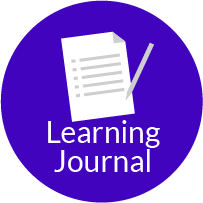


**Introduction**

Welcome to this learning journal. This document should be used in conjunction with the National Autistic Society’s Finding Employment online module. The aim of this journal is to give you a place to record your notes, reflections and decisions based on what you learn. It also contains a number of templates and examples to use when applying for roles.

Throughout the module you will see this icon to indicate that there is a section in this workbook to complete. When you see the icon, it is a signal that you may find it useful to refer to the learning journal to complete a resource. This will enable you to build a valuable resource to help you find, apply for and, where successful, start new jobs.

When using the templates provided, remember you will need to take a copy of the particular section and place the text in new documents ready to send to potential employers. As well as in this document, there will also be downloadable templates for a cover letter and a CV at the relevant point in the module, for you to separately download.

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# Autistic talent

please note there are examples on the following pages.

### Autism Profile – template

Name:

I am autistic/have Asperger syndrome (delete as required) which means I have the following strengths and difficulties:

Strengths:

* ………………………………………………………………………………………………
* ………………………………………………………………………………………………
* ………………………………………………………………………………………………
* ………………………………………………………………………………………………
* ………………………………………………………………………………………………
* ………………………………………………………………………………………………

Difficulties:

* ………………………………………………………………………………………………
* ………………………………………………………………………………………………
* ………………………………………………………………………………………………
* ………………………………………………………………………………………………
* ………………………………………………………………………………………………
* ………………………………………………………………………………………………

I find the following helpful:

* ………………………………………………………………………………………………
* ………………………………………………………………………………………………
* ………………………………………………………………………………………………
* ………………………………………………………………………………………………
* ………………………………………………………………………………………………
* ………………………………………………………………………………………………

### Autism Profile – example

Name: Sarah Morris

I am autistic which means I have the following strengths and difficulties:

Strengths:

* punctual and reliable
* technical analysis
* applying research, theory and legislation
* remembering policies, procedures, codes of practice, data and information that has been read
* high productivity once a task is understood and in a suitable sensory environment
* creative problem solving.

Difficulties:

* becoming exhausted from sustaining the expected social communication
* learning new tasks takes longer
* anxiety – specifically time anxiety and performance anxiety
* I can take a longer period of time to refocus on a task or switch between tasks if interrupted or distracted
* noise sensitivity, especially high tones, alarms, emergency vehicles, squeaks, tapping, crackling sounds
* photo-sensitivity – strip/fluorescent and bright lighting is painful
* tactile sensitivity.

I find the following helpful:

* written communication wherever possible, with clear and direct language
* frequent breaks during long meetings with fast-paced verbal conversations (more than an hour)
* detailed instructions and visual information
* not to rely on my non-verbal body language and eye contact as a gauge of my interest or understanding
* more time, without interrupting, given to construct meaningful replies
* a quiet place to “reset” if I become overwhelmed and more personal space
* headphones are helpful in cutting out background noise so that I can concentrate, as is natural daylight instead of overhead lighting.

# Designing your career path

### Career path – template

Use the template below to design a career path for yourself. You might find it helpful to break this down into steps. There are two options: short term or long term. For short term, think about steps to improve your career in the next week, two weeks, four weeks, two months, four months, six months. For the long term, consider one month, three months, six months, one year, three years, five years.

Your career path will look different depending on where you are in your career. You may need to start with a training course or volunteer position if you have never worked before. If you are currently in work but looking to develop in your role, you may need to take additional qualifications or responsibilities to be able to progress.

### Strengths, skills and qualifications journey

Use the table below to list the strengths, skills and qualifications you would need to gain in order to work in your desired profession. The example below is for someone who wants to start working in an administration role.   
  
Note the colour code:  
red = don’t have  
yellow = working towards  
**green = already have**.

Complete the table below by identifying the strengths, skills and qualificationsthat you would need in order to work in your ideal career. The boxes have been highlighted for you using the colour code above. You may not need to fill all the boxes, or you may need to add in extra boxes depending on the role.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Strengths** | **Skills** | **Qualifications** | **Year Qualification**  **Acquired** |
| Good listener | Good IT skills including Microsoft Word, Excel and PowerPoint. Oracle Database experience | GCSEs: English Literature (A), English Language (C), Maths (A), French (A), Geography (B), History (B) | 2015 |
| Attention to detail | Database administration |  |  |
| Creative thinker | Financial administration including payroll |  |  |
| Quick problem solver | Booking travel |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |

### Strengths, skills and qualifications table

Use the table below to list the strengths, skills and qualifications that you already have – both work related and not work related. You can use this to create a general list that you can refer to. You may also wish to use this to identify strengths, skills or qualifications for a specific job.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Strengths** | **Skills** | **Qualification** | **Year Qualification Acquired** |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |

### Description of characteristics

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **NO** | **YES** |
| I find it difficult to regulate the tone and volume of  my voice. |  |  |
| I need extra personal space. |  |  |
| I find some smells overwhelming. |  |  |
| I am sensitive to bright artificial light. |  |  |
| I find it difficult to imagine a situation that I haven’t  been in. |  |  |
| I am good at creative problem solving. |  |  |
| I need extra time to switch between tasks and refocus. |  |  |
| I am morally motivated and caring. |  |  |
| I am very task focused at work. |  |  |
| I am resourceful. |  |  |
| I have specialist knowledge and skills. |  |  |
| I find it difficult to make small talk. |  |  |
| I have a good memory for factual information. |  |  |
| I pay attention to detail. |  |  |
| I have different eye contact and body language than expected. |  |  |
| I might not interpret non-verbal communication accurately. |  |  |
| I need some extra time and detail to plan and prepare  for changes. |  |  |
| I am honest and communicate in a direct way. |  |  |
| I may not easily understand unwritten rules. |  |  |
| I find it difficult to cut-out background noise. |  |  |
| I am punctual and reliable. |  |  |
| I enjoy routine. |  |  |
| I prefer written information and task instruction. |  |  |
| I need some extra time to process conversations  and information. |  |  |

# Job descriptions

### Job advertisement - example

Below is an example job advert – you will also find an example CV and cover letter that are designed to go with this example in the resources section.

