



## Interviews

# Tips for tertiary students with neurodivergent conditions

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So, you made it past the first step of the application process, but your heart is racing, and your palms are sweating at the thought of answering the questions asked by a panel of strangers.

It can help to remember that interviews are not just about the employer finding someone for the job. An interview can help you discover whether the job is good for you and whether the company is one you want to work for. Remember also that the company already believes you have relevant skills. If they didn't, they wouldn't have invited you to an interview.

The following tips provide information around the interview process, how to prepare and the types of questions you may encounter.

### What happens in an interview?

In its simplest terms, an interview is a meeting of people for a structured consultation or conversation. Interviews can occur in person or in a virtual/video environment. They can involve a face-to-face or group session and can be formal or informal.

An employer will select interview candidates based on a written job application. During the interview, the employer will usually ask the same set of questions to each candidate. You may be interviewed by multiple people. Although this can feel intimidating, the purpose is to reduce bias. Each interviewer will compare notes and share their scores at the end of the interview.

## What type of questions get asked in a job interview?

Formal job interviews usually consist of two types of questions: personal questions and behavioural questions.

### Personal interview questions

Personal questions are questions about you. For example, “Tell me about yourself.”; “What are your strengths/weaknesses?”; “Why are you the best candidate for this job?”

The interviewer doesn’t want to know your full life story or that your favourite food is pizza! Try to share highlights of your educational experience and your professional experience, particularly those things that have relevance to the role or organisation. You can also talk about your aspirations.

### Behavioural interview questions

These questions allow you to demonstrate specific examples of your skills and attributes such as communication, problem solving and teamwork. Refer to the tip sheet “Tips for tertiary students with neurodivergent conditions: Writing a résumé”.

Here are some examples of typical behavioural questions asked in an interview:

*Give me an example of when you had to take on the leadership of a team or project. What did you do well? Reflecting, how could you have improved the way you approached the task?*

*What is the most difficult or challenging situation you have ever had to resolve in the workplace?*

*Explain a time when you took the initiative on a project.*

*Describe how you used problem-solving skills to benefit a team or your workplace.*

You can use the **Situation, Action, Outcome (SAO)** format to structure your responses.

For example:

*Describe a complex project or task that you were assigned to. What approach did you take to complete it? What was the outcome?*

This question is assessing your problem-solving skills and initiative. A good answer should include:

- **SITUATION:** Describe a project or task (educational or professional) that highlights your technical or transferable skills. Talk about the role that you played in completing the complex project or task, particularly if it was a group project or task.
- **ACTION:** Any challenges that arose and the solutions you provided to complete the task.
- **OUTCOME:** The positive results (i.e. high grade, satisfied client, new technical solution/product/service idea).

## Interview checklist

### Before the interview

- **Contact the person who organised the interview to find out what will happen** so you can request reasonable adjustments in advance. You may wish to find out how many people will be interviewing you, how long the interview will be, if there will be any assessments, and what the company dress code is.
- **Send an email to request adjustments.** The Image Project has a useful [template](#) and an adjustments profile builder. You can include the condition you have – keep it brief and relevant to the interview process, what you need on the day and why. If you are unsure about whether to share your condition, visit [The Neurodiversity Hub](#) for additional resources.
- **Read the job description or advertisement** and highlight the key selection criteria. The interview questions are likely to focus on the skills and experience listed in the advertisement. If you find it hard to articulate your skills verbally, prepare examples or statements and take these along to the interview.
- **Research the company.** Look up the employer's website. What are their current projects or programs? What is their value statement and what community work do they fund? Look for recent news articles that mention them. Write down why you are interested in working for the company so you can talk about this in the interview.
- **Work out your journey ahead of time** on a transport planner or online map. Consider doing a practice visit or ask someone to transport you on the day.

### The interview

- **Aim to arrive 15 minutes early.** If you arrived even earlier, find a nearby café or wait in your car. Do some meditation or breathing exercises to relax.
- **Let reception know you have arrived** and that you are there for an interview.
- **Bring a copy of your application documents** and a notepad on which to take notes.
- **Try to look at the interviewer** as you introduce yourself. Be prepared that interviewers may also shake your hand. There may also be some small talk, such as "How are you?" Be ready to answer these questions.
- **Try to maintain open and positive body language**, an upright posture and regular eye contact. If you need to look away or create some time to think, having a sip of water creates a natural break.
- **Ask for clarification if you are not sure** about a question. If you don't think you answered the question, ask the interviewer whether you understood the question correctly.
- **Have some questions prepared** to ask the interviewers. Ask them what the next steps are.
- **Thank the interviewers** for their time at the end.

### After the interview

- [Send a follow up email](#) to thank the interviewers and ask for feedback.

### Keep practising and learning

- Practise with a mentor or support person or book in for a mock interview with your university careers centre.
- [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 [MyPlus Students' Club](#) offers careers advice for students with disability. Resources include information on sharing your disability with an employer, applying for jobs, requesting adjustments and standing out for the right reasons.
- The [Neurodiversity Hub](#) provides programs and materials to support students with neurodivergent conditions in developing life skills and becoming work ready.