



DISCLOSING YOUR DISABILITY

Learn about disclosure in the workplace when arranging career-ready placements and applying for jobs.

What is disclosure?

Disclosure involves a conversation about a disability (visible or hidden) and how it impacts your ability to undertake the role requirements of a job.

The decision to disclose is a personal choice. This will be influenced by your willingness to divulge personal information and the extent of the requirements or adjustments you need to perform at your best in the workplace.

There may be some level of reluctance to open a discussion with employers or potential employers about the adjustments you require to undertake the duties of the role. You may have had a poor experience in the past, you may be uncertain about how to articulate your needs, or you may be wary about the level of support available and any long-term career implications of disclosing a disability. If your disability is well managed and you already have the equipment you need, then you may elect not to disclose your disability.

The most positive scenario would result in your disclosure generating a conversation about your strengths and any requirements you may need to be successful in completing your duties. There are likely to be some simple strategies that are easily implemented to accommodate your needs.

Even if there are no specific changes required by the workplace, the conversation could be an important connection with your work colleagues to understanding and appreciating you as a person. It could also be a powerful learning opportunity for all parties involved to manage access in the workplace.

When to disclose

There is no one timeframe when disclosure could or should take place. There are several options, and it will be your decision about the optimum time and method by which to open the discussion. Some options on when to disclose include:

- During the application process
- At the start of an interview when you introduce yourself
- During the interview
- Once you have been offered or accepted employment
- Once you have established yourself in the role

Consider discussing who and how this information is shared with colleagues.

Tips

- Disclosure is a personal choice
- Talk through your disclosure plan with a trusted individual
- Know the laws that are there to protect you
- Workplace and university adjustments are designed to support you to achieve your goals
- Approach a workplace adjustment discussion with a focus on solutions will impress employers
- The [Careers Service](#) can provide guidance and support during job search and recruitment processes and how to manage the disclosure conversation with employers



How to disclose

It is your choice about how to disclose your disability and / or your requirements, there is no prescribed way to do so.

- As a starting point, prepare a short, written statement of what you would like to say to clarify your thinking
- Focus on your strengths and what you can bring to the role; for example, being detail oriented, recognising patterns, undertaking analysis or experiments, interpersonal interaction, conducting surveys, or problem solving
- Outline your disability and / or requirements to function well at work; for example, you may need certain physical access, equipment, flexibility with hours, or written instruction for tasks with clear deadlines
- Be prepared for the conversation by having possible solutions, and make it easy for the employer to agree to your requirements

What are your rights?

The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) provides legal protection for everyone in Australia against discrimination based on disability. The DDA prohibits discrimination against people with disability throughout all stages of the employment process, from advertising and recruitment to training as well as termination of employment. Under the DDA, employers are obliged to accommodate an individual's disability, unless that adjustment would result in unjustifiable hardship.

Check with your professional registration body if disclosure is a requirement in your field of work, e.g. for nurses the relevant association is AHPRA and for teachers the relevant association is NESA.

Always consider the benefits and risks involved in disclosure in terms of your privacy, how people perceive you and your strengths, and career progression.

Potential benefits of disclosure

- **Transparency** – Clarifying your strengths and capabilities with the employer could enable you to perform your duties with confidence, and remove the sense that you are hiding important information
- **Educating others** – Disclosing your disability with others may help transform perceptions in the workplace, educating employers and colleagues on your capabilities and the capabilities of others
- **Adjustments** – Disclosure will prompt your employer to make the agreed adjustments you require to be productive in your role, bearing in mind it may take some time to supply equipment or other requirements
- **Solutions focus** – You are best placed to suggest solutions to your employer, enabling you to be productive in your new job early in the role. This also demonstrates that you are honest, self-aware and resourceful. Discussing your strengths and focusing the conversation on your suitability for the position is a positive approach to the role
- **Assisting others** – Many employers have equity, diversity and inclusion plans and an increasing number of roles are targeted at people with a lived experience of a disability who can provide personal insights into policies, services and accessibility for other people with disabilities

Additional support: The University of Newcastle [AccessAbility](#) team can provide guidance around disclosure and support while you study whether for academic purposes or during your career-ready placement.