

THE NEURODIVERGENT PROFESSIONAL'S GUIDE TO Requesting Accommodations in the Workplace

Access to support at work can go a long way in setting you up for success. But the process of requesting them can be overwhelming, especially for neurodivergent folks who struggle with advocating for themselves.

This guide will take you through the steps you need to take in order to request adjustments at work, and improve your chances of getting what you need to succeed!



Getting support from employers can be intimidating!

There are three main reasons why neurodivergent professionals hesitate to propose workplace accommodations to their employer:



- **They're unsure what to ask for.** When it comes to accommodations, the possibilities are vast, which can be overwhelming to think about.
- **They struggle to communicate their needs.** Neurodivergent folks may find it challenging to describe their experiences so that the employers understand.
- **They're afraid of being rejected.** People pleasers and individuals with Rejection Sensitive Dysphoria (RSD) may refrain completely from pursuing support to avoid being turned down.

DID YOU KNOW?

Accessibility supports are commonly referred to as *workplace accommodations or adjustments*.

Common Misconceptions



“Needing support from your employer makes you a bad professional.”



“Communicating support needs makes you a more reliable and engaged professional.”



“By requesting accessible supports in the workplace, you are asking a favor of your employer.”



“By proposing accessible supports in the workplace, you open opportunities to collaborate more effectively.”



“Any action your employer takes to support you is an additional burden on the organization.”



“Conversations around accessibility and workplace supports can spark opportunities to improve organizational processes, which benefits everyone.”

Which accommodations should you request?

These questions will help you identify the kinds of supports you can request from your employer.

Step 1: Explore your workplace challenges

First, we need to understand what is blocking you from being able to complete your work. Brainstorm a list of things you struggle with in your daily work life.

- I find it difficult to focus when working at the office.
- I can never remember what my manager tells me to do.
- I get overwhelmed and anxious with all the tasks I need to complete.

Step 2: Identify the root problem for each challenge

Now that we have a running list of workplace challenges, it's time to analyze them and figure out the cause behind your struggles. You may start to see patterns emerge as you explore these root problems - write them down below!

- I get interrupted constantly by coworkers and clients, which makes it difficult to focus on my work.
- My memory makes it difficult to retain tasks when they're assigned verbally.
- I worry that my manager will think I'm not productive enough.



Step 3: Research accommodation options

Once you have identified the root problems of your workplace challenges, it's time to research your support options! These are adjustments your employer can make to improve your work experience and help you succeed in your role.

Start your research with the Job Accommodation Network (JAN)



- Request a quiet workspace with minimal traffic so I can focus on my work.
- Request all tasks and assignments to be delivered in writing (email, chat, etc.)
- Request regular check-ins with manager to discuss workload and prioritize tasks.

Step 4: Prioritize your needs

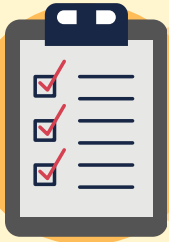
Set your expectations early – you may not receive everything you ask from your employer. Knowing what is most important to you during this process will help you know what to prioritize if you need to negotiate what supports you can receive.

For each of the accommodations you wrote in Step 3, rank from from **(1) - less important, to (5) - most important.**

TIP:

Any accommodation you request must be considered a “reasonable accommodation”. In other words, your request needs to be feasible and within reason for an employer to perform, and it must promote your ability to do your job.

Examples of Workplace Accommodations



Communication & Task Assignment

In the workplace, the way we communicate as professionals can impact how effective we are in our work. As neurodivergent people, we often deal with auditory processing issues, memory retention, and general overwhelm over managing the demands of our job.

Here are a few solutions you can present to your employer to improve communication and tasks assignments in your work life.



If you struggle to remember your tasks and assignments, especially if they are verbally assigned to you...

Ask your employer to assign and deliver all tasks and assignments in writing via email or other suitable channel, with clear due dates.



If you work on a highly collaborative team with a lot of changing aspects to your projects that you can't keep up with...

Suggest implementing a project management tool for managing task assignments, such as Asana, Monday, Trello, etc.



If you get overwhelmed and anxious when assigned last-minute items or being pulled into impromptu meetings...

Request your colleagues and manager provide advance preparation time for assignment, meetings, etc. Provide outlines in advance where possible.



If you struggle to prioritize your tasks and worry that you and your manager aren't on the "same page" about how to approach work...

Request regular one-on-one meetings and touchpoints with your manager to ensure all work is progressing smoothly and that you are aligned on priority goals

Examples of Workplace Accommodations



Workplace Conduct & Interactions

Navigating social interactions on your personal time is tough enough. But when your work life is riding on your engagements with coworkers and management, that can really bring on the pressure.

It's important to set boundaries early on when it comes to workplace conduct and interactions. Here are a few suggestions to get your started:



- ✓ ***If you have sensitivities or aversions to certain types of clothing, fabrics, etc.***
Request flexible dress codes where you can prioritize your comfort and sensory needs, so you can focus better on your work.
- ✓ ***If you struggle with regulating your energy and emotions when it comes to the workplace...***
Request an arrangement for flexible hours and break times so you can manage your well-being and focus when you're feeling better.
- ✓ ***If you find busy work functions and socials overwhelming...***
Set a boundary around attending these functions, and let your employer know you will either limit your attended time or opt-out of the engagement.
- ✓ ***If you find small-talk and implied language challenging...***
Request that your manager and team members use direct, literal language to improve communication and minimize misunderstandings.
- ✓ ***If you find it difficult to focus in meetings...***
Ask for regular meeting notes for you to review after the fact, or record meetings and use a transcription tool.

Examples of Workplace Accommodations








Environment & Workspace

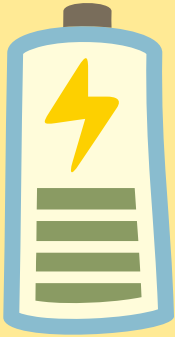
Your workspace and work environment have a big impact on how well you are able to perform in your role. Work culture also plays a huge role. That's why it's so important to seek out employers who are willing to provide the supports you need to succeed.

Here are some supports you can request in order to optimize your work environment!



-  ***Do you have sensory needs that require consideration?***
Request a scent-free policy for work; adjustable lighting; access to noise cancelling headphones or sound dampening earplugs.
-  ***Are you constantly uncomfortable in your workspace and struggle to focus as a result?***
Request adjustments like a standing desk, ergonomic chairs and monitor setup, access to fidget tools and other tools for stimulating.
-  ***Do your managers and peers understand how to work with people who are neurodivergent?***
Encourage your employer to provide neurodiversity training to all staff so they are better equipped to support you at work.
-  ***Do you struggle with temperature regulation in the workplace?***
Request a personal fan or space heater so you can manage your temperature needs without disturbing others.
-  ***Always distracted by activity around your workstation?***
Ask for regular access to a quiet room where you can focus on your work. Or request remote work options so you can create your ideal environment at home.

Things to remember...



Protect your energy

Depending on your employer, getting accessibility support in place can be a long, drawn out process. Save your energy for where it counts, and use coping skills to soothe and ground yourself during periods of anxiety and overwhelm.

Be prepared to repeat yourself

Being asked to repeat your proposal for accessibility support can be frustrating, especially when it feels like you have to justify everything to your employer. Prepare for that feeling, and keep your goal in mind.



Document everything

Keep track of all conversations, documents, and meeting notes in case you need to reference them for future. Trust us, your employer is doing the same thing.



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