

Decoding job ad language

A guide for Autistic jobseekers

Job ads are often written in vague, jargon-heavy language that can make it hard to understand what a role actually involves. Inclusive employers take responsibility for communicating their requirements clearly - this guide is a reference to help you interpret common phrases you might come across.

Common phrases and what they could mean

If you see...	It could mean something like... *
"Tech-savvy"	Comfortable using digital tools like Teams, Excel, PowerPoint or internal databases
"Excellent communication skills"	Preparing clear written reports and presenting key ideas to colleagues at different levels
"Work under tight deadlines"	Submitting a progress report by a specific deadline each week, and contributing to a team audit during specific period of each quarter
"Manage projects"	Leading a team of 5-10 people to plan, execute, and evaluate campaigns within specified deadlines
"Marketing experience preferred"	A degree in marketing or a related field, or equivalent professional experience
"Social media expert"	Responsibility for increasing social media engagement by a specific target within a set timeframe

*The examples in the table above are for reference only. The specific language and requirements will vary depending on the role and organisation.

It is the organisation's responsibility to communicate role requirements clearly. If a job ad uses vague language, that is worth noting when you are assessing whether the employer communicates openly and transparently.

The same applies to interview questions

Vague language also appears in interview questions. Here is what clearer versions of common questions look like - this can help you understand what is actually being asked:

If you hear...	It could mean something like...*
"Tell me about your leadership experience"	"Describe a time when you led a team of 3-5 people to complete a project. What were your responsibilities, and how did you ensure success?"
"How do you handle tight deadlines?"	"Describe a specific project where you had to meet a deadline. What steps did you take to manage your time and complete the work on schedule?"
"Do you communicate well with colleagues?"	"Explain how you prepare and deliver written reports to colleagues and how you share key ideas in meetings."
"Tell us about a time you overcame a challenge"	"Describe a time a project didn't go to plan. How did you respond, and what was the result?"
"Tell us about a time you showed initiative"	"Describe a time you identified a problem and took steps to fix it."

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