Series 1 : Openness

Ebook 2 : How to be open



PRACTICAL STEPS TO BE OPEN WITH AN EMPLOYER

A FOOL PROOF FORMULA TO HELP YOU INFORM AN EMPLOYER ABOUT A DISABILITY IN ORDER TO GET THE ADJUSTMENTS YOU NEED.

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MyPLUS STUDENTS' CLUB

INTRODUCTION

The overriding reason for telling an employer that you have a disability is to obtain the adjustments you require. You may require adjustments in order to demonstrate your true potential at each stage of the assessment process and perform well in the role once you have secured the job offer.

If you have decided to be open about your disability, the next step is to think about how you wish to be open in terms of what you are going to say and how you are going to say it. In this ebook we guide you through steps to informing an employer about your disability, ensuring that the information you provide is used to implement the adjustments and support you require.

This ebook also features examples of best practice from Helen Cooke, disability consultant and Director of MyPlus Students' Club. We hope these practical steps to being open will equip you with the confidence to 'tick the box' and achieve success in your application.

This ebook will cover:

- Step 1: Work out what you want to tell an employer and why
- Step 2: Know who you need to speak to
- Step 3: Decide when the best time to inform an employer is
- Step 4: Explore how to present your disability positively

This is the second ebook in the Openness series. Visit www.myplusstudentsclub.com for careers advice and more information on applying with a disability. Become a member on the website for free, in order to download more ebooks on topics such as writing a cover letter and requesting adjustments in the recruitment process.



STEP 1:
WORK OUT WHAT YOU WANT TO TELL AN EMPLOYER AND WHY?

Tell the employer only what is relevant so that they know exactly how to support you; what adjustments do you require?

You do not have to go into the details of your disability. Rather, focus on your disability within the context of the interview, and ask yourself 'what do I need in order to demonstrate my potential?'

To work out what you need you will firstly have to find out what the recruitment process involves. You should then challenge yourself to think broadly about what you need at each stage of the process remembering that adjustments go way beyond extra time and access. Other adjustments include (but are not limited to) the use of a PC, the provision of an interpreter, a change in format to the interview and an orientation visit.

Helen Cooke, disability consultant and Director of MyPlus Students' Club, says:

"As a wheelchair user I remember requesting a parking space to be reserved and ensuring that there was access at the venue including an accessible toilet. If I were requesting adjustments now I would also ask to ensure that the desk be an appropriate height in order that my knees can fit under it. In addition, I would request that the breaks are sufficiently long enough to enable me to use the toilet and get a drink since I often found that by the time I had used the toilet it was time to start again."

Practice your openness statement

Once you are clear about the adjustments you are going to request, you then need to work how to request them. Following this checklist is a great way of working out what to say:

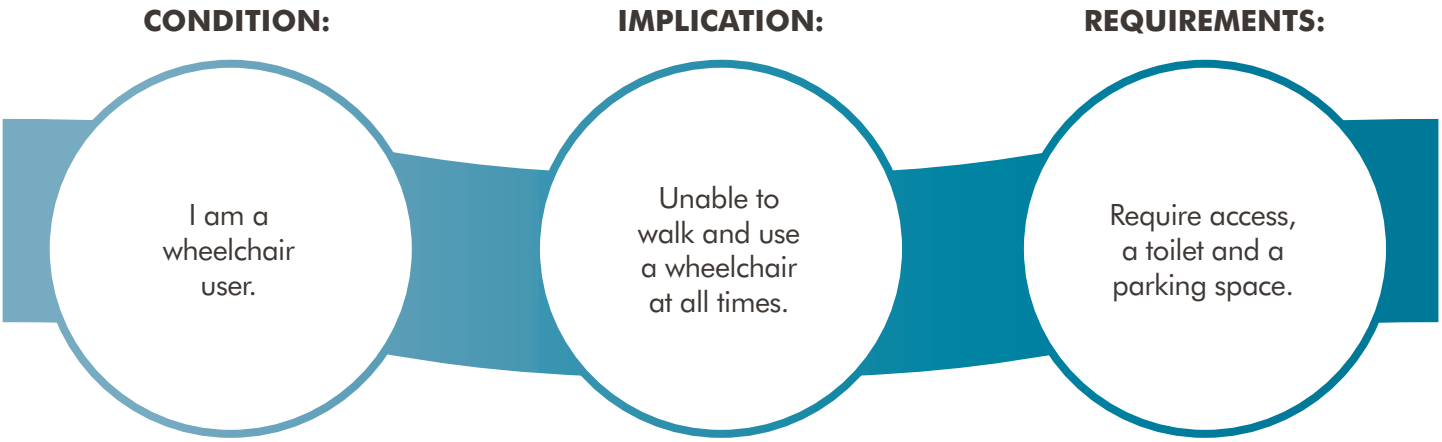
1. This is my disability/condition
2. This is the implication for the recruitment process
3. As a consequence, this is what I require.

