



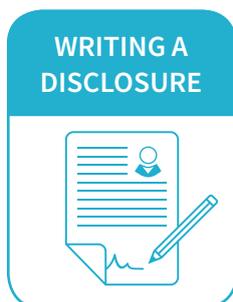
HOW TO GET A JOB: AN EMPLOYMENT GUIDE FOR NEURODIVERSE PEOPLE

NEURODIVERSITY IS, AS ITS NAME SUGGESTS, DIVERSE! WHAT YOU FIND EASY OR DIFFICULT MAY BE DIFFERENT TO WHAT ANOTHER PERSON FINDS EASY OR DIFFICULT.

This guide, therefore, covers a lot of different challenges faced by people on the autism spectrum. These challenges may not all apply to you, so please skim over those that are not relevant and focus on those that are. We hope these points help make your job interviews easier and your working life more fulfilling.



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JOB HUNTING

Looking for a job is exciting but also daunting. It can be confusing to search through opportunities and work out what you might like to do. Fortunately, there are some steps you can take to obtain a fulfilling position.

- ✦ Get in touch with [Xceptional](#) if you are in Australia. We can help you look for opportunities and update your resume, as well as coach you in interview techniques. If you don't live in Australia, you could contact [Specialisterne](#), [Auticon](#) or the [DXC Dandelion Program](#).
- ✦ This [workbook](#), published by The National Autistic Society UK, includes a longer guide to finding work as well as some useful activities that will help you prepare for an interview.
- ✦ Write a list of all the things you're good at or like doing. Write down a job, or jobs, that you'd love to do. You can also include things you'd like to try.
- ✦ Write another list of your character strengths. This is slightly different to the previous list (having just written down what you're good at doing), this list will contain what you're good at being. For example, do you work through challenges? Are you punctual and reliable? Are you hard-working? Are you a quick learner? Do you have good attention to detail? Do you work well with others? Are you self-motivated? If you're finding this hard, ask a friend or family member what they feel your strengths are. For each one, write an example of a time in your life when you showed that characteristic.

- ✦ **If you have worked before, write down a list of your jobs. What did you enjoy about them? What was a challenge? What would you be happy to do again, and what do you never want to do again?**