In the following example, the parts of the role that have been highlighted in yellow relate to the key roles and responsibilities. These are the parts you should focus on when you are writing a cover letter.

When you are going through a job advert, you may wish to use a highlighter like this to help you pick out the key information you need to include in your cover letter. The key sections to focus on have been highlighted in blue. These will normally be the key responsibilities and job summary – although different terms may be used by different organisations.

When you are going through a job advert, you may find it helpful to highlight the areas that you know you have experience in. As you can see, not every area is highlighted but the person has still decided they have enough experience to apply for the position.

You will notice that there are ‘essential’ and ‘desirable’ sections in the person specification. Many people can be put off applying if they don’t meet all of these requirements specifically. However, it can still be worth applying if you meet most of them – especially those listed as ‘essential’. If you aren’t sure, speak to someone else about whether they think you would be a good match for the role.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Office Administrator** | | | | | |
| **Division / Function:** Front of House Administrator | | | | **Reports to:** Office Manager | |
| **Why** | Job summary:   * first line of contact for visitors and clients * supports office managers with office procedures and duties | | | | |
| **What** | Key responsibilities   * communicates with relevant agencies to produce itineraries for business directors and employee events * arranges meetings by scheduling appropriate meeting times, booking rooms, and planning refreshments * manages correspondence by answering emails and sorting mail * assists in planning and arranging events, including organising catering * handles expenses and billing cycles * manages reception area and looks after visitors * answers phone calls and transfers them as necessary * drafts, formats, and prints relevant documents * maintains stock lists and orders office supplies as needed * manages staff expense requests | | | | |
| **Competencies** | **I am committed to making a difference**  I commit to the company’s objectives and values. I display a positive approach in the way I work and contribute to the wider needs of the organisation and its stakeholders either directly or indirectly. At work I overcome difficulties, setbacks and pressure, to get things done because I understand the impact. I recognise and encourage commitment in others. | | | | |
| I cooperate with others to work safely.  I understand the health and safety risks associated with my job and work responsibly with others to reduce them. I have a positive attitude to safety that causes me to care about the wellbeing of others as well as myself. | | | | |
| **Person specification** | | | | | |
| Criteria | | | Essential | | Desirable |
| Skills/Abilities/Knowledge | | | | | |
| * strong attention to detail * ability to work without supervision * excellent time management skills * ability to analyse data * customer service skills * technical skills * proficiency with Microsoft Office programs * strong prioritisation and organisation skills * ability to handle confidential information * strong record keeping skills * presentation skills * processing and filing | | | X X X  X  X X X | | X  X X X X |
| Experience | | | | | |
| * prior office management experience * report writing experience * experience of annual planning * basic budget handling * managing website and social media functions * managing employee holiday requests * purchase ordering and invoicing | | | X | | X X X  X X X |
| Education & Certification | | | | | |
| * maths and English GCSE grade C or above * NVQ level 2 or equivalent in literacy or numeracy * Level 2 diploma in Business or Administration | | | X | | X X |
| **Position** | | Salary Band: | | Range: | |
|  | | Date Reviewed: | |

# Applying for roles

### Creating a great cover letter

It is important that you adapt your cover letter each time you apply for a role. Your cover letter is what helps ‘sell’ your skills to the employer and gives you a chance to expand on the experience you detail in your CV.  
  
You need to tailor each cover letter to the specific job and company you are applying for. Use the job description for the role (this can normally be found on the job advert) and concentrate on matching your experience with the criteria and person specification outlined for the role. In the example below, the highlighted sections show how we have matched our skills and experiences to the criteria and person specification.

A cover letter should contain the following basic information:

1. What role you are applying for.
2. How your skills and experiences are relevant to the role.
3. How your skills and experiences benefit the employer.
4. Why the role interests you.

Cover letters should be written like a formal business letter, even if you are emailing it to the employer. If you are sending your cover letter by email, you may wish to send it as an attached document – this will make it easier for the recruiter to save on their system. Make sure you name your file for your cover letter in a way that makes it easy to identify eg “Jane Smith FSK and Sons Cover Letter”

### Cover letter – example

FSK and Sons

Northampton

NN4 7LQ

Re: Office Administrator Position

Dear Mrs Black

I am interested in applying for the current vacancy you have for an office administrator, advertised on your website.

In my current role as a receptionist administrator at Saxons Solicitors, I am responsible for the day to day management of the front of house desk. This includes liaising with customers who visit the office as well as supporting the underwriters within the company and ensuring that their customer records are up to date. I update vendors and purchasers on the progress of their sale by email, telephone and in written format. I am responsible for handling customers’ confidential information, I have excellent time management skills and am proficient in Excel and Microsoft Office.

I am currently looking to move into a more challenging role, so I can progress in my career. I feel that that I would be able to use the skills and experience I have developed at Saxons Solicitors to provide you with a high-quality administrator who will support the team and ensure that the office is run to the best possible standard.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Jane Smith

37 Fairmount lane

Northampton

NN4 7LQ

01234567890

[j.smith@mail.com](mailto:j.smith@mail.com)

### Cover letter – template

Below is a template cover letter for you to use. The sections in brackets ( ) are the sections you should make sure you edit to match your own skills and experience. This is a short cover letter example and you may need to provide additional details to show that you have the experience they are looking for. You don’t need to focus on showing you can do all aspects of the job but giving enough information on the “essential” criteria.

(Address of company)

Dear (Name)

I am interested in applying for the current vacancy you have for a (job title; include job reference if stated on advert), advertised (insert where you saw this).

In my current role as (job title), I am responsible for (insert relevant experience relating to job advert). I have excellent (include skills and qualifications).

I am currently looking to (make a step up into a more challenging role with a reputable company which can offer career growth).

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

(Name)

(Address)

(Email address)

### Cover letter – checklist

**Contact information**

* Name of person or company you are applying to.
* Your contact name, address, telephone number and email.