Using this checklist you can put together your 'openness statement' which you can share with employers as and when you need to.



Here are 3 openness statement examples:

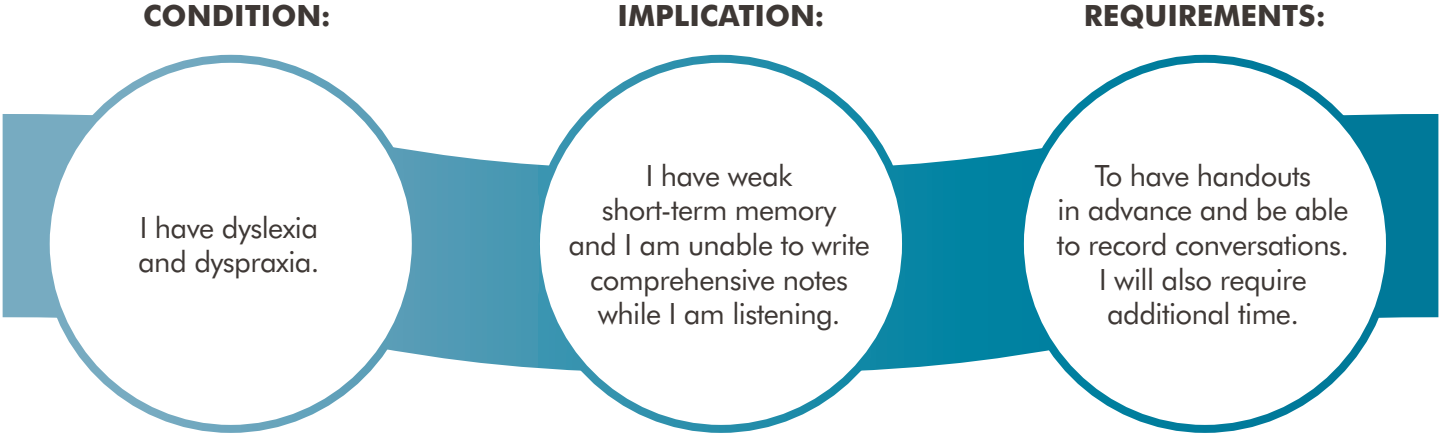
WHEELCHAIR USER:



ANXIETY DISORDER:



DYSLEXIA/DYSPRAXIA:



STEP 2:
KNOW WHO YOU NEED TO SPEAK TO

Aim to inform the person managing the recruitment process of your disability so that they can implement the adjustments you require.

Who you inform of your disability varies between employers. Many employers provide information on www.myplusstudentsclub.com and/or on their own careers website of who to call or email about diversity and disability issues.

You may contact the graduate recruitment team by phone or email as soon as you are invited to an interview. If you are not able to find the number on the website, go through the main switchboard and obtain the name and contact details of the person you can liaise with for future reference.

Helen Cooke, disability consultant and director at MyPlus Students' Club, says:

"Many employers will provide you with a dedicated point of contact or the opportunity to speak directly to a recruitment manager about your needs and requirements, use this opportunity to clarify any questions that you have and confirm that the adjustments you have requested can be provided on the day."

Be willing and prepared to engage in an open dialogue with an employer.

As you progress through the various stages of the application process, you should be prepared to answer any questions the employer has and help them understand how to support you.

Remember that recruiters are dealing with many, many applicants and it is therefore understandable that they may need you to remind them of your requirements. Find out what the assessment entails so you can identify what adjustments you need to perform best. If you sense the interviewer has any anxieties, create an opportunity to address these.



