



Curtin Careers

Transitioning to Employment

Embracing your neurodivergence

This workbook has been developed to increase your understanding of your strengths and be better equipped for the challenges in the recruitment process. Learn to confidently address your needs with employers to be at your best.

This workbook should be completed in conjunction with the Transition to Employment workshop.

You will have the opportunity to:

- Understand your strengths and unique characteristics
- Understand what adjustments you can ask for in the recruitment process
- Explore the pros and cons of sharing your needs
- Learn how to confidently address gaps on your résumé
- Explore coping strategies for when you don't get the job
- Get help – make use of your networks and seek career counselling or disability employment support

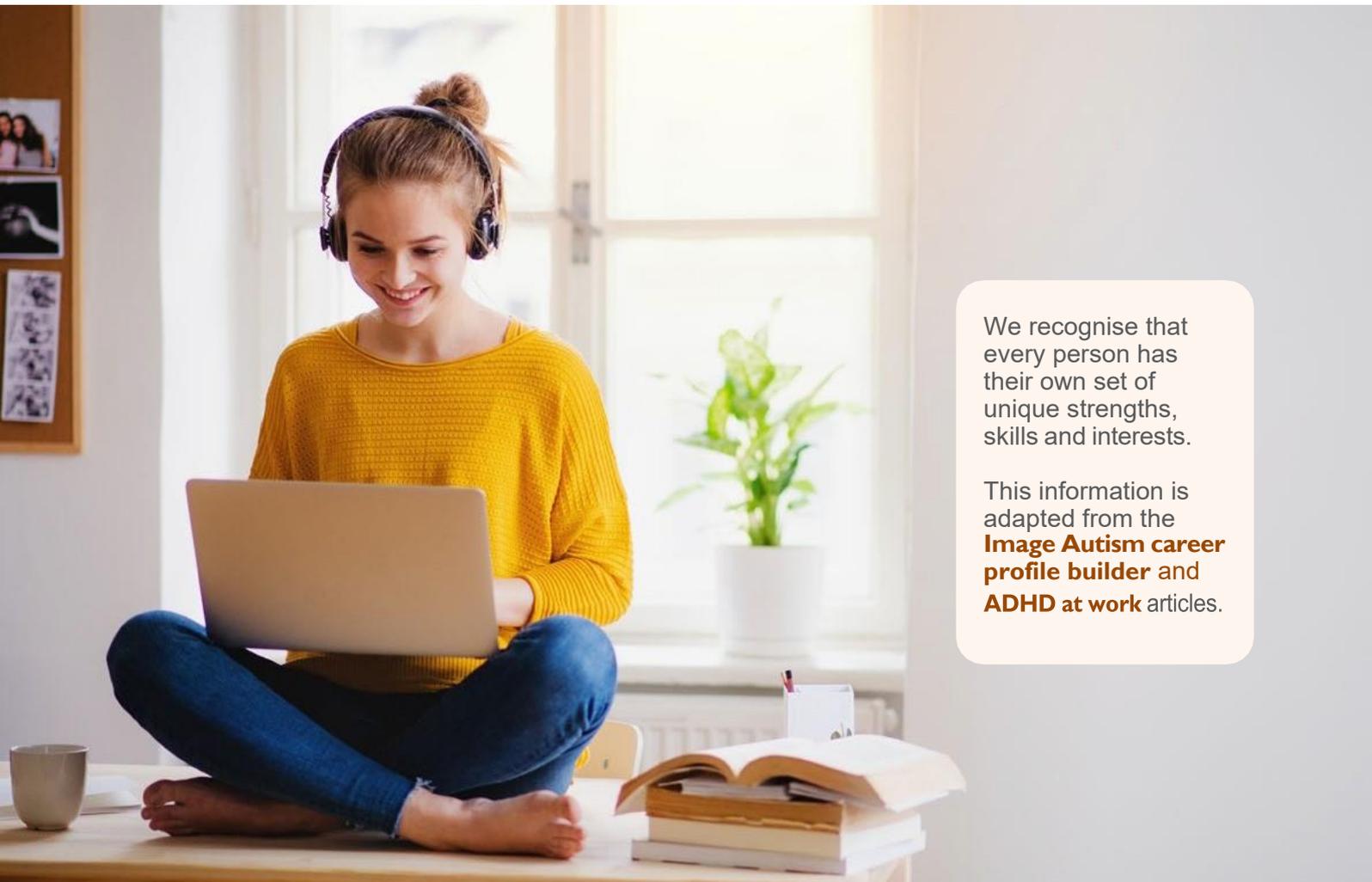


Your strengths and characteristics

Employers are increasingly recognising the advantages of hiring for neurodiversity¹ and the benefits that can bring in terms of creativity, productivity and innovation. This exercise highlights some key strengths that some people with neurodivergent conditions can bring.

Consider these traits and indicate how much you do or don't agree that each trait describes you. There are no right or wrong answers.

For example, if a strength does sound like you, you might wish to select 'tend to agree' or 'strongly agree'. If you have no opinion, you can tick 'unsure/neutral'.



We recognise that every person has their own set of unique strengths, skills and interests.

This information is adapted from the **Image Autism career profile builder** and **ADHD at work** articles.

1. Austin, Robert & Pisano, Gary. (2017, May). *Neurodiversity as a competitive advantage*. Harvard Business Review. <https://hbr.org/2017/05/neurodiversity-as-a-competitive-advantage>



Strongly disagree Tend to disagree Unsure /neutral Tend to agree Strongly agree

I have great attention to detail



I'm very honest and have integrity



I work on a given task with great concentration



I'm very punctual



I have real passion for my professional subject



I'm highly committed to being accurate



I'm creative in my thinking



I think visually



I think logically





Strongly disagree Tend to disagree Unsure /neutral Tend to agree Strongly agree

I'm entrepreneurial



I'm very loyal to my job and employer



I like to adhere to rules and regulations



I'm good at spotting errors and irregularities



I'm good at recognising patterns that other people don't see



I enjoy routine



I find unique solutions to difficult problems



I have a strong drive to seek and improve my knowledge



I like doing research