**Details**

* Ensure you state which role you are applying for, include reference number if one is stated.
* State where you found the job.
* Emphasise your experience and skills match with the job description.
* Explain why you are interested in applying for the role.

**Closing**

* Include a personal ending such as “I look forward to hearing from you”.
* Sign off the letter with “Yours sincerely” if going to a named person,   
  otherwise use “Yours faithfully”.
* If sending by post, include a hand-written signature.

**Format**

* Font size of text isn’t below 10pts or exceeding 15pts.
* The letter does not exceed one side of A4 paper.
* Spelling, grammar and punctuation have been checked.
* A second person has proofread the letter before sending it with your application.

### CV – example

Jane Smith  
37 Fairmount Lane  
Northampton  
NN4 7LQ  
07986543221

[**Jane.smith@mail.com**](mailto:Jane.smith@mail.com)

**PERSONAL PROFILE**

A pleasant, professional and proficient administrator. I am an effective team member who has the ability to meet deadlines and ensure that the highest standards of office organisation are maintained at all times. I have a methodical and thorough approach to work. I am currently looking to work for a company that offers excellent opportunities for personal and professional development.

**EDUCATION**

Saint Peters Academy (September 2009 - July 2015)

GCSE English Literature (A), English Language (C), Maths (A), French (A), Geography (B), History (B)

**EMPLOYMENT HISTORY**

Administrator – Saxons Solicitors (January 2016 – present)

Responsible for handling the day-to-day administrative tasks of the office.  
  
**Key duties and responsibilities:**

* supporting underwriters with sale property completions
* liaising with vendors and purchasers to update on sales
* carrying out filing whilst retaining a good level of accuracy and efficiency
* maintaining an effective administration system
* rapidly responding to and resolving any underwriter administrative problems
* managing related legislative, regulatory and compliance issues
* running the company reception area
* coordinating office procedures
* ordering and maintaining office stationery and equipment
* typing up correspondence including letters, faxes, minutes and memos
* booking travel and accommodation for senior managers
* updating office manuals and brochures
* managing electronic and printed files.

**Trainee Administrator - Bonds Finance (September 2014-January 2016)**

Working as part of a team to support all administrative duties within the finance office.

**Key duties and responsibilities:**

* sorting and distributing incoming post
* processing staff payrolls, keeping account of finances and updating staff files
* receiving and redirecting telephone calls
* raising and progressing purchase orders
* offering a warm and friendly welcome to any visitors.

**Cashier- James News Store (January 2014-September 2014)**

**Key duties and responsibilities:**

* meeting and greeting of customers
* serve customers in a timely manner
* assist with orders
* attend staff meetings
* keep up to date with any policies
* accurately file to ensure easy retrieval.

**INTERESTS**

I have varied interests. I enjoy reading and am currently writing my own book. I have a passion for cycling and running, and am part of a running club’s committee helping with organising run meets and social events**.**

### CV – template

(Your name)

(Your address)

(Your telephone number)

(Your email address)

**PERSONAL PROFILE**

(Your personal profile)

**EDUCATION**

(Your education history)

**EMPLOYMENT HISTORY**

(role title) – (company name) (Start date – end date)

(main responsibility)

Key duties and responsibilities:

* (key responsibilities list)
* etc.

(role title) – (company name) (Start date – end date)

Trainee Administrator - Bonds Finance (September 2014 - January 2016)

(main responsibility)

Key duties and responsibilities:

* (key responsibilities list)
* etc.

**INTERESTS**

(your interests)

### CV – checklist

CV stands for curriculum vitae. It is a document that gives potential employers an outline of your previous work experience and the skills and qualifications that you have to offer.

Why you need a CV

A professional-looking and up-to-date CV is a vital tool in your job search. There are two ways you can use your CV:

* You can send it to an employer in response to a job advert which asks for CVs to be submitted instead of application forms.
* You can send it to employers you’d like to work for even if they haven’t requested it (this is called sending a CV out ‘speculatively’) in case they are looking for someone with your skills either now or in the future.

What to include

Your CV should include:

* your name
* your contact details
* your qualifications
* your employment history, including voluntary work and work experience.

Tips for designing your CV

* Keep your CV short and to the point. A one-page CV is fine for anyone who has less than three years’ work experience. Two pages is the maximum length for people with more work history.
* Ensure your name and contact details are clearly marked at the top of the first page.
* Include a short “profile” – four or five lines in length - description of what sort of role you are looking for and what your skills are.
* Type your CV on a computer using a simple, easy-to-read font such as Arial size 12. Avoid using borders or ‘clip art’ pictures, as these will be distracting to an employer and look unprofessional.

* Use bullet points to list the duties in your previous roles – this is easier to read than paragraphs of information.
* Put job titles in “**bold**” font so they can be easily read.
* Your education and work history should start with the most recent information and work backwards.
* It’s not necessary to include exact dates – the month and the year is enough.
* Remember to include voluntary and unpaid work.
* Be honest but positive – emphasise your strengths and abilities and describe your experiences in a positive way.
* Ask someone else to read it and check for any spelling errors.
* When you send your CV to an employer you should always include a cover letter (which is sometimes called a covering letter) with it.

Things to avoid

When writing your CV:

* Don’t include your age, date of birth, gender or marital status.
* Don’t disclose your disability on your CV.
* Don’t list more than four hobbies or interests.
* Don’t include a photo.
* Don’t mention any sort of failure.

# Interviews

Below are some examples of typical questions that you may be asked at an interview - this template is designed to help you script (write down) your responses in advance. As a reasonable adjustment you may ask to be able to refer to your written document if needed. Tips on how to answer each question are given below.

**1. Tell me about yourself.**

Focus on two or three relevant points of work history from your CV including any pieces of work that you’ve really enjoyed or performed well at. Finish by saying how you would like your career to develop, relating it to the position you are applying for. Focus on giving information that’s relevant to the role and stay focused on answering the question.

**2. Tell me about your strengths.**

Choose three things that you do well in work and give an example of each one relating to your previous work experience. For example, if you are good at maths then you may have an example of where you developed a spreadsheet or performed some accountancy calculations that saved your employer time or money.

