



Pre-Employment and the ADA: 5 Tips for Navigating a Job Interview

Jul 16, 2019

By Brittany Lambert, MS, CRC

One of the first steps to successful employment is landing an interview. As a person with a disability, you may have questions regarding how to navigate this process. Deciding whether to disclose a disability or request accommodations during this subjective stage can be daunting, but job applicants should be aware of the protection provided by Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Under the ADA, discrimination on the basis of disability is prohibited in all stages of employment, including the pre-employment stage. Let's take a closer look at what that means for job seekers with disabilities.



Am I required to disclose my disability on an application or during a job interview?

Generally, no. You are not obligated to disclose a disability to a potential employer unless you need a reasonable accommodation for the hiring process. For example, if an individual who is deaf requires an interpreter for the interview, they would need to disclose and request this as an accommodation. If an individual with an invisible disability, such as depression, does not anticipate the need for an accommodation in order to complete the interview, they may choose not to disclose at this time. As a general rule, disclosure is only necessary when requesting an accommodation. You may request an accommodation on the job even if you chose not to disclose during pre-employment.

May employers ask me to voluntarily disclose a disability on an application or during an interview?

Employers may ask applicants to voluntarily self-identify as having a disability, but only if it is for the direct benefit of the individual, such as through an affirmative action program. If this is the case, it must be clearly stated that the information is completely voluntary and failure to respond will not result in adverse action against the applicant. The information must also be kept confidential. In order to maintain the applicant's privacy and meet confidentiality guidelines, information pertaining to self-identification must be kept separate from the application.

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JAN will join us as guest presenters for this month's WISE webinar! Register now to learn more about the ADA and reasonable accommodations.

July 24, 2019

choosework.ssa.gov/wise

If I need an accommodation for the interview, may the potential employer ask for medical documentation?

Sometimes. If the need for accommodation is not obvious, the employer may be entitled to limited documentation to substantiate that the applicant has a disability and is in need of reasonable accommodation. Questions should be relevant to the request at hand, meaning that the employer may ask about the disclosed disability and functional limitations, as well as suggested accommodations.

Can the employer propose an alternative accommodation to the one I'm requesting?

Employers have an obligation to provide a reasonable accommodation to qualified individuals with disabilities, absent undue hardship. With that being said, the employer has the right to choose among accommodation options, as long as what they ultimately provide is effective at meeting the individual's medical needs. This means that an employer may not necessarily be obligated to provide your first choice if there is another suitable accommodation that would be sufficient to meet your needs. If the employer suggests an alternative accommodation that you do not feel would be effective, it's important to let the employer know why.

Ticket to Work

Social Security's Ticket to Work program supports career development for people ages 18 through 64 who receive Social Security disability benefits and want to work. The Ticket program is free and voluntary. It helps people with disabilities move toward financial independence and connects them with the services and support they need to succeed in the workforce.

Here is an example:

An administrative assistant who is blind makes a request for a qualified reader as an accommodation. The role of the reader would be to read information from the employee's computer aloud to the employee, thus giving her access to vital information. The employer wonders if screen reading software would be an adequate alternative. The employer acquires a demo of a screen reading program and finds that it is compatible with the programs the employee needs to access. In this case, the screen reader may be an effective alternative to the qualified reader that the employee initially requested.

To learn more about the Ticket program, call the Ticket to Work Help Line at [1-866-968-7842](tel:1-866-968-7842) or [1-866-833-2962](tel:1-866-833-2962) (TTY) Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. ET. Ask a representative to send you a list of service providers or find providers on your own with the Ticket program [Find Help tool](#).

What can I do if I feel I have been discriminated against during pre-employment due to my disability?



