



## Tips for a Successful, Inclusive Interview with Autistic Candidates

For many autistic candidates, the interview is their greatest barrier preventing them from securing a job. See below for some tips and tricks to help alleviate anxiety and carry out a more productive interview for this underrepresented group.

*General rules: be direct, upfront, communicate your expectations and outline the process for them. Be open-minded to different ways of answering questions, or different ways of being.*

### Invitation to Interview

- Ask if they need any accommodations
- Provide location and any tricky aspects of finding the place or parking
  - o If conducting the interview remotely, provide details and tips for using the preferred application. Tell them if it will be audio or video call
- Provide dress code expectations, start and end time, number of interviewers
- Provide a list of the interview questions or examples of the types of questions you will be asking
- Provide an opportunity for the person to request adjustments they may require in the interview process

Autistic folks **may behave slightly differently** than what you experience with other candidates. There are certain behaviours that may catch you off guard, but should not be judged or be taken as offensive. Some examples of these are:

- A lack of eye contact
- Fidgeting
- A lack of tone or excitement in their voice
- Inability or awkwardness in making small talk
- Taking longer times to answer a question, or longer pauses
- Taking your questions very literally, and answering them as such

**Anxiety** is very common among people with Autism. Anxiety is common for anyone in interviews, but for autistic people, it is on another level. Below are ways to reduce anxiety in an interview:

- Start by introducing yourself and anyone else in the interview
- Communicate your expectations for the interview, including amount of time it should take, and what you are expecting from them throughout
- Start by asking them about their hobbies, things they like to do to promote a more relaxed environment



- Ask if they have any questions
- Tell them that they are allowed to ask questions about the questions, or for a question to be rephrased if needed

Certain typical, behavioural **interview questions** are often very challenging for autistic candidates due to their neurological differences. We would ask that some of these questions may be allowed to hold less weight or importance, than more technical ways of assessing them.

At Focus, we do what we call a “Meet & Greet;” our version of an interview. Below are examples of the questions we tend to ask, which work well for this population:

1. Find a topic to break the ice, such as their hobbies and interests. Do they engage? Does the conversation flow? Is it reciprocal?
2. What motivated them to apply for a job with you?
3. If salary, education, etc. were not a concern, then what would be their dream job? Why?
4. What do they want to be doing in a career? And why? Is employment a priority right now?
5. Refer to their education. Ask what they liked, disliked, found easy and challenging.
6. Ask about their previous (or current) employment or volunteer role. What they liked and disliked. What they found easy and difficult. Why did they leave?
7. Ask what they believe will be their challenges in working full time or part time.  
(Accommodations needed?)
8. What triggers stress for them and how do they cope with it?
9. Tell them about the company and the job. Describe a typical day. Ask if they have questions.

## Technical Assessments

Upon inviting them for a technical assessment:

- Tell them what you are assessing or will be assessing
- Provide an example of the assessment or similar assessment ahead of time
- Allow them to solve the problems on their preferred medium (computer, paper, whiteboard)
- Allow them to solve it in a comfortable space, such as
  - o In a separate room
  - o At home
  - o Collaboratively with you

BE CURIOUS | QUESTION YOUR ASSUMPTIONS & BIASES | ACTIVELY LISTEN, ASSIMILATE & LEARN |  
STEP OUTSIDE YOUR COMFORT ZONE  
ENJOY THE JOURNEY | YOU WILL BE GLAD YOU DID