**3. Tell me about any weakness that you have.**

Focus on one aspect of your work that needs improving, for example you may need further training in a piece of software that you will need to use or in customer service. Don’t be overly negative and don’t criticise yourself – some people can find that they want to be “too” honest during this question and list all of their flaws. If you know you have a tendency to be self-critical, ask someone to help you find a good answer to this question before you have an interview.

**4. Why are you right for this role/why should I offer you this job?**

Briefly mention any specific qualifications that you have for this role, but also follow-up with any personal qualities that make you a good employee or particularly suitable for the role such as being hard-working, detail focused and accurate etc. Finish by saying that you are keen to develop your skills further in any areas that need attention.

**5. Where do you see yourself five years from now/what are your ambitions/how would you like your career to progress?**

Use an example of being promoted to a higher role within the organisation that you are applying for, or explain how you would like to develop your skills further with training and experience. If you see yourself working in a different sector or organisation, try to think of a way to answer this question that doesn’t make you sound like you’re uninterested in the position you’re applying for.

**6. Why do you want to work here?**

Do not talk negatively about your current employer even if you have a good reason to want to leave them. Research the company you are applying for a role with and decide why they might be a good employer for you to work for, for example, they may offer a good salary with additional benefits such as healthcare. Other examples include that they may have a good reputation as a leader in the industry you are working in or they may be very conveniently located with good offices and staff facilities.

**7. What is your expected salary?**

You may not always be asked this, or it may be stated clearly on the application what salary you can expect. If you are asked this question then it’s ok to give a range rather than a fixed amount, and base your answer on researching other similar roles so that you know what the average pay rate is for the job that you are applying for. Most jobs will have a salary scale attached to the job advert.

**8. What makes a good team player/tell me why you would fit in well here/how do you work as part of a team?**

Talk about an example from your past work experience where you have been able to cooperate well with other team members, for example, you may have been able to help them with their work when you were asked. If you know you struggle to talk to people and build conversational relationships with colleagues, focus on the way that you contribute to a team by your hard work or your dedication to helping others achieve their goals.

**9. Is there anything that you would like to ask me/do you have any questions?**

Prepare one question in advance for example, you may ask for clarification about something that your interviewer has talked about in the interview such as an aspect of the role, or you may just simply ask for feedback on your interview.

### Reasonable adjustments at interview

“I’ve been to interviews where I haven’t disclosed that I am autistic. I got   
feedback like, ‘We didn’t get a sense of who you really are as a person.   
You didn’t smile at us.’”

If you tell the employer that you are autistic, reasonable adjustments can be made to the interview process. Reasonable adjustments are adaptations that are made for people with disabilities in the workplace. You will need to tell the employer which reasonable adjustments you need.

**Adjustments before the interview**

The following are things that you could ask an employer to do before your interview.

* Provide clear information on what will be expected at the interview, how long the interview will take, what needs to be brought along and how to get to the interview.
* Describe any tasks that you will have to do and the types of questions that may be asked.

**Adjustments during the interview**

You could ask the people interviewing you to make the following adjustments.

* Ask for clear and specific questions such as, ‘Describe your work history for the last three years’, rather than, ‘Tell me about yourself.’
* Avoid hypothetical (‘What if?’) questions such as, ‘How do you think you’ll cope with working if there are lots of interruptions?’ A better question would be, ‘Think back to your last job. Can you tell us how you coped with your work when people interrupted you?’
* Prompt you and ask additional questions to get all the information they need.
* Tell you clearly if an answer is too long. A polite but direct way of the interviewer doing this would be to say, ‘Thank you, you’ve told us enough about that now and I’d like to ask you another question.’
* To be aware that your body language and eye contact may be different from other candidates and they should not interpret this as a lack of interest in the job.

**Other reasonable adjustments**  
If you feel it would help you, you could ask for a support worker to attend the interview with you, to act as a facilitator or ‘translator’.   
  
They could help with:

* rephrasing unclear questions
* giving context to a question
* prompting to give more information.

You could suggest to an employer that a work trial or placement evaluation would be a more suitable method than an interview to assess whether you have the skills to do the role. Some employers have found that a placement evaluation – a period of work experience – is a better way of assessing individuals’ talents than a formal interview.

### Disclosure at interview tips

Choosing to tell your employer that you’re autistic is the first step in the formal process of “disclosure” – doing this helps your employer to make appropriate reasonable adjustments to support you to succeed in your role and also ensures that you are protected under equality legislation. One way to do this is by disclosing at interview.

The following is a step-by-step guide to help you disclose your diagnosis and will help you to make decisions about the support that may benefit you.

1. **Choose when to tell them** – would you rather let them know at the start of the interview or at the end? Letting them know at the start will allow you to request adjustments (you may even wish to email in advance to make sure adjustments can be met). Letting them know at the end may feel more comfortable if you feel anxious about sharing your diagnosis.
2. **Bring a written document with you** – this should explain what autism is, how it will help you to do the job and the areas you may need support with. Try to make this document as positive and proactive as possible. It should be no longer than one side of A4 printed in size 12 font.
3. **Don’t expect the interviewer to know what autism is** – although most people have heard of autism, they don’t know exactly what it is. Most people may have a connection through a friend, or family member having an autistic child, and may not have met an autistic peer before.
4. **Remember you’re protected by equality legislation** – which means that you can’t be discriminated against at interview if you disclose your diagnosis. This is a really important thing to remember if you feel anxious about disclosing. By disclosing in a positive and proactive way, you are also showing your employer that you are a creative and proactive thinker and ensuring that they know exactly how to support you.
5. **Keep it relevant** - only share what your employer needs to know about your diagnosis. You don’t need to share difficulties you experienced as a child, issues in your personal life or other ways that your autism affects you that don’t relate to work. By keeping your disclosure relevant, positive and proactive, you can focus on showing how being autistic will be an asset for the company and “selling yourself” for the role.

Some things to consider for your profile:

* Why does being autistic make you a good fit for the role?
* What are your sensory needs? How could your employer meet these?
* How would you commute to work? Would you need amended hours or flexible working?
* What support would you need from your manager to help you succeed (eg clear written instructions for tasks)?
* What are some differences you experience as an autistic person that it would be helpful for your manager to know (eg not making eye contact doesn’t mean you’re not listening, or using a monotone voice doesn’t mean you’re not interested)?

