

Writing your openness statement

Introduction

If you decide to be open about your disability, it is important to think about what you want to say and how you want to say it.

This guide will help you create your openness statement. You can also use the attached downloadable and editable template to develop your personal statement

What is an openness statement?

An openness statement is a brief, personal description of your disability or health condition and the adjustments or support you may need to perform at your best. It helps you communicate your needs clearly and confidently in job applications, interviews, performance or development conversations, and networking situations.

There is no single “right” version - your statement should sound like you.

Step 1: Describe your disability / health condition

Start by choosing a few words that positively describes your disability / health condition, avoid using negative words such as unfortunately, suffer, sadly.

Please see some examples below:

Visual impairment

I have a visual impairment

Or you could simply say: I have a disability

Poor mental health

I experience anxiety and depression

Or you be less specific and say: I experience poor mental health

Neurodivergent

I am neurodivergent

Next consider the implications - use a positive way to describe how your disability / health condition impacts you or presents. Again, avoid using negative words such as unfortunately, prevents, can't. etc

Spinal injury

As a result of having a spinal injury, I am a wheelchair user

Anxiety

As a result of my anxiety, I become nervous and anxious, particularly in new situations

Dyslexia

Due to my being dyslexic, I have a weak short-term memory, and I am unable to write comprehensive notes whilst I am listening

Finally, consider your requirements: think about the support and / or adjustments you need during the recruitment process or in the workplace e.g. additional time, access, a schedule of the day's event or handouts in advance.

Autism

I would like to have a quiet space to work and be able to wear noise cancelling headphones when I am not in meetings.

Anxiety

For my interview, I would find it useful to have a detailed schedule of the day's events so I know what to expect, and for the recruitment team to be aware that I may more anxious than others

Dyslexia

It would be helpful to have handouts in advance, and I would also require additional time for the interview and written assessments.

Step 2: Create your openness statement

Using the content from step 1, turn this into your openness statement using 3 - 4 sentences.

Following this structure may help:

1. Describe your disability / health condition
2. Positively explain how this impacts you
3. List the support and adjustments you need to demonstrate your potential / capability

Stammer / stutter

I have a stammer and I would appreciate having additional time for my interview. I would also benefit having the questions in advance so I can better prepare my answers. I would like the assessors to know that I have a stammer.

Anxiety & depression

I experience anxiety & depression and can feel anxious in new situations. It would be helpful to have an orientation visit before my interview, a schedule of the day's events, and for the recruitment team to be aware that I may experience higher levels of anxiety than others.

Dyslexia/Dyspraxia

I have dyslexia and dyspraxia, which affects my short-term memory and makes it difficult to take comprehensive notes while listening. Receiving handouts in advance, recording conversations, and having extra time would help me perform at my best.

Step 3: Make it yours

Using your content from step 2, practice delivering your openness statement, make sure you use positive language. Read your draft out loud and practice it with friends and family.

Ask yourself: Does this sound like me? Would I feel comfortable saying this out loud? Does it focus on what I can do rather than limitations? Am I happy / proud to share this with an employer?

You may find you develop and amend your openness statement and that it may evolve over time.

Top tips

- Only share information that is relevant; you don't need to go into all the details of your disability
 - Don't use complicated medical terminology when talking about your disability
 - Become an expert in what you need so you know what to ask for
 - Only by being open can you gain the support you need
 - Be confident in asking for what you need
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Final thought

Employers are looking to recruit the best and brightest talent in the industry, and you can be confident that they will support you throughout the application process if you are open about your disability and have requested adjustments or support. Being open is about levelling the playing field so you can perform at your best.