What other strengths or skills have you developed as a result of managing your neurodivergence?



Your strengths statement

Pick two strengths or positive characteristics you have identified.

Write or draw a story to demonstrate these strengths. This will help you with articulating your strengths in future job application documents or interview scenarios. Here's some suggested formats:

The hero format¹

You could use a hero format:

- “My strength is that I am ...”
- Set the scene and explain the challenge: “Having a neurodivergent condition means that ...”
- Explain what action you take to manage this: “To manage this, I ...”
- What is the outcome of this?: “As a result, I have ...”

SAO format

If you prefer not to refer to your neurodivergent condition, you can also use the situation, action, outcome (SAO) format to explain a strength:

- Describe a **situation** where you demonstrated this strength
- What **action** did you take?
- What was the **outcome** (result) of your actions?

Visual format

Alternatively, feel free to draw or doodle a story or picture that represents your strengths.

When in an interview, it can be useful to think of your sketch to help find the words to explain your point to others.

1. Austin, Alyssa. (n.d.). *How to use "Hero Stories" in your next job interview*. <https://poisedandprofessional.com/2018/10/how-to-create-and-use-a-hero-story-for-your-next-interview/>



Strength statement/sketch 1

A large, empty, light-orange rounded rectangular box intended for writing a strength statement or sketch.

Strength statement/sketch 2

A large, empty, light-orange rounded rectangular box intended for writing a second strength statement or sketch.



Needs and adjustments

Here are some example adjustments.

You could ask for one or more adjustments, as appropriate, to help you perform at your best.

1. I need clear, written explanations of the application process and timings.
2. Please provide me with written details of the interview, including the names of people on the panel, the location, photographs of panellists and the room.
3. Please provide me with additional time to answer questions for the online/ in-person interview.
4. Can I please have an in-person, one-to-one interview as an alternative for the online video interview?
5. Can I please have a one-to-one interview rather than a panel interview?
6. Can I please have an informal meeting prior to the formal interview to meet the interviewer and view the room?
7. Please make the interview questions available ahead of time to allow me time to think about the best response.
8. Can I please have an alternative assessment process such as a work trial instead of an interview?