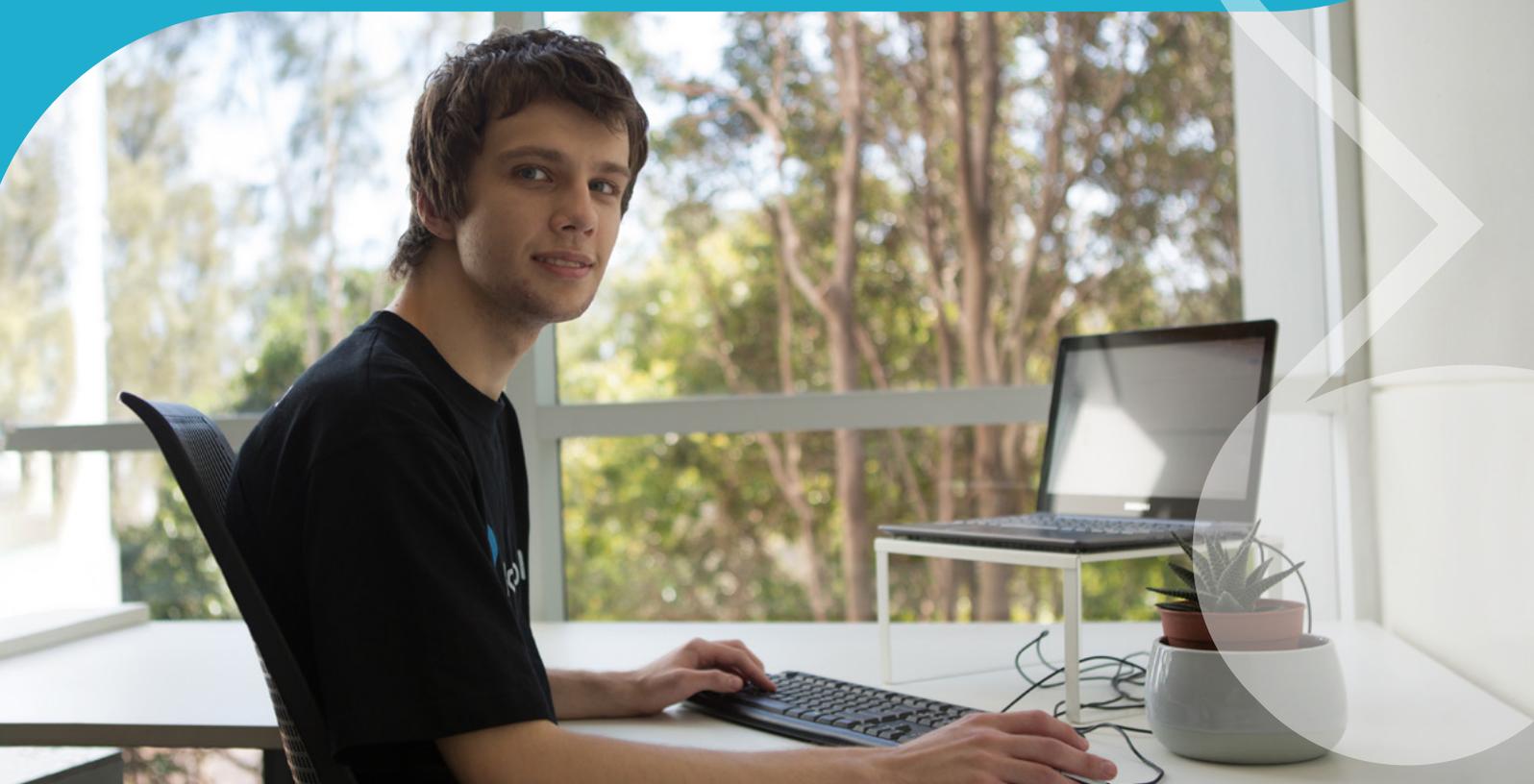




- ✚ Investigate the companies close to where you live and make another list. Include any companies which you can walk to easily, or get to by car, bus or train, if you are happy to use these forms of transport.
- ✚ Update your CV (Xceptional can help with this), making sure it reflects all your experience and qualifications.
- ✚ Make sure you are accessing all the help available to you at your local job centre, Disability Employment Services (DES), or any other services available in your area.
- ✚ Tell your family and friends what kind of job you'd like, and ask them to let you know of any opportunities they hear about.
- ✚ Start applying for jobs. Ask family or friends to check your application before you send it in. Xceptional can help you with this too.
- ✚ You are not obliged to inform your potential employer about your neurodiversity, but it will help enormously if you do. It will mean the employer can prepare a style of interview that makes things easier for you. If you get the job, it will also mean your manager will understand some of the ways in which they can provide you with the best possible work environment. We invite employers to contact Xceptional to find out more.

“I AM DIFFERENT, NOT LESS”

Dr Temple Grandin





WRITING A DISCLOSURE OF NEURODIVERSITY

Should you choose to inform your potential employer about your neurodiversity, here is what you should include.

- A statement of your neurodiversity, followed by three or four strengths that you have as a result; for example, attention to detail, reliability or resilience.
- An outline of the challenges you face as a result of your neurodiversity, with an explanation of how you overcome these.
- A few things that would make the interview easier for you to succeed.
- A few things that would make the work environment easier for you to succeed in, should you get the job.

You will find examples of how to answer these questions in this [workbook](#), published by The National Autistic Society UK, on pages 35-37.





PREPARING FOR A JOB INTERVIEW

You've successfully applied for a job and been offered an interview. Great! Now is the time to check you have everything you need to succeed.