The Job Interview: It's More Than What You Say

Sep 25, 2017

If you read our blog post a couple days ago, [It's Your Turn: Questions to Ask During a Job Interview](#), you know what to say during a job interview. In today's post we're talking about what to do if you have an in-person interview. Many recruiters say that how you look and act are just as important as what you say. Consider the following tips



- **Ask for accommodations before the interview.** If you need a reasonable accommodation for your interview, you may choose to **disclose your disability** before the interview. Read our blog about [interview accommodations](#) and learn how to ask for them before an interview.
- **Be on time (or maybe even a little early).** Figure out how you'll get to the interview location—car, taxi, bus, etc. Then estimate how long it will take. You could even do a test run to be sure. Finally, on the day of the interview, plan to arrive 10 minutes early, but also plan for delays. Giving yourself an extra 15-30 minutes may help you arrive feeling calm. If you have a mobility disability, you may consider disclosing your disability to ask about accessible building entrances and elevator access before you get there.
- **Dress for the job.** Most recruiters say you won't go wrong if you dress for the job you want. You can do some research to see what the company's dress culture is. However, if in doubt, a jacket and tie, suit or professional dress for a job in an office setting are always appropriate. For an outdoor job or one in a more physical environment, it's likely that khaki pants and a collared shirt would be more suitable. In all cases, neat, clean and pressed clothing will serve you well.
- **Turn off your phone.** You only have a short time with your interviewer and interruptions will break into your conversation. Respect the interview process by giving it your full attention.
- **Smile and use your body language.** Smiling shows that you're happy to be there. Make eye contact if you can and even laugh at appropriate times. Yes, an interview can be stressful, but when you smile, you relax and appear more confident. Sitting with your arms and legs crossed may look defensive so adopt an "open" posture and avoid fidgeting movements if you're able. If you can't make eye contact, think about other ways to show that you're paying attention, like nodding.
- **Listen.** Give the interviewer your undivided attention. Show that you're listening by your body language, and acknowledge you heard them by responding appropriately.
- **Close the interview.** Closing the interview means asking for the job. Near the end of the interview, the interviewer is likely to ask if you have any other questions. This gives you an opportunity to tell the interviewer you want the job and think it would be a good match for your skills. You can even ask if they have any concerns about your qualifications that you can answer.
- **Be gracious.** Send a thank-you note. Most people send an email thank-you. But if you can, sending a handwritten thank-you by mail will make you stand out from other applicants. If you forgot to mention something during the interview, you can add it to your note. Writing a thank-you note also gives you another opportunity to restate your interest in the position.

During an interview, demonstrate your knowledge, skills and experience to show that you're qualified. Following these tips and showing respect for the interviewer and the hiring process will make a strong and positive impression.

About Ticket to Work

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Learn more

To learn more about the Ticket program, visit www.ssa.gov/work. You can also call the Ticket to Work Help Line at 866-968-7842 or 866-833-2967 (TTY) Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. ET. Ask a representative to send you a list of service providers or find providers on your own with the Ticket program [Find Help](#) tool.

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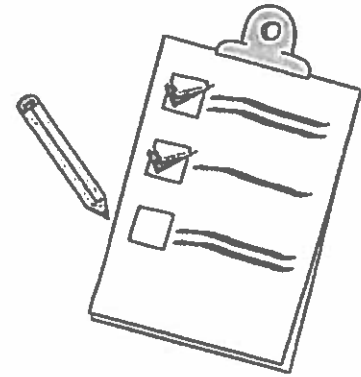
It's Your Turn: Questions to Ask During a Job Interview

Sep 21, 2017

Once you've impressed an employer with your resume and phone interview, you may be asked to meet an employer in person. An in-person interview is an opportunity for a potential employer to get to know you and find out if you'd be a good fit for the company.

Sometimes, we forget that job interviews are a two-way street. Just as the employer wants to make sure they're making a good choice when they hire you, it is just as important for you to be sure that the company is a good match for you. Researching a company before an interview will give you some of that information, but an interview will also help you decide whether you would be happy and productive working there.

The interview is also your opportunity to show interest in the job. Interviewers want to know that you care enough about the position and their company to ask questions. At some point, probably near the end of the interview, an interviewer will ask if you have any questions. However, you don't always have to wait for that opening. Asking questions during an interview can make a discussion more interesting.