# Disclosure

### Employee Disclosure and Reasonable Adjustment Agreement – template

Employee name:

Manager name:

Date of meeting:

|  |
| --- |
| **Disclosure Agreement** |
| I (employee name) agree to the following disclosure being made on my behalf by (manager name)  Full disclosure (disclosure to immediate team and any other relevant internal colleagues)  Partial disclosure (disclosure only to named colleagues – see below)  No disclosure (no disclosure to colleagues. Disclosure with agreement to any future managers)  Partial Disclosure List (you may not need to use all five bullet points):  I (employee name) give agreement for a disclosure to be made on my behalf by (managers name) to:  1.  2.  3.  4.  5.  (Add more as required) |

Suggested disclosure wording (this template should be edited to fully reflect the needs of the employee).

(Employee name) has asked me to let you know that they have a diagnosis of (autism/Asperger syndrome). They have asked me to share this information with you so that you are able to communicate effectively with them allowing them the chance to demonstrate their skills and strengths.

Some useful tips for communicating with autistic colleagues include:

* Be clear and concise.
* Give specific instructions eg Please finish the report by 4pm today and send it back to me.
* Be aware of sensory issues (light/sound/smell).
* Send requests for catch ups via email instead of interrupting mid-task at their desk.

This disclosure has been made in confidence and does not automatically indicate that other team members have been made aware. Please treat this information with discretion.

|  |
| --- |
| **Reasonable Adjustments Agreement** |
| The following reasonable adjustments have been identified for (employee name). Funding for reasonable adjustments can be sought from Access to Work.   * Noise cancelling headphones * Desk adjustment   + change of location (recommended: back to wall by a window)   + panels/desk dividers   + screen filters   + adjusted lighting * Training course   + manager   + employee   + colleagues (as per above disclosure agreement) * Regular catch up meetings with manager * Brain in Hand assistive technology * Workplace Support Adviser * Amended working hours * Working from home (X) days per week * Workplace mentor * Training adjustments (Please detail below) * Weekly timetable (temporary/ongoing) * Temporary reduced workload * Assistance with work planning * Anxiety communication system between employee and manager * Scheduled breaks including morning and afternoon * Regular use of meeting rooms for working * Adjusted hours * Change management plan * Organisational skills assistant (Please detail below) * Phased transition to alternative role * Additional reasonable adjustments as detailed below:   1.  2.  3.  4.  5. |
| The below timetable has been agreed between (employee name) and (manager name) for the implementation of the above adjustments  Adjustment:    Next steps:  Timeframe:  Adjustment:  Next steps:  Timeframe:  Adjustment:  Next steps:  Timeframe:  Adjustment:  Next steps:  Timeframe:  Adjustment:  Next steps:  Timeframe: |
| Training needs  Course title:  Next steps:  Course title:  Next steps:  Course title:  Next steps: |
| KPI and targets:  Target:  Evidence for completion:  Adjustments required to complete:  Target:  Evidence for completion:  Adjustments required to complete:  Target:  Evidence for completion:  Adjustments required to complete: |

The above disclosure and adjustment plan was agreed on (date) by (employee name) and (manager’s name). It will next be reviewed on (date – three months).

Employee signature:

Print name:

Manager signature:

Print name:

### Employee Disclosure and Reasonable Adjustment Agreement – example

Employee name: Jenny Smith

Manager name: Bob White

Date of meeting: 10/06/18

|  |
| --- |
| **Disclosure Agreement** |
| I, Jenny Smith, agree to the following disclosure being made on my behalf by (manager name)   * Full disclosure (disclosure to immediate team and any other relevant internal colleagues) * Partial disclosure (disclosure only to named colleagues – see below) * No disclosure (no disclosure to colleagues. Disclosure with agreement to any future managers)   Partial disclosure list:  I (employee name) give agreement for a disclosure to be made on my behalf by (manager’s name) to:  1.  2.  3.  4.  5.  (Add more as required) |

Suggested disclosure wording (this template should be edited to fully reflect the needs of the employee).

Jenny Smith has asked me to let you know that she has a diagnosis of autism. She has asked me to share this information with you so that you can be aware of the need for clear communication when working with her.

**Some useful tips for communicating with autistic colleagues include:**

* Be clear and concise.
* Give specific instructions eg Please finish the report by 4pm today and send it back to me.
* Be aware of sensory issues (light/sound/smell).
* Send requests for catch ups via email instead of interrupting mid task at their desk.

This disclosure has been made in confidence and does not automatically indicate that other team members have been made aware. Please treat this information with discretion.

|  |
| --- |
| **Reasonable Adjustments Agreement** |
| The following reasonable adjustments have been identified for Jenny Smith. Funding for reasonable adjustments can be sought from Access to Work.   * Noise cancelling headphones * Desk adjustment   + Change of location (recommended: back to wall by a window)   + Panels/desk dividers   + Screen filters   + Adjusted lighting * Training course   + Manager   + Employee   + Colleagues (as per above disclosure agreement) * Regular catch up meetings with manager * Brain in Hand assistive technology * Workplace Support Adviser * Amended working hours * Working from home two days per week * Workplace mentor * Training adjustments (Please detail below) * Weekly timetable (ongoing) * Temporary reduced workload * Assistance with work planning * Anxiety communication system between employee and manager * Scheduled breaks including morning and afternoon * Regular use of meeting rooms for working * Adjusted hours * Change management plan * Organisational skills assistant (Please detail below) * Phased transition to alternative role * Additional reasonable adjustments as detailed below:   1.  2.  3.  4.  5. |
| The below timetable has been agreed between Jenny Smith and Bob White for the implementation of the above adjustments.  Adjustment: Noise cancelling headphones    Next steps: Agree funding with Access to Work for Bose Quiet Comfort 25. Order online and send over invoice.  Timeframe: By end of month one  Adjustment: Desk adjustment  Next steps: Swap desks with Alan to be located by the window and have overhead lighting removed. Replace with desk lamps.  Timeframe: By end of month one  Adjustment: Training course  Next steps: Book National Autistic Society training for managers, colleagues and employee.  Timeframe: By end of month three  Adjustment: Working from home  Next steps: Jenny to start working from home two days per week. Assess after two months for effectiveness.    Timeframe: Immediately  Adjustment: Weekly timetable/catch ups/regular breaks  Next steps: Schedule into calendar.    Timeframe: Immediately |
| Training needs  Course title:  Next steps:  Course title:  Next steps:  Course title:  Next steps:  Course title:  Next steps: |
| KPI and targets:  Target:  Evidence for completion:  Adjustments required to complete:  Target:  Evidence for completion:  Adjustments required to complete: |