You can find more adjustment ideas at:

- **Job Accommodation Network (JAN)**
- **Australian Disability Clearinghouse on Education and Training (ADCET)**
- **The IMAGE Project**



9. If the interview process includes a test or exercise, can I please be advised in advance and given a practice example?
10. Can I please request an online video interview instead of an in-person interview?
11. Can I please have access to interview questions in advance?
12. I have a tendency to focus on a topic at length. It's okay for the panel to let me know if I am doing this.
13. I would like permission to bring a support person to help me if I do not understand a question and/or to help me feel more at ease.
14. I may not maintain [eye contact/typical body language] during the interview. This is so that I can focus on what you are saying and helps me to process information. Please inform the panel.
15. I would like to request a low-sensory environment for the interview. I require [low lighting/a quiet setting/no air freshener or background scent/to face away from windows/other adjustment as suits your need].



Matching needs and adjustments

From the previous numbered list of adjustments, **match one or more adjustments that can help with each of these needs and preferences**.^{1,2} Tick "This would help me" if this situation is relevant to you.

Need / preference	Adjustment options	This would help me
I find some smells overwhelming.	- <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I'm sensitive to bright artificial light.	- <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I find it difficult to imagine a situation that I haven't been in.	- <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I need extra time to switch between tasks.	- <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I may have different eye contact and body language than expected.	- <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I need extra time and detail to plan and prepare for changes.	- <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

1. Adapted from The Image Project. (n.d.). *Select reasonable adjustments for the workplace*. <https://toolkit.imageautism.com/profile-builder/select-reasonable-adjustments-for-the-workplace/>
2. Adapted from Attention Deficit Disorder Association (ADDA). (n.d.). *Top 5 potential benefits of ADHD for employees*. <https://adhdwork.add.org/potential-benefits-of-having-an-adhd-employee/>



Need / preference

Adjustment options

This would help me

I get distracted by noise and movement in busy environments.

-

I prefer written information and task instructions.

-

I need extra time to process conversations and information.

-

I may find it difficult to remain stationary and concentrate for long periods of time.

-

I find new and unfamiliar situations overwhelming.

-





Personal adjustment statement

How could you ask for an adjustment?

You can request adjustments via:

- **The contact email or person on the advertisement.** If no one is listed, you may need to look up a contact for the recruitment or careers team at the company via their website, or phone the company to request a contact. Ask a support person for help if you need.
- **The application form.** Usually there is a field to indicate if you have a disability, health condition, illness or injury that requires accommodation, as well as a field to submit requests for adjustments.
- **Via reply email** if you have been invited to an interview.

You do not need to share all the details of your diagnosis; focus on what is relevant to the adjustment. Here is an example of how you might request an adjustment.

I process auditory information differently, which means that I sometimes need more time to articulate my responses. I would like to request interview questions in advance, please, so that I can better articulate my skills to you.

What are two adjustments that you might want to ask for? Create your statement. Be clear about what you need and how that empowers you or helps others to understand your communications.

Adjustment statement 1

Adjustment statement 2



Your communication preference

A communication preference is your preferred means of providing and/or receiving information. Means of communication may include:

- Email
- Text
- Face to face
- Telephone call
- Online video call
- Auslan
- National relay service

What's your preferred communication style?



Addressing gaps in experience

Address any gaps in your work history positively and confidently to mitigate employer concerns.

Acknowledge the gap and highlight any positive experiences or activities achieved during this time.

Gaps can be explained in your résumé, cover letter or application form.

For example:

Due to [personal/health/medical/caring] reasons/commitments, I was required to take some time out from [work/university].

During this time, I [highlight your other personal development activity or achievement]. I was able to return to ... and have since [achieved/ enrolled/ commenced] ...

Your notes



Your needs from a job or employer

Looking for a job is a two-way process. To find a job and organisation where you can thrive, understand your needs and what conditions you require from the job and employer.

This may include:

- Suitable location and/or accessible by public transport
- Working hours that meet your needs
- Flexible work policies
- Aligned with your interests
- Employee Assistance Program
- Does the company have a Disability or Diversity Employee reference group?
- Has the company shown a commitment to support accessibility and inclusion through membership of the Diversity Council Australia or Australian Network on Disability?
- Do they have a neurodiversity hiring program?

