

What to expect in a recruitment process

A guide for Autistic jobseekers

Unclear job ads, lack of flexibility during recruitment processes, and concerns around sharing Autistic identity were among the most common barriers identified in community research. This guide explains what a typical recruitment process looks like, what you are entitled to ask, and what inclusive employers should be doing at each stage.

Stage 1 - The job ad

This is where the process starts. A clear job ad should tell you:

- What the role involves day-to-day - for example, "A typical day includes assisting customers, restocking shelves, processing sales, updating inventory records, and participating in team meetings"
- Specific timeframes rather than vague terms - for example, "You will be required to submit a progress report every Friday by 5pm"
- What flexible work options are available - for example, "flexible hours, hybrid work (3 days remote), and compressed fortnight options"
- A closing date, a timeline for shortlisting, and an outline of what happens next
- A contact person named for support or adjustments, with a message that makes clear this is welcome and routine

What this looks like in practice:

"Applications close: Monday 12 August. All applicants will be contacted via email by 19 August to confirm if they're shortlisted. If shortlisted, there will be a 1-hour online interview with questions provided in advance. Need support? Contact recruiter.name@company.com for adjustments or accessibility support."

Stage 2 – The application

Most organisations ask for a CV and cover letter submitted via an online form, email, or application portal. An inclusive employer will also offer alternative formats - for example, a video introduction, email submission, or simplified application view. Forms should be compatible with screen readers and assistive technology, and there should be a clear, confidential way to request adjustments.

You are entitled to ask for adjustments to the application process. For example: "I would find it helpful to submit my application by email rather than through the online portal."

Stage 3 – Shortlisting

After applications close, the employer reviews submissions and selects candidates to progress. A transparent employer will:

- Set and share clear timelines for each stage
- Contact all applicants to let them know the outcome - including those who are unsuccessful
- Provide updates if timelines or processes change, even if the update is brief - for example, "We are still reviewing applications for this role and expect to contact shortlisted candidates by [date]. Thanks for your patience."

You can ask when you will hear back, how you will be contacted, and what the next stage involves.

Stage 4 – The interview

Interviews can take different formats - phone, video, in-person, or panel. An inclusive employer will tell you in advance:

- The format, who will be there, and how long it will take
- What will be assessed - and what will not be assessed
- Whether questions will be provided in advance

Delivery style - tone, fluency, and eye contact - should not be part of how you are assessed. Inclusive employers focus on skills, knowledge, and the actual requirements of the role.

You are entitled to ask for adjustments to the interview. For example:

“You’re welcome to request changes to our standard process, including additional prep time, or a different application or interview format. You don’t need to provide any details as to why.”

What this looks like in practice:

“You’re welcome to bring notes and ask clarifying questions throughout the process. We focus on skills and knowledge, not delivery style.”

Stage 5 – Assessment tasks

Some roles include a work-based task or simulation as part of the process, which is sometimes known as the second interview. This should:

- Be directly related to the actual requirements of the role - not traits unrelated to the job like improvising under pressure or rapid-fire responses
- Come with clear instructions, timeframes, word counts, and guidance on format
- Allow reasonable time to complete - not reward speed for its own sake
- Include advance notice of topics, question types, or scenarios where possible

You can ask for adjustments to assessment tasks in the same way as interviews.

Stage 6 – The offer

If you are successful, the employer will make an offer. A clear offer should confirm in plain language:

- The role title
- The start date
- The pay or pay band
- Any agreed adjustments
- A checklist of forms and due dates

If you are not successful, an inclusive employer will provide constructive, specific feedback linked to the assessed skills - for example, “You showed strong attention to detail. However, we were looking for more experience in managing external stakeholder relationships, which is a key focus of this role” - rather than vague responses.