The above disclosure and adjustment plan was agreed on (date) by (employee name) and (manager’s name). It will next be reviewed on (date – three months)

Employee signature: Jenny Smith

Print name:

Manager signature: Bob White

Print name

### Guidance for managers of autistic employees

The workplace is a complex environment and is likely to have its own unspoken rules about appropriate behaviours, language and dress code.

Below is some guidance that you may find useful when working with an autistic employee. Remember that every autistic person is different, and that they may not require all of the following adjustments.

**Guidelines for starting work**

You can use the following checklist to ensure you have provided all the relevant Information:

* what time to arrive at work
* what time to start working
* where to sit/which desk to use
* when the morning and afternoon breaks take place
* when lunch is
* where to make a cup of tea, coffee or other refreshments and eat lunch
* where the toilets are
* what time to start packing up for the day
* what time to leave work.

**Dress code**It is important to clearly define the dress code in your workplace. Below are some things to consider:

* Avoid phrases like ‘smart casual’.
* Give clear examples, such as ‘In this office we don’t expect you to wear a suit but you should wear smart, clean, trousers, shoes and a shirt’.
* It may be helpful to show the person a picture of the expected dress style to give examples of what is expected.
* Be clear and direct if someone isn’t dressed appropriately and explain what they need to change.

**Unwritten rules**

There are many unwritten rules in society and this is often reflected in the workplace. Unwritten rules can be loosely defined as rules or behaviour which an individual is expected to follow despite the fact that the expectations are not made explicit. It is important to clarify as many of the unwritten rules as soon as possible, on the first day if possible.   
  
The following table has common unwritten rules that you may find useful:

* when to make tea and coffee
* what is the tea, coffee and milk rule
* are any other items in the fridge for everybody to use
* if a team has cake to share, the rule is you take one piece
* when to offer to make colleagues a cup of tea
* internet for personal use
* how often you can take a break
* conversations with colleagues in the office.

**Team structure**

It is useful to clarify the immediate team and responsibilities in the form of a diagram and clearly state each person’s role and where they sit in the office.

**Managing sensory sensitivities**

Autistic people may also experience [over- or under-sensitivity](https://www.autism.org.uk/about/behaviour/sensory-world.aspx) to sounds, touch, tastes, smells, light, colours, temperatures or pain. For example, they may find certain background sounds, which other people ignore or block out, unbearably loud or distracting

This can include:

* light
* sound
* touch
* taste
* temperature.

All of the above can have a significant impact on a person’s daily activities, productivity and anxiety in the workplace. Here are some simple things to consider.

**Desk position:** Where a person sits in an office can have an impact on a person’s performance and anxiety levels. It is important to identify with your employee if they have any sensory sensitivities and plan the desk space accordingly. An autistic person should never be expected to ‘hot- desk’.

**Equipment:** Equipment can be used to manage sensory sensitivities and so help increase performance or decrease anxiety. For example, allowing a person to wear headphones, have desk dividers or computer screen filters.

**Quiet space**: It is important that a quiet space in, or near the office, is identified for the autistic person to use when they become anxious, due to sensory sensitivities. Speak to your office manager for guidance on which rooms can be used.

**Clarifying the role and expectations**  
It is important that as many aspects of the role as possible are clarified.

You may want to use the following checklist to ensure you have provided all the relevant information.

* Is there a clear job description?
* What are the specific daily targets?
* What are the specific weekly targets?
* Who to ask for help?
* When are the weekly meetings scheduled?
* When are team meetings scheduled?

**Giving instructions**Unclear and indirect communication is often the main barrier for autistic people in the workplace. Here are some simple things to consider.

**Do**

* Use the employee’s preferred method of commination. For many people this may be via written communication, such as email.
* Use language which is clear and direct; do so both verbally and when writing.
* Use direct communication such as ‘I need you to complete this task by 1pm. If you are not going to be able to complete the task by that time, then let me know.’

**Do not**

* Rely on non-verbal gestures or hints to get a message across.
* Use indirect communication such as ‘Can you do this?’
* Rely on verbal instructions alone – always follow up with written instructions in bullet point format.

**Supporting documents and templates**Autistic people can often have difficulty with one or more aspects of executive function. Executive function is the set of mental processes that helps connect past experience with present action. People use it to perform activities such as planning, organising, strategising, paying attention to and remembering details, and managing themselves in time and space. Here are some simple strategies to consider:

**Scripts**

Scripts can be developed for situations in the workplace. For example, when answering the phone, greeting customers or asking questions. The best way to do this is think of short phrases or sentences that the person can write down to use in situations they are unsure about.

**Working file and visual reminders**A working file could be developed which will help create independence. This should have details of:

* common tasks with clear procedures
* example screen shots could be used for any tasks that involve using the computer
* photographs/video clips of each stage of a task.

**Help to organise**There are many tools you can use to help you stay organised at work. Here are some simple things to consider:

* Outlook calendars
* smartphones
* watch alarms
* clear ‘to do’ lists with clear deadlines
* guidance on how and when to move deadlines.

**Timetable**  
A timetable could be developed clearly outlining the following:

* specific times to do certain activities
* structured breaks and lunch
* supervisor and management meetings
* time to complete new tasks (see multitasking below).

**Assistive technology**You may find it useful to let your employee know about assistive technologies. These are often cheap and offer simple ways to develop workplace strategies and create independence.