Planning your questions

Your questions should focus on understanding what the employer is looking for in an employee and how your skills can help the company. In short, focus on what you can do for them rather than what they can do for you. Stay away from questions about salary and benefits at this point. You will have time to talk about that when they offer you the job.

You don't need a lot of questions. Prepare 4 or 5 that you think will give you more insight about whether the job is right for you. You can even write them down so that you don't forget. Here are a few questions to consider including on your list:

- What do you think are the most important qualities for someone to do their best in this role?
- How would you describe a typical day and week in this position?
- What's the most important thing I can accomplish in the first 60 days?
- What are the biggest challenges facing the company right now?
- What do you like best about working for this company?
- What are the next steps in the hiring process?

Remember, whether you're answering questions or asking them, being prepared is the best way to show you're serious about the job and help you stand out from the crowd.

Disclosure and accommodations

Disclosure of your disability is always your choice. If you need a reasonable accommodation for your interview, you may need to disclose your disability. But if you do not request an accommodation for the interview, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) does not require you to tell the interviewer about your disability or that you may need a reasonable accommodation to perform the job. Learn more about [disclosure on our blog](#) and head to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) website for more [information about the ADA](#).

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Making Interviews Accessible for You

Jul 13, 2017

Throughout July, we're discussing the American with Disabilities Act (ADA). One key feature of the ADA prohibits discrimination against persons with disabilities in employment. That means employers must provide reasonable workplace accommodations for employees with disabilities. However, did you know that employers must also provide accommodations to people with disabilities who are applying for a job? Today, we're talking about accommodations in the interview process.

Requesting a reasonable accommodation

An employer may ask if you need a reasonable accommodation for the interview, or you may need to make the request yourself, either verbally or in written form.

We recommend requesting the accommodation when setting up the interview because the employer may need time to make arrangements. For example, if an employer needs to arrange for a different location for wheelchair accessibility, they may need time to find and reserve a space to hold the interview.

The employer is not required to provide the exact accommodation that you request as long as they provide a suitable accommodation. For example, if you are blind and request that an interview test be read to you, the employer may choose to offer the test on a computer using a screen reader or by audio recording instead as long as it allows you to complete the task.

Under the ADA, employers are not allowed to ask you questions about your disability before you're employed with them. However, an employer who may not be familiar with your disability may ask for more information about it before setting up accommodations. If they do, it is your responsibility to provide accurate information so that the employer can arrange the accommodation.

Interview accommodations

When you apply for an interview for a job, consider the following:

- Review the job posting. Make sure you have the qualifications for it. Employers are required to detail the essential functions of the job to ensure that qualified people with disabilities are not discriminated against.
- Know the questions they may ask. Even though employers are not allowed to ask questions about your disability before you're employed with them, if you're applying for a federal government position or for a job with a federal government contractor, they will ask you if you want to self-identify as a person with a disability under Sections 501 and 503 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.
- Keep in mind that an employer who hires you is allowed to ask medical questions about your ability to complete job functions if these questions are asked of all employees, regardless of disability.
- Think about other accommodations you may need for the interview such as a sign language interpreter, someone to assist with filling out paperwork or that the interview be held somewhere with wheelchair accessibility.
- Ask about tests that you may need to take during the interview process, which may alert you to accommodations you'll need.

Additional Resources

- Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC): [Job Applicants and the Americans with Disabilities Act](#)
- JAN: [Employers' Practical Guide to Reasonable Accommodation Under the Americans with Disabilities Act \(ADA\)](#)
- Employers Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Inclusion (EARN): [Interviews](#)

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The Ticket program is free and voluntary. It helps people with disabilities move toward financial independence and connects them with the services and support they need to succeed in the workforce.

Ticket program service providers, like Employment Networks (EN) and State Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) agencies, may be able to help you request and secure reasonable accommodations for your job interviews. If you've never considered reasonable accommodations, a service provider can help you learn more and find options that can help you succeed in the workplace. They can also guide you through requesting job accommodations as you interview for job positions and transition into the workplace.

Learn more

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