- ❧ Make sure you know how to get to the interview. Do you have a map or instructions? If anything is unclear remember you can contact the employer to ask for more directions, or ask someone to do this on your behalf.
- ❧ Do you know where to go once you arrive? Will you need to sign in at reception, or ask for a particular person, or find an office? If this isn't clear in your interview instructions, again do contact the employer to clarify.
- ❧ Read about the company on their website as well as any other information you've been sent.
- ❧ You may be asked about your neurodiversity and how it affects you. To prepare, get out your lists of strengths and challenges. Prepare how you will communicate these. Keep it positive and focus on your strengths, as well as how you and your employer can overcome your challenges. For example, rather than saying "I can't work with background noise", which sounds rather negative, you could say "I can focus much better on a task when I can listen to music through my headphones while I'm doing it".
- ❧ Ask a friend or family member to help you practise your interview skills. Shake hands with them, make eye contact, smile and say "hello", and answer questions relating to the job you hope to get.
- ❧ You could make a list of questions you have about the company or what it will be like to work there (see next section).
- ❧ Make sure you have smart, clean clothes to wear to your interview





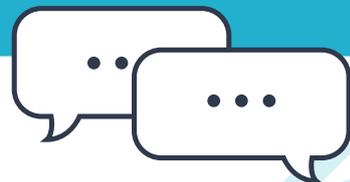
INTERVIEW DAY

When the day arrives, remember that the interview is not only for your potential employer to find out about you, but for you to find out about the company, and whether it's somewhere you'd like to work.

- ✂ When you arrive, or when you meet a new person, there may be some small talk. For example, you might be asked how you are, or your interviewer may comment on the weather. These might seem unimportant areas of discussion, but are used in the workplace to build relationships and as a starting point in meetings. If you can engage with interviewers by simply agreeing or answering questions and smiling, this is a great way of showing that you're interested in the person you're speaking to. Practice with your family and friends if you think it will be difficult for you. But don't worry – this small talk won't last long.
- ✂ There will probably be a bit of hand-shaking at an interview. This is most likely to happen when you first meet people and when you go into the interview room. If you find physical touch a challenge, remember it is only a very short process. (If you absolutely cannot bear to shake hands, there are other options such as nodding your head in acknowledgement, work out what is best for you and please make sure you've made this clear on your job application.)
- ✂ There should be an empty seat waiting for you. If there are more seats, or if you're not sure where to sit, it's OK to ask, "Where should I sit?"



- ✂ **Hopefully, your interview will be conducted in a room free of distractions. Listen carefully to the questions the interviewer asks you.**





- ✦ Sometimes interviewers use jargon in their questions without realising and this can be hard to decipher. If you don't understand what you're being asked, don't be afraid to ask for clarity. You could say, "I'm not sure I understand. Could you rephrase the question please?"
- ✦ When you're being asked a question, try to look the interviewer in the eye, or at least look towards their face. This shows you are interested in being at the interview, are listening and take their questions seriously. If you find this difficult, look in their general direction rather than looking down. You don't need to look at them constantly – too much eye contact can be distracting – but aim to do it at least when you're being asked a question.
- ✦ If there are distracting noises around you, for example, building work outside or a noisy meeting next door, ask the interviewer whether it's possible to move to a different room. You could say, "I'm finding it difficult to concentrate with this noise. Is there somewhere quieter we could go?"

- ✦ **Towards the end of the interview, the interviewer will probably ask you if you have any questions for them. You can now ask as many questions as you like about the job.**



Depending on your unique challenges, you might ask:

- ✦ *Will I be able to work from home?*
- ✦ *Will I be sharing an office or desk with other people?*
- ✦ *Is there a quiet space where I will be able to work undistracted?*
- ✦ *Is there a space where I can work with lower lighting?*
- ✦ *Will I be required to work with other people?*
- ✦ *Will I be required to attend social networking events?*
- ✦ *Will I be able to work flexible hours?*



IN A JOB

Congratulations, you've got the job! Here are some top tips to help you settle in and thrive in your new position.