**Building skills**

**Training**

All training for the employee when they start should be practical and done on a one-to-one basis in an environment that is suitable (does not cause anxiety due to sensory sensitivities). When an employee is attending other training courses, the following adjustments may be considered:

* working through course materials on a one-to-one basis before the course takes place - this will allow your employee to attend the course, follow what is being said, and to participate in the group work activities.
* working through the course materials on a one-to-one basis after the course - this will allow your employee to review the materials and clarify any areas of uncertainty.

**Learning new tasks**

When supporting your employee to learn a new task, some of the following adjustments may be useful:

* Talk through the task in a quiet environment. Break the task down into stages and explain each stage. In addition, explain the purpose of the task and what the output will be used for. This will enable your employee to understand why each stage is necessary.
* Allow your employee to shadow or ‘buddy-up’ with an allocated person to initially observe how the ‘buddy’ completes the task, and then let them carry out each stage of the task with increasing independence.
* Offer the employee the opportunity to ask questions to build their knowledge and understanding of the processes and procedures involved. Materials such as checklists, flow charts and problem-solving ‘prompt sheets’ should be developed to help the employee to learn and remember any procedures involved, and to assist them in completing tasks independently.

**Support and supervision**

It is important to structure-in specific times each week/fortnight to meet with your employee. To get the most out of these meetings, here are some simple things to consider:

* frequency: it would be beneficial for meetings to be scheduled at a set time and day each week.
* format for the meetings: the meetings should follow a clear and consistent format. This should be sent as an agenda in the meeting invitation. An example agenda is as follows:
* feedback from manager
* feedback from employee
* planning of timetable for next week
* reporting any upcoming changes or events
* location of meetings: meetings should take place in a quiet environment, with low background noise levels and minimal opportunities for interruptions.

Some autistic people can find it difficult themselves to identify the areas that they need support with and so may benefit from prompting by their manager. Regular catch ups also act as a good opportunity to discuss any anxieties that your employee may be having and to develop strategies for these.

#### Creating an induction lan

When working with autistic employees, it is important that information is given in their preferred format (often written) and that the stages involved in the plan are clearly shared with the employee.

Creating an induction plan for the first three months is an important part of supporting an autistic employee who is starting their role. This should clearly state any key milestones or objectives to be met during the initial three months and these should be reviewed in one-to-one catch ups once a month.

**Disclosure and reasonable adjustments**

It is recommended that you consider meeting your employee before they start work to create a disclosure and reasonable adjustments plan. Disclosure is a personal choice for each individual and one which they are not obliged to make by law. Often an employee may wish to only have a partial disclosure (ie disclose to manager but not to colleagues). When this is the case, it is important to respect their decision and to **only disclose with the employee’s consent**.

A written agreement using the Reasonable Adjustments and Disclosure Plan should be made during this meeting. This will lay out who the employee wishes to disclose to and what reasonable adjustments have been agreed. It will also lay out a timetable for putting the adjustments in place and a review date.

# Starting work

### First day checklist and induction plan

**Induction checklist**

The following checklist includes most of the details it is important to cover during an employee’s induction. However, it is not exhaustive and there may be additional things that are important for you to clarify. Please add these as required.

**General**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Dress code | Organisation structure and overview | Security (including remote working policy) |
| Building walk-around | Department structure and overview | IT policy (including log in, how to contact IT support and booking IT equipment) |
| Fire safety procedure (including details of regular fire alarm checks) | Who’s who (names, roles, responsibilities) | Induction plan/support and supervision/appraisal process |
| Meet the team | Building layout | Accident reporting |
| Meet key colleagues in other teams | Basic communication processes overview (including calendar sharing and unwritten rules) | General administration and housekeeping |
| Location of toilets | Pay and benefits | Booking holiday and TOIL |
| Food/drink/kitchen (including unwritten rules such as bringing in cakes on your birthday) | Reporting absence/lateness/sickness | Book onto internal induction |
| Timings and induction overview | Reasonable adjustment and disclosure plan | Share basic local information (where shops/banks are, transport information etc) |

**Role specific**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Purpose of role | Sharing key contacts | Task explanations/training |
| How role fits into broader team | Email and phone procedures (how to answer the phone, email signatures) |  |
| Team roles and responsibilities | Expenses and TOIL policy |  |
| Employee role and responsibilities | Hours of work |  |
| Induction timetable | How to use photocopier/printer |  |
| Shadowing opportunities | Additional training plans |  |

**Sample induction timetable**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Monday** | **Tuesday** | **Wednesday** | **Thursday** | **Friday** |
| **Morning (9am-12.30pm)** | Induction plan Office tour  Desk set up | Shadowing (colleague name and role) | Shadowing  (colleague name and role) | Visit to Service  (name, location, transport plans) | Role training  10am catch up meeting with manager |
| **Lunch (12.30-1.30pm)** | Optional tour of local area | Lunch | Team lunch (Pizza Express, Upper Street) | Lunch provided | Lunch |
| **Afternoon (1.30pm-5pm)** | Meeting with team  Set up IT systems  Early finish 4pm | Role training (details)  Early finish 4pm | 2pm Meeting with (name and role)  Role training | Visit to service | Meeting with (name and role)  Shadowing (colleague name and role) |

The above timetable should be used for the first week and may be beneficial in the following weeks. In cases where the employee uses Outlook calendars, details should also be added to this.

**Induction plan**

Creating a clear plan will help your employee to succeed in their role. When used with the above checklists, it should help your employee feel well supported and can highlight any potential areas of misunderstanding early. Below is an example plan for you to use

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Month one** | |
| **Key aims and Objectives** | * complete induction check lists * meet the team * create working file detailing role responsibilities and processes * complete online training modules * details * shadowing * details * role specific tasks * details * role specific training * details |
| **Month two** | |
| **Key aims and objectives** | * complete shadowing * role specific tasks * details * role specific training * details * attend corporate induction |
| **Month three** | |
| **Key aims and objectives** | * role specific tasks * details * role specific training * details * develop probation plan next steps |

### How to tell your manager you are autistic

Choosing to tell your employer that you’re autistic is the first step in the formal process of “disclosure” – doing this helps your employer to make appropriate reasonable adjustments to support you to succeed in your role and also ensures that you are protected under equality legislation. You don’t have to be a new employee to tell your employer that you’re autistic but we would recommend telling them as soon as possible.

