

Inclusive Interviewing: A Guide to Interviewing People with Disabilities

Understanding how to interview candidates with disabilities is essential for building an inclusive, equitable hiring process. Including this guide in your interviewing guidelines gives your team practical tools to ensure every candidate feels respected, supported, and able to showcase their skills and potential.

Key Facts

- 1 in 4 people in the U.S. has a disability (25%).
- Most disabilities are non-apparent (70%). Many candidates may not disclose their disability unless asked about accommodations.

Consider This

- Interviewing inclusively ensures candidates are evaluated on their skills and potential, not assumptions about their abilities. By removing barriers and offering accommodations, organizations access a broader talent pool, foster engagement, and bring diverse perspectives that drive innovation and retention.

Best Practices: Do

- 1. Ask About Accommodations** – Ask candidates up front if they need a specific accommodation for the interview
- 2. Outline the Interview** – Before beginning, explain the interview process and share details like the number of interviewers, length, and question types.
- 3. Use Person-First Language** – Say “individual with a disability,” unless the candidate requests otherwise.
- 4. Break Up Long Interviews** – Divide lengthy sessions into more manageable segments with short breaks
- 5. Use Visual Aids** – Slides, diagrams, or written instructions reinforce key points.
- 6. Focus on the Candidate** – Evaluate skills and experience, not assumptions about disability.
- 7. Accommodate Specific Needs** – Face candidates with hearing impairments, verbally identify yourself and others to those with visual impairments, and maintain eye contact with the candidate when interpreters are used.
- 8. Minimize Distractions** – Conduct interviews in quiet, uncluttered spaces without interruptions.

Pitfalls to Avoid: Do Not

When interviewing candidates with disabilities, it’s important to avoid assumptions or behaviors that can create barriers. Common pitfalls include:

- 1. Don't assume cognitive limitations based on physical disabilities** – Speak at a regular pace and volume unless accommodations are requested.
- 2. Don't rush responses from candidates with cognitive differences** – Individuals with cognitive impairments are sometimes slower to answer questions. Allow time to process and answer; repeated, impatient questioning can disrupt thought flow.
- 3. Do not touch wheelchairs or assistive devices** – These are extensions of the individual and should never be handled without permission.
- 4. Don't dismiss employment gaps automatically** – Candidates with disabilities may have non-linear career paths or gaps due to medical or accessibility needs.