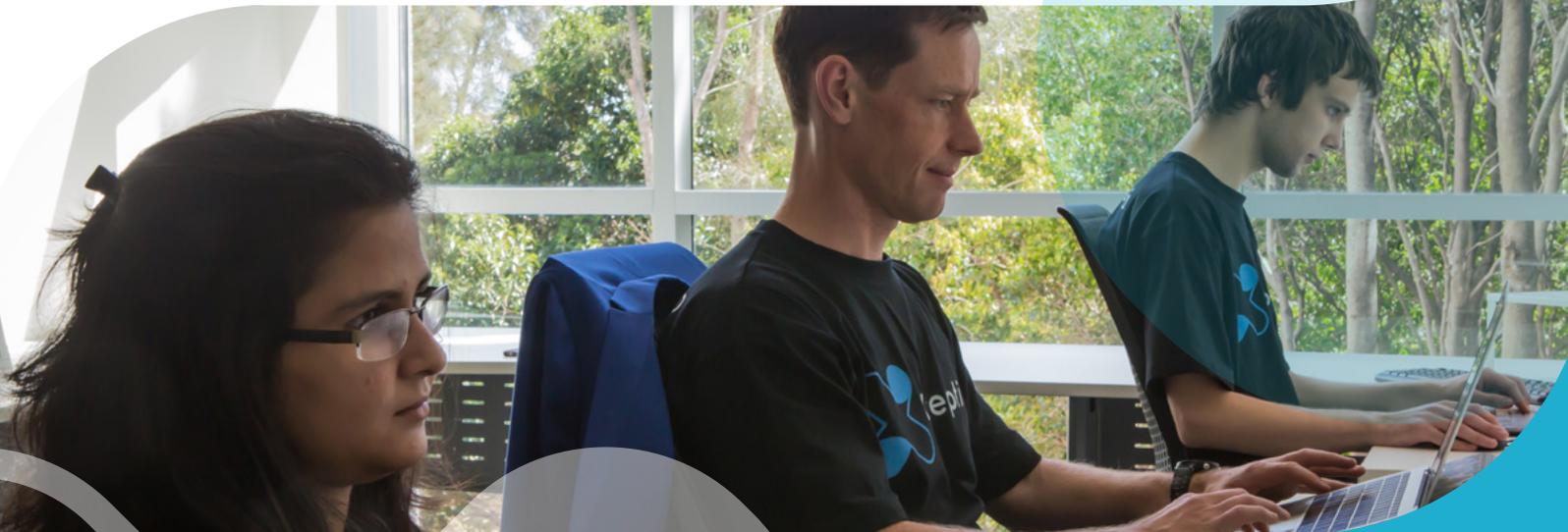
- ✦ Invite your manager to contact [Xceptional](#), as we can work with your employer to help them become more aware of the challenges you face. If you're not in Australia, you could contact [Specialisterne](#), [Auticon](#) or the [DXC Dandelion Program](#), all of which operate in a number of countries.
- ✦ This [workbook](#), recommended above, might also be a helpful guide to pass on to your manager.
- ✦ Make sure you know exactly what to do in any task you're given. You may not always be given clear instructions, so do ask questions. Sometimes you'll need to ask: "Could you explain that again please?" Write down what you're being told to do and repeat it back to your manager to check you've understood their request accurately. If you feel it is easier to communicate directly with your line manager through email or in writing, ask for this to happen. Explain this adjustment will help you to do your work better and allow more time to formulate and clearly respond to requests.

- ✦ **If there is distracting noise, lights or smells, tell your manager what's troubling you and ask if there is a different place you could work where you'll be able to complete your tasks more easily.**





- Alternatively, there may be strategies that will help you focus without having to move desks. Using noise-cancelling headphones or listening to music through headphones can help block out distracting background noise, while setting up a screen around your desk can help block out visual distractions. If you think a strategy like this might help, ask your manager for help.
- You may be required to attend meetings with other colleagues. If several people together in one room can be overwhelming for you, ask if you can participate in the meeting via video or audio conferencing.
- You may be required to attend social-networking events, but you will get prior warning. Check the details. Where and when will the event take place? Who will be there? What will you be doing at the event? If you have any anxiety about attending, talk this through with your manager. There may be others who can attend instead of you.
- If you are finding it a struggle to explain your specific needs to your line manager, you could ask a colleague, friend or family member do it for you, or to come with you for support.
- Occasionally your company may plan some big changes: perhaps an office move, expansion of a team, or a merger with another company. If this is happening, you should get plenty of warning. Ask to meet with your manager to discuss exactly what changes are taking place, how they will affect you, and what strategies might ease the transition.



GOOD LUCK!



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