

- Answer any questions the candidate or employee may have.
- For implementation considerations, see the table below.

After requesting an accommodation



Who to talk with

There may be a specific person in the business to talk to, such as someone in [Human Resources](#). You may support the candidate or employee to connect with this person.

Have a meeting



- As a job coach, you may attend a [meeting](#) with the person in Human Resources and the candidate or employee. The business will ask questions to learn more about the accommodation request. You can help them decide how to make the accommodation work best for the candidate or employee and the business.
- A formal request for accommodations usually requires [disclosure](#) of a disability. You may want to discuss the disclosure process with the candidate or employee.

Accommodation is made

The business should try to make the accommodation. However, not all accommodation requests can be granted.

If the request takes away a necessary part of the job, is too costly, or could cause health and safety risks (called **undue hardship**), the business may not be able to make the accommodation. For example:



- The candidate applies for a sales job and asks for an accommodation that they only talk with customers by phone and email. In this example, meeting with customers in person is a necessary part of the sales job because they need to give customers samples of the product being sold. The business probably won't make this accommodation because it takes away a necessary part of the sales job.

Look for creative approaches

The business may listen to the accommodation request and then provide a different and creative way to meet the accommodation.



- For example, instead of receiving a progress report over email, they may allow an employee to share their weekly progress update in a short, recorded video.

Expect a timely response

Accommodations should be implemented in a timely manner. You can support the candidate or employee to follow up on accommodation requests.



Support the documentation process

Small businesses aren't required to document an accommodation process. However, it is **good practice**. It's recommended that the business keep records of accommodation requests and actions taken.



A written plan preserves the information even if there are changes in personnel (for example, if the employee's manager leaves the business).

You may support the candidate or employee to read and approve a written report that explains the accommodation that was asked for.

Ensure privacy



Accommodations are to be kept **private** and **confidential**. Information should only be shared as needed to implement the accommodation and with the permission of the employee.

Invite feedback



After the accommodation is made, continue your job coach role by checking in with the employee to see how the accommodation is working.

- Is it helpful? Is it making a difference? Is it achieving the goal?

Check in regularly



You can stay involved in ongoing meetings with the business and the employee (for example, every six months) to ensure the accommodation is working well or determine if any changes should be made. Is it continuing to meet the employee's needs? Does the employee have feedback or suggestions?



Links



1. [Accommodations for Your Workplace](#)

Sources

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