

# Interviews

## Tips for Employers Interviewing People with Disabilities

### Quick Tips

- ✓ A good job description is essential
- ✓ Be informed on the questions you can and can't ask
- ✓ Treat individuals with disabilities like any other candidate for the position



**The key to a good interview with an individual with a disability is to comply with the guidelines and spirit of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).**

Every interviewer has preconceived notions or expectations of how a good interview begins. We expect the person we are interviewing to walk into the room, look us in the eye, and give three firm pumps of a handshake. Although many people with disabilities may not be able to do that they may be the best candidate you interview for the position, so **it is essential to keep an open mind and be prepared for each interview process.**

It is important to remember that before you scheduled the interview, you reviewed the interviewee's application, and/or resume that showed that the interviewee met the qualification for the position for which you are interviewing, or you wouldn't be interviewing them. So, if an interviewee enters the interview rolling in a wheelchair and is unable to shake your hand, keep in mind that you are interviewing this person because this person met basic background and experience qualifications for the job.

Your next step is to remember that the **key to the job interview is the job description and the purpose of the job interview is to:**

- ✓ Make a match between the requirements of the job and the person's ability to do the job
- ✓ Recognizing that people may be able to perform the job tasks in multiple ways that are not necessarily the way a non-disabled person would perform the job.

**Job descriptions are essential tools for the job interview.**

- ✓ A properly prepared job description should focus on the tasks performed and the outcomes of those tasks - Not necessarily *how* the task is performed
- ✓ Job descriptions should inform the applicant of the expected outcomes the job requires and not focus on how to perform the job.
- ✓ People with disabilities may perform the job in a different way, that may be faster, better, and more efficient for everyone, while achieving the same outcomes or better outcomes.
- ✓ Ask interviews if they can perform the job tasks listed in the job description as you would ask other interviewees

The American's with Disabilities Act forbids asking questions about an applicant's disability, so you want to avoid questions about the person's disability. Questions should be job related and consistent with business necessity. **Examples of questions you can't ask:**

- How did you become disabled?
- Are you in good health?
- Have you recovered from your prior disability?
- How much can you lift? (If the job does not require lifting or it can be accommodated)
- How far can you walk? (If the job does not require walking or it can be accommodated)
- Have you been in a wheelchair your whole life?
- Do you have a driver's license? (If the job doesn't require driving or if a reasonable accommodation can't eliminate the driving)
- Have you ever been injured in an accident?
- Have you ever filed a claim for workers' compensation?
- Do you have any physical conditions that would prevent you from doing your job?

Base your interview questions on the ultimate goal of finding the match between the person and **his or her ability to perform the essential function of the job, with or without reasonable accommodations.**

- ✓ Essential functions are the basic job duties an employee must be able to perform in the job, with or without reasonable accommodations.
- ✓ To determine whether or not a task is or is not an essential function consider:
  - If the position exists to perform the function

- The number of other employees available to perform the function or among whom the performance can be distributed
- The degree of expertise or skill required to perform the job function

**Some do's and don't for the interview:**

- ✓ Do try to treat an individual with disabilities as you would treat any other person.
- ✓ Don't trap yourself into thinking "If I were disabled how would I feel?"
- ✓ Do avoid statements such as "I admire your courage" or "You've done so much for a person in a wheelchair"
- ✓ Don't try to put yourself in the applicant's place and ask yourself "Could I do this job if I were disabled?"
- ✓ Do try to treat the person with a disability as you would treat any other applicant.
- ✓ Don't touch the wheelchair, move it, or lean on it. A wheelchair is an extension of the person.
- ✓ Don't apologize for comments such as "Let's take a walk" to an individual in a wheelchair or "Do you see my point?" to a person with a visual impairment.
- ✓ Do remember that communications skills are often an inaccurate measure of the intelligence, ability or confidence of an individual with a speech or hearing problem.
- ✓ Don't patronize the applicant with a disability with your own body language.
- ✓ Do focus on the person – not the disability.
- ✓ Don't make assumptions about the applicant's ability to do the job.

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## Resources for Job Interviews with People with Disabilities

Focus on Ability: Interviewing Applicants with Disabilities, from the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy  
<https://www.dol.gov/odep/pubs/fact/focus.htm>

Job Applicants and the Americans with Disabilities Act, from the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission  
<https://www.eeoc.gov/facts/jobapplicant.html>

How to Interview Without Violating the ADA from FindLaw  
<https://practice.findlaw.com/human-resources/how-to-interview-without-violating-the-ada.html>

Interviews from Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Inclusion (EARN) <http://www.askearn.org/topics/recruitment-hiring/interviews/>

Do's and Don'ts of Interviewing Individuals with Disabilities, by *Angie Vandersteen and DirectEmployers Association*  
<https://directemployers.org/2018/10/31/dos-and-donts-of-interviewing-individuals-with-disabilities/>