



Disability Disclosure

Disclosing a disability means sharing information about one's disability for the purpose of receiving accommodations when interviewing for a position, starting a new job, transitioning from another job or unemployment, or retaining a job after acquiring a disability.

Disclosing is a Personal Decision

If you have a disability, it's your personal choice whether or not you share information regarding your disability with an employer. Disclosure is not required, nor is there a standardized form or set of requirements regarding what people must share about their disabilities.

Your Rights as a Job Seeker

If you can navigate the hiring process and perform the essential functions of the job without accommodations, disclosure is typically not necessary. However, in order to receive accommodations or receive other protections under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), you'll want to consider disclosing. Remember, the ADA prohibits job discrimination against people with disabilities and requires employers to provide reasonable accommodation to qualified employees and applicants with disabilities unless such accommodations would pose an undue hardship.

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

Step 1: Determine Need for Disclosure

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

Other considerations include:

- Weighing the advantages and disadvantages of disclosure
- Exploring your feelings about sharing your disability with others
- Researching potential employers' history with disability services



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Step 2: Decide When to Disclose

If you have determined a personal need to disclose a disability, it is recommended that you disclose before an accommodation is needed or an issue arises on the job.

Below are some pros and cons related to disclosure timing for you to consider when making this decision.

Time of Disclosure	Potential Gains	Potential Setbacks	Additional Considerations
On a resume, cover letter, and/or employment application	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Peace of mind for you – you’ve been upfront with the employer. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draws attention to your disability rather than your skills. Employer’s preconceptions may hinder opportunity for an interview. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Generally, disclosure on your resume, cover letter, or employment application isn’t recommended. However, some companies have employment programs specifically for applicants with disabilities; you will likely need to disclose your disability during the application process to be considered for these programs.
When the employer contacts you for an interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Peace of mind for you – you’ve been upfront with the employer. Provides employer with advance notice to secure a needed accommodation for the interview. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May distract the interviewer from your skills and abilities to do the job, so you may not be seriously considered for the position. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disclosure at this stage may be necessary if accommodations are needed during the interview process. For example, if you use a wheelchair, you will want to make sure the interview site is accessible
During the interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opportunity to time the disclosure and to disclose in a positive manner. Opportunity to read employer body language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employer may not feel prepared to respond with appropriate and legal questions. Could cause you undue stress or nervousness prior to the interview. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is recommended to prepare and rehearse your disclosure script in advance (see step 3).
After the interview, before the offer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positive relationship has already been established with the employer. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employer may feel that you have been dishonest in the application process, which may erode trust. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You can address this concern by indicating you needed to learn more about the essential functions of the job prior to disclosing
After the offer, before you accept	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If the offer is rescinded, you may have legal recourse (can take action to remedy a legal difficulty). There is time to get accommodations in place before the job starts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employer may feel that you have been dishonest in the application process, which may erode trust. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You can address this concern by indicating you needed to learn more about the essential functions of the job prior to disclosing
After you start the job	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gives opportunity to establish credibility before disclosure. If disclosure impacts your employment status, you may have legal recourse. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May take time to secure requested accommodations, which could hinder job performance. Employer may believe you have not been honest which may negatively affect your relationship. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Changes in your job responsibilities after you start a position may result in you needing to request accommodations.

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Step 3: Choose How to Disclose

Who to Tell

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

- **Human Resources**
- **Your Supervisor**
- **Employee Assistance Program Counselor**
 - If you're already working, have started experiencing problems, and need assistance determining how and to whom to disclose

Similarly, you may choose to share your disability to those relevant to your interviewing process, such as a recruiter or hiring manager.

Disclosure Script

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

Your disclosure script should include:

- A brief description of your disability
 - Be concise and avoid using clinical or technical terms that can be confusing and intimidating
 - You do not need to thoroughly discuss your diagnosis
- An emphasis on your job-related skills and abilities
 - You want to convey the message that you're a qualified candidate with great skills who also happens to have a disability, rather than focusing solely on your disability
- A description of the functional limitations related to your disability that may interfere with your job performance
- Suggestions for accommodations

Utilize the following guide to prepare your own disclosure script:

- Description of my disability
- The key skills and abilities I possess related to this job are...
- My limitations are...
- The accommodations I need include...

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

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

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

Additional Support

If you have any questions or concerns regarding disability disclosure, or would like to practice disclosing your disability in a mock setting, you can find support in the Office of Career Management by scheduling an appointment through Handshake.