What benefits or working conditions are important to you in your job search?



Reflecting on job applications¹

Use these questions to help you evaluate a job you have applied for. These questions will help you understand what went well, and what you can learn from next time.

Ask a support person for help if you need.

Description of experience

- What happened in the application process/interview?
- What did you feel, think and do?
- What were the key moments (positive and negative)?
- Why were those moments key?

Reflect on the experience as a whole

- In retrospect, what would you change, and why?
- What did you learn about yourself?
- What did you learn about other people?
- What new understandings arose from the experience?

Understand your values, beliefs and assumptions

- What beliefs and values impacted what you did and your interpretation of others?
- What discipline-specific knowledge, practices and personal experiences were used?

Relate what you have learned to other contexts (personal, professional, other)

- How has the experience influenced the way you might act in the future?
- How has the experience influenced the way in which you think about your future?
- As a result of the experience, what do you need to find out more about, and why?

1. Adapted from Bennett, Dawn & Evans, Carol. (2018). *Using critical reflection to get the most out of your learning*. Developing Employability Student Starter Kit. https://student.developingemployability.edu.au/student_resources/critical-reflection-learn-from-your-experiences-with-critical-reflection/



Your network

Identify people in your network that can help you find career information. These connections may be people who have been supportive to you through university, school, work, volunteering, hobbies or other activities.

Does someone in your family or network have a connection to a company or job that you are interested in? Have they studied a similar degree? Can you ask a trusted person in your network for feedback on what you are good at, and where you need to develop more skills?

Who do you know?

How could they help?

You

Me: Conduct my own research from online and printed resources.

Family and friends

University classmates or teachers

Work or volunteering colleagues

Community members

Nominate two people you will follow up with after this workshop.



Additional support

Curtin Careers services and resources

- Instant **résumé and LinkedIn profile reviews on VMock**. Log in using your Curtin student email for access.
- **Workplace Rights and Responsibilities in Australia** self-paced **online** module in the **Getting A Job Challenge**. There are also modules on **résumés**, **cover letters**, **selection criteria**, **interviews** and **having your own personal brand**.
- Workbooks to prepare you for each step of the recruitment process: **résumés**, **cover letters**, **selection criteria** and **interviews**.
- Connect with mentoring and internship programs via the **Curtin Careers disability employment support website**.



Curtin Careers

Contact **Curtin Careers** about your career-related questions. Our services are free to current Curtin students and recent graduates.

- **Book an appointment** to chat with a Career Development Consultant or our Disability Employment Consultant. Available face to face, online or over the phone – it's your choice.
- Visit us in **Building 101 Level 2** – just over the Koi Pond.
- Email us at **careers@curtin.edu.au**
- Call us on **+61 8 9266 7802**



Other specialist careers advice and resources

- **myWay Employability** is an online profile builder to help people with autism to identify strengths and work preferences, match to relevant education training and career information, and set goals to track progress.
- The **MyPlus Students' Club** offers careers advice for students with disability. Resources include information on sharing your disability with an employer, applying for jobs with a disability, requesting adjustments and standing out for the right reasons.
- The **Neurodiversity Hub** provides programs and materials to support neurodivergent students in developing life skills and becoming work ready.
- **The Image Project** provides tools to help students with autism navigate the transition from university to employment. This includes information and advice on choosing a career, applying for work, arranging adjustments and settling into work.
- The **LaunchPad** website has been created by Autism Spectrum Australia to assist young people with autism with leaving school and transitioning to work or further study. The website includes practical strategies, personal stories and links to resources.
- *The Hidden curriculum of getting and keeping a job: Navigating the social landscape of employment* by Brenda Smith Myles, Judy Endow and Malcolm Mayfield, is a guide for individuals with autism and other social-cognitive challenges. This book covers a range of topics related to getting a job, finding a mentor, networking, interviewing and understanding social rules at work. The authors have shared a **video preview**.

This publication is available in alternative formats on request to careers@curtin.edu.au.

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