STEP 3:
DECIDE *WHEN* IS THE BEST TIME TO INFORM AN EMPLOYER

Be timely in your communication; employers will be able to make sure adjustments are implemented and ready for you if they are informed in advance and have time to prepare.

There are a number of opportunities for you to tell an employer that you have a disability or long-term health condition. When you do so is ultimately your choice and will depend on when you feel most confident to do so. However remember that the more notice you give an employer of your requirements, the easier it will be for them to accommodate them.

Helen Cooke, disability consultant and director at MyPlus Students' Club, says:

"Knowing what support you need will help you decide when to inform an employer. If you know that you need accessible software or additional time in order to complete the online tests, then you should inform your employer in advance so that they may make the appropriate adjustments and/or take into account any mitigating circumstances relating to your condition during the assessment process."

Here are opportunities where you can discuss your disability with an employer:

- Prior to applying. Discussing your requirements at the beginning will reassure you that they can provide what you need. It will also provide the employer with sufficient time to implement what is needed.
- On your application form or on your CV. There is likely to be space on the application form for you to add information about your requirements.
- Once you have been invited for an interview. If you choose to inform them at this point, do so as soon as you receive your request to attend the interview.
- During the interview. You could bring your disability up during the interview however be aware that this may come as a surprise to the interviewers and may not be the best option.*
- Once you have been made a job offer. If you have been made a job offer and are going to need support or adjustments in the workplace, it is advisable to discuss these prior to your start date. This will allow whatever you need to be in place from day one.
- Once you have started. If you require very little support or adjustments, there may not be any rush for you to tell your new employer that you have a disability. It is advisable to inform them at some stage however as you may need support or time off in the future.

* Helen Cooke, Director of MyPlus Students' Club does not recommend that applicants inform an employer about their disability during the interview.

STEP 4: (DON'T JUST STOP THERE...)
EXPLORE HOW TO DISCUSS YOUR DISABILITY POSITIVELY

Take ownership and make your disability work for you. Identify the strengths you have gained through your experience.

Whether you're writing your cover letter or completing an application form, we all have the same goal - to stand out as an exceptional applicant and be invited for an interview. This is where you can make your disability work for you and talk about the strengths and skills you have developed as a result of your personal experiences.

When it comes to disability it's very easy to think about all the things you cannot do, or that you can no longer do. However, it is time to think about what you can do and what skills, strengths and competencies you do have. We all develop skills as a result of our experiences and this is also true if you have to manage a disability on a day-to-day basis in a world that isn't always geared up for it. These are skills that employers are potentially looking for.

Helen Cooke, disability consultant and director at MyPlus Students' Club, says:

If I think about the skills that I have developed as a result of being a wheelchair user, these would include:

- ***Determination*** *– to do what I want to do particularly when others are trying to stop me.*
- ***Problem solving*** *– to get around daily challenges and obstacles such as lack of access or lifts not working.*
- ***Communication*** *– to articulate to others what I need when I can't do it myself.*
- ***Interpersonal skills*** *– to build relationships with others, particularly when I need them to assist me.*

What skills and personal strengths have you developed as a result of your disability?

You should aim to identify three or four key skills/competencies and for each of these you need to be able to provide a couple of examples to demonstrate why they are a strength. Ideally each skill will have been developed by a different experience and you should only aim to have two or three that are related to your disability.

Top Tips:

- Only share what information is relevant; you don't need to go into all the details of your disability. By knowing what you need you can know what to ask for.
- Do not use complicated medical terminology when talking about your disability.
- Contact the graduate recruitment team by phone or email as soon as you are invited to an interview. The more notice you give an employer of your requirements, the easier it will be for them to accommodate them.
- Be positive. Talk about your disability positively by describing the skills and strengths it has enabled you to develop. Demonstrate that your disability has not limited your personal achievements, study or work performance.

AND FINALLY....

We hope this ebook has showed you that you can be open about your disability with an employer and request the adjustments you need in order to fulfil your potential.

For more advice and information, become a member of myplusstudentsclub.com, for free, and explore ebooks covering a range of topics such as making an application and requesting workplace adjustments.