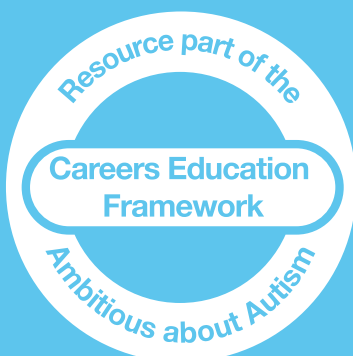




**Ambitious  
about Autism**

# Top tips for job interviews with autistic people

Tips for employers hosting interviews with autistic job seekers



# Top tips for job interviews with autistic people

These tips are for employers hosting interviews with autistic job seekers.

## 1 Provide a clear structure for the interview in advance

Give the autistic person clear image- and text-based supporting information for their interview. For example, set out in writing what time the interview will start and finish and who the interviewers are. This includes photographs and information about their work roles and their roles in the interview, e.g. note-taker, technical questioning, etc.



## 2 Provide interview questions in advance

This is not providing autistic candidates with an advantage but is removing the common barriers they have to answering unpredictable interview questions 'on the spot'. Autistic candidates often need more time to process and prepare to answer questions, and additionally experience much higher levels of anxiety in interview situations than their non-autistic counterparts.



This means that many autistic candidates 'freeze' completely and are unable to speak or reply meaningfully to questions that they easily know the answer to. Sometimes, they may over-talk and completely lose the 'thread' of what they are saying and appear disorganised in their thoughts, when they are not. We advise our employer partners to give questions at least five days in advance.

## 3 Be mindful of your language

Avoid hypothetical questions. For example, don't ask someone 'what if?' but try 'what did you do?' instead.



## 4 Think about the timing of in-person interviews

Interviews are often the most difficult part of the recruitment process for autistic candidates, and they need to be scheduled at a time when the autistic candidate is most resilient. This may be at the start of a day when they have had the least stressful commute to the interview location and a good night's rest the day before. Remember that all candidates will be different, so ask the candidate what the best time of day for them would be to attend an interview.



## 5 Allow additional processing time

Remember to allow additional processing time and prompt the candidate to refer to any helpful notes. A good guide is to ask one question, or make one point at a time, and then allow a full five seconds before prompting or rephrasing a question or point.



## 6 Consider reasonable adjustments

Remember to invite any support to the interview to accompany the candidate. Reasonable adjustments commonly include inviting someone who supports the candidate along to the interview, to act as a 'translator' and to help the candidate manage their anxiety. You may also be able to adapt the interview style itself. We have worked with many autistic job-seekers who have thrived at working interviews rather than sit-down interviews, e.g. where the job-seeker completes a task and demonstrates the skills applicable to the job.



## 7 Think of the environment

Create an environment that is free of interruptions or disruptions and is sensory calm and neutral. This will extend to any waiting areas that you are designating for the candidate. It is often hard to imagine how disrupting and overwhelming sensory intrusion can be for someone, if you don't have sensory sensitivity yourself. So, we encourage employers to be very conservative and 'over-design' their interview environments in terms of making them calm and sensory-neutral.



## 8 Think about adjustments for remote interviews

Take care not to assume that a candidate may not need any adjustments to attend a remote interview. Some autistic people benefit from being able to ask questions, interjecting using the 'chat' area of virtual meetings, or raising a hand to signal that they need to ask a question or are struggling.

Ensure that interviewers are highly disciplined about ensuring that their environments are visually calm and that they keep their microphones muted when not speaking. This will help to cut down on intrusive and overwhelming sensory input.



## 9 Provide information about the location

Provide comprehensive information on how and where to attend their interview. Take care to provide travel information, if appropriate. This can be in different media, such as Google Maps, as well as in text and using map extracts and images. Also provide specific details on where and who they should report to when they arrive at the interview location, and what will happen after they initially check in. Autistic people often struggle at the first hurdle, usually at the reception or entrance to buildings. So, do ensure that all staff who will be initially receiving autistic candidates, including security and reception staff, are well prepared and briefed/trained in autism-friendly communication and support.



## 10 Have a point of contact

Do remember to provide a single point of contact to talk through helpful adjustments and to ask any questions, both before the interview and on the day. Remember to provide alternative ways of getting in touch for those autistic candidates who struggle to make phone calls.



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We believe every autistic child and young person has the right to be themselves and realise their ambitions.

We started as one school and have become a movement for change. We champion rights, campaign for change and create opportunities.

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