This is a step-by-step guide to help you disclose your diagnosis and will help you to make decisions about the support that you may benefit from.

Telling your manager  
  
Most people start with telling their manager. Your manager will be responsible for implementing reasonable adjustments. They will also contact the Human Resources (HR) team in your workplace to let them know about your disclosure. You can choose whether to tell your manager face-to-face, over the phone or by email. An example email is below. This will need adapting to your situation:

Subject: Confidential: Disclosure

Hi,

I hope you are well. I am writing to let you know that I wish to disclose that I have a diagnosis of autism and I would like to discuss reasonable adjustments with you.

Please let me know when would be a good time for us to meet.

Thanks

You can also disclose that you are considering a diagnosis of autism or are in the process of getting an autism diagnosis. Many of the recommended adjustments can be made without a formal diagnosis.

#### **Meeting with your manager**

You will need to have a face-to-face meeting with your manager to discuss the reasonable adjustments that you may find useful. Your manager will use a document called the “Employee Disclosure and Reasonable Adjustment Agreement” – this is a form that lists some of the common reasonable adjustments recommended for autistic people, a timeline for implementing the adjustments, and an agreement about who you want to disclose to. After this meeting, your manager will let HR know about your diagnosis and the adjustments that are being implemented.

It can be hard to work out what adjustments you need straight away – planning adjustments is a hypothetical process at first and it can be hard to know what will work until you’ve tried a few different things. There may need to be a process of “trial and error” initially as you and your manager work out what works best for you.

#### **Some things to consider:**

* What sort of lighting do you like at home? Soft or bright or subdued?
* Do you find it hard to concentrate? Is this because of visual distractions (eg people walking past), sound distractions (eg people talking) or something else (eg not knowing what to work on first, getting distracted by talking to colleagues).
* Would listening to music make it easier for you to concentrate?
* What helps you calm down when you’re feeling stressed or anxious (eg stimming, music, time outside, talking to someone)?
* How do you commute to work? Do you find this easy or stressful – why?
* Do you struggle with your workload? What makes it hard (eg not knowing what to start on first, not understanding instructions given to you by your manager)?

#### Disclosing to your team

In the “Employee Disclosure and Reasonable Adjustment Agreement”, there is a process for helping you disclose to other people in your team. You may not wish to do this straight away, but it is advised that, if possible, you disclose to the rest of your team. This will help to build better working relationships and will mean that your manager can ensure that they follow the reasonable adjustments needed to support you to succeed in the workplace.

#### Follow Up

After your initial meeting with your manager, you will have a timeline for implementing adjustments and a number of “action points” will have been created to help make sure these happen. We recommend that you meet with your manager once a month for the first three months to ensure that they keep you updated on any adjustments they are in the process of arranging and to see if there have been any improvements following those adjustments which have been made.

# In work

### Starting work – checklist

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Reasonable adjustments template/disclosure profile completed. |  |
| Requests for any required adjustments made to employer and adjustments in place. |  |
| Any childcare arrangements that are required are in place. |  |
| Any additional benefits (tax credits, universal credits) are applied for, or existing claims are ended as appropriate and DWP/HMRC informed of changes in income (sometimes this is not appropriate until the day that you start your new role, but you should check what the process is that you are required to follow as soon as you have accepted the job offer). |  |
| Confirm the date and start time of your role. |  |
| Confirm the location and person that you will report to when you start. |  |
| Check for any rules around using mobile phones, internet usage or personal devices during work hours and breaks. |  |
| Confirm whether there are food/catering facilities in or near your place of work, or whether you will need to prepare a packed lunch. |  |
| Plan your new journey to work – it is a good idea to practise your journey to and from work at least once so that you know how much time you will need for travelling and can adjust your morning and evening routines accordingly. |  |
| Check with your employer, or HR contact, whether you need to bring any documentation with you on the first day, or provide it in advance, such as your most recent P45, National Insurance number, copies of formal qualification certificates or bank account details. |  |
| Work wardrobe preparation – check that you understand what the dress code or uniform requirements are for your role and that you have been supplied with (if your employer supplies work clothes) or have purchased, suitable clothes. Make sure you have sufficient clothes so that you can wear clean clothes every day that you work (eg if you work five days a week, then you may need two pairs of trousers, to wear on two occasions each, and three or four shirts, which you change after wearing for one day or shift at work). Don’t forget that you may need to wash your clothes in the middle of the working week if you haven’t enough clean clothes to see you through the week. |  |
| Personal presentation – practise a good hygiene routine that includes showering every day, or every other day, brushing your teeth and hair, washing your face, wearing clean clothes and using deodorant every day. |  |
| Establishing a good sleep routine – adjust the time you go to bed and get up by half an hour each day in the run-up to starting work, to ensure that you have practised at least a week of getting up for work at the required time. |  |
| Work bag – practise packing your bag for work. You may want to write a separate checklist for your bag to make sure that you remember to pack everything that you need such as:  lunch/drinks  any necessary sensory equipment, headphones, sunglasses etc.  a notebook and pens  your mobile phone/assistive technology or devices  deodorant/hairbrush/hygiene or sanitary items  a suitable coat or jacket  money for lunch or travelling costs  any travel passes or public transport travel tickets/cards  emergency contact details. |  |

### Meeting – template

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Meeting attendees** |  |
| **Meeting purpose** |  |
| **Date** |  |

Items for action

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **No.** | **Action to be taken** | **Deadline** | **Notes** | **Comments/updates** |
| 1. |  |  |  |  |
| 2. |  |  |  |  |
| 3. |  |  |  |  |
| 4. |  |  |  |  |
| 5. |  |  |  |  |
| 6. |  |  |  |  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Additional discussion points** | |
| 1. |  |
| 2. |  |
| 3. |  |
| 4. |  |

Suggested one-to-one meeting structure

1. General wellbeing check in
2. Feedback from manager
3. Feedback from employee
4. Work planning for next week/fortnight/month
5. Any other business