

REQUESTING ACCOMMODATION

Finding What You Need to Be Successful at Work

This tipsheet provides some strategies to help you navigate and prepare to make your own request.

Quick Tips for Requesting Accommodation

- Focus on what you need, not your diagnosis or why
- Focus on your strengths
- Keep an open mind
- Contact your Human Resources (HR) representative or supervisor to gather details on how accommodation requests are usually made

When can I request accommodation?

There are many occasions when you can request accommodation. review the explanations and examples below to understand what requesting accommodation at each moment can involve.

Before an Interview

If you think you will need accommodation for any part of the interview process, you can communicate with the person who contacted you for the interview.

Example email

Email subject: Accommodation request for upcoming interview

Hi [name],

I am looking forward to my interview next week and would like to request that [request]. Please let me know if you have any questions. Thank you in advance.

Best, [Name]

After accepting an offer or when in a role

Whether you would like to request accommodation after you accept an offer or after you have started the role, the basics for setting up a meeting and having a conversation with an employer and/or HR representative usually follow similar steps: requesting a meeting, preparing for the meeting, attending the initial meeting, and following up. Below you will find examples of these different steps.

Email your employer to set up a meeting

A straightforward email to request a meeting about accommodation is a great way to start this process. Example of a meeting request email before you begin a role.

Email Subject: Exploring Options for Accommodation

Hi [name],

I am looking forward to starting my role in a couple of weeks. In the meantime, I would like to have a conversation about accommodation options so that we can start the process of finding what works best. Do you have any availability on Thursday this week to have a meeting?

Thanks,
[Name]

Example of a meeting request email after you have started in a role.

Email Subject: Accommodation Options

Hi [name],

I have been enjoying learning about the organization in my role so far and working as part of the design team. Having been in the role for a few weeks, I believe that I would benefit from accommodations pertaining to [need]. It would be helpful for me to have a meeting and discuss what options are available. Do you have any availability on Thursday this week to have this conversation?

Thanks,
[Name]

Prepare for the Meeting

You might find it helpful to outline aspects of the conversation you would like to have in advance of the meeting.

Consider some of the following topics:

- How will you start the conversation?

- Maybe begin by saying what you are enjoying about your role so far.
- How would you like to explain your situation and share the functional limitation or need?
 - “When working on or in [detail] I have a functional limitation pertaining to...”
 - “I would like to attend [religious observance, medical appointment, and so on]
 - “I have come to realize [need or limitation] and believe I would benefit from [accommodation]...”
- How might you share any suggestions you have for your request?
 - “In the past I have found that [accommodation] works well for me, but I am also open to different options or ideas...”
 - “I would be happy to make up the hours I will miss by [scheduling change] ...”
 - “What options are available so that I can continue to perform at the level I feel is my best and that makes a full contribution to my team?”
- Ask questions about the next steps.
 - “What are the next steps here? What additional information might be helpful?”

Tip: Make your request as clear and as detailed as possible. It is very unlikely that you will need to give any medical information. If medical information does need to be shared, it would be unusual for this to occur in the initial meeting.

Next Steps

- After the initial meeting you might find it helpful to send an email that summarizes the discussion and what the next steps are. Usually, the person you had the meeting will do this, but if not, you can write one.
- You might also find it helpful to ask for a check-in meeting. In this meeting you can have a conversation about whether your needs are being met and make sure no unforeseen barriers have arisen since you started your role.

Remember: there is no perfect time to request accommodation. It is important that you ask when it feels right for you.

I Am Not Sure Who to Contact

Sometimes people work on different teams and have different supervisors for different roles. Consider contacting the supervisor with whom you have the strongest working relationship with or start with HR for advice. If you would like to request accommodation for an interview, you can contact the person who scheduled the interview with you.

Things to Remember

- Requesting accommodation is the first step in what will likely be a multi-step process.
- There are many different types of accommodations. Some may be more straightforward to implement whereas others might include involving experts. Regardless, it is important to remember that you are within your rights to request accommodation.
- Just because one accommodation has worked for you in the past doesn't mean that there isn't another accommodation that will work and is reasonable. In addition, accommodations

- that worked in a university setting may not directly translate to a workplace. Being open to different options and ideas can be a helpful approach to this process.
- If you are part of a union, your union representative may be a source of information on accommodation requests, procedures, and what you can expect during this process.

Additional Resources

- Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC)
The OHRC works to build respect for human rights into all aspects of life in Ontario. It looks at the roots of discrimination, develops policy for preventing different forms of discrimination, and works to raise awareness of human rights issues. The OHRC intervenes, as needed, at tribunals and all levels of court on human rights issues with broad public interest or concern, with different sectors and groups, to promote organizational change and to break down barriers to equity and success.
http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/social_areas/employment
- Lime Connect
A global not for profit organization that works to connect high potential university students and professionals with disabilities with scholarships, internship sand careers. Lime Connect works with several corporate partners to help educate them and develop opportunities for persons with disabilities. Check out their opportunities and programs on their website.
<https://www.limeconnect.com/>
- Discover Ability Network
The Discover Ability Network is a government funded resource that connects organizations with people with disabilities who are seeking employment. It includes a job-matching platform, tip sheets, and links to additional resources.
<https://discoverability.network/job-seeker/>
- CareerWise
CareerWise is produced by CERIC, a charitable organization that advances education and research in career counselling and career development. On this page you can find curated articles around employment. You can also use the tags on the right-hand side of the page to view other topics.
<https://careerwise.ceric.ca>
- Consider the following article that describes strategies for young people disclosing disabilities early on in their careers.
<https://careerwise.ceric.ca/2020/11/12/6-strategies-youth-use-to-disclose-disabilities-at-work/#.YTdyZp5Kiqk>
- Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act
For further information and examples of accommodations in the workplace, the AODA is a great resource.
<https://www.aoda.ca/>
- Human Rights Legal Support Centre – Understanding the Duty to Accommodate
<https://www.hrlsc.on.ca/en/how-guides-and-faqs/your-right-accommodation>
- Human Rights Legal Support Centre – Human Rights at Work FAQ
<https://www.hrlsc.on.ca/en/frequently-asked-questions/human-rights-work#8>

- Ontario Human Rights Commission - Accommodations for Religious Observances
<http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/frequently-asked-questions/employer-do-i-have-give-people-time-religious-leave-and-do-i-also-have-pay-them>

References

Discrimination based on disability and the duty to accommodate: Information for employers. (n.d.). Ontario Human Rights Commission. Retrieved September 14, 2021, from <http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/discrimination-based-disability-and-duty-accommodate-information-employers>

Meeting the accommodation needs of employees on the job. (n.d.). Ontario Human Rights Commission. Retrieved September 28, 2021, from <http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/iv-human-rights-issues-all-stages-employment/8-meeting-accommodation-needs-employees-job>

The Ontario Human Rights Code. (n.d.). Ontario Human Rights Commission. Retrieved September 17, 2021, from <http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/ontario-human-rights-code>

Understanding the Duty to Accommodate. (n.d.). Human Rights and Legal Support Centre. Retrieved September 14, 2021, from <https://www.hrlsc.on.ca/en/how-guides-and-faqs/your-right-accommodation>