

## Tips for Interviewing People with Disabilities

Interviewing people with disabilities should not be any different than interviewing people without disabilities. However, interviewers need to be sensitive to the interviewee's needs. Follow these tips to create a more inclusive interview.



### When interviewing people with disabilities:

- Emphasize abilities, achievements and individual qualities – not limitations.
- Be considerate without being patronizing.
- If it appears that a person's disability inhibits performance of a job, focus on HOW the person can perform the job.
- Allow the person with a disability to educate you as to any assistance they may need – not the medical diagnosis or condition.



### If the person is deaf or hard of hearing:

- Ask the person to choose a place to sit where they will be comfortable.
- Speak directly to the person being interviewed. If they read lips, speak at a normal rate while facing the person and be sure to keep your hands away from your mouth. Do not exaggerate your lip movements, but speak expressively.
- If the interviewee is using an interpreter, do not address the interpreter. Interpreters only facilitate communication. They should not be consulted or regarded as a reference for the interview.
- Do not shout. A deaf person cannot hear you and if the interviewee is using an assistive listening device, you may actually hurt their ears.
- If an interpreter is not present and if the person is reading lips and something is not clear, it is acceptable to write notes back and forth.



### **If the person is blind or has a vision disability:**

- Always identify yourself and others who may be with you. Describe the interview setting. For example, say “there is a table in front of you and a seat to your right.”
- The interviewee is unable to “read body language.” Let the person know when you need to move locations or end the conversation.
- Provide a well-lit area for the interview. Avoid sharp contrasts of light and dark ness. A person’s visual acuity may change under different light conditions.
- Offer assistance in filling out forms. Most people with visual impairments can fill out forms and sign their names if the appropriate spaces are indicated to them.



### **If the person has a speech-related disability:**

- Phrase questions so that they can be answered with short responses.
- Give your total attention to the person. Don’t be afraid to ask for clarification if necessary.
- Do not complete the person’s thoughts for them. Be patient and wait for the entire response.
- Never pretend to understand if you are having difficulty doing so. Repeat what you understand and the person’s reactions will clue you in and guide you to understanding.
- Speak with a normal tone of voice. Most people with a speech-related disability can hear and understand without difficulty.



### **If the person uses a wheelchair, cane or crutches:**

- Double check to be sure that the interview site is accessible. If the interview site is inaccessible, find an alternate location. Be sure to contact the interviewee to make arrangements in advance.
- When scheduling interviews, be aware that applicants may need to make transportation arrangements.

- In giving directions, consider accessible travel routes, accessible parking spaces and physical obstacles such as stairs, curbs or steep hills that may hinder or delay a person using a wheelchair, cane or crutches.
- Be aware that some people who use wheelchairs may choose to transfer themselves out of their wheelchairs (into an office chair, for example) for the duration of the interview.
- Remember that a wheelchair is part of a person's body space. Don't lean against it.
- Find a location where you can sit down and be at eye level with each other.
- Allow people using canes or crutches to keep them within easy reach. Allow guide dogs to accompany the interviewee. Do not pet or otherwise distract the dog.



### **If the person has cognitive disabilities:**

- Rephrase comments or questions for clarity.
- Some neurodiverse interviewees may find generic questions confusing. Rephrase your questions to ask exactly what you want to know. For example, say "tell me about your previous work experience" instead of "tell me about yourself."
- Stay focused on the person as they responds to you.

 **Adapted from: [Interviewing Persons with Disabilities – University of Mary Washington](#)**