

## DISCLOSURE SCRIPT

Disclosing to an employer that you have a disability is not mandatory. However, if there are certain functions that come with a job role that you might not be able to perform due to certain limitations, then it is a great idea to let your employer know. Depending on your specific situation, a good time to disclose your accommodation needs to your employer might be at an interview. This way, you have the opportunity to see the interviewer's reactions firsthand. This can also help you get a sense of how *disability-friendly* an organization might be.

A disclosure script is a useful resource that helps you prepare for an effective disclosure—one where you convey your accommodation needs confidently, while highlighting your strengths and abilities.

Note: When giving a disclosure, it is important to show flexibility and open-mindedness. State that you are willing to consider other reasonable accommodation options apart from the ones you might have in mind.<sup>1</sup>

Below are a few steps to follow:

### Avoid ambiguous terms

Describing your disability in very simple terms is important. You want to make sure that your employer understands what you mean. Keep in mind that you do not have to state your medical diagnosis.

### Highlight your skills and abilities

Reflect on your skills and abilities. Think about the content of your resume— the relevant experiences you have listed. Identify the strengths you possess, demonstrating to the

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<sup>1</sup> Rebecca Spirito Dalgin, "Disability Disclosure in an Employment Interview: Impact on Employers' Hiring Decisions and Views of Employability" (PhD diss., Syracuse University, 2005), 47.

employer that you are qualified, and will be a valuable asset to the company or organization.

State your limitations in relation to the co-op job duties

Having stated your skills and abilities, think about your limitations in relation to particular functions of the co-op job. Be as specific as possible. Which job functions will be impacted due to these limitations? What challenges might there be?

Mention previously used effective accommodation(s)

If there are any accommodations that you have successfully used in the past, let the employer know. This will prove that you are competent, and are able to work effectively, when provided with the accommodation(s) that you need.

State reasonable accommodation(s) needed and be flexible

You might suggest a similar accommodation to the ones you have successfully used in the past. In addition to this, show the employer that you are flexible, by stating your willingness to discuss other suitable alternatives as well.

Before you create your disclosure script, here are a few examples to follow.

The table below consists of prompts, which when responded to, makes it easy for one to create a disclosure script with all the necessary information included. The responses are then combined to form a cohesive narration.

Example 1

A co-op student that has Dyslexia has applied for a job as a Student Software Developer and wants to disclose to an employer.

Prompt	Response
In simple terms, my disability is	a learning disability
My valuable skills and abilities in relation to the job are	technical and problem-solving skills
The limitation(s) that might affect my ability to do a particular duty is/are	struggling to write extensive reports and other lengthy pieces of writing
The previous accommodation(s) I have successfully used in the past is/are	extra time to read and write, allowing me to proof-read my work and come up with well-written material

Prompt	Response
The accommodation(s) you might need is/are	extra time for reading and writing. But, I am also open to other reasonable alternatives.

Now, merging these responses together, the disclosure ensues as follows:

“I would like to mention that I have a learning disability. Given the nature of this job, I do not anticipate any particular struggles in relation to my ability to perform the essential job duties. I am confident in my technical and problem-solving skills. However, in relation to written communication, I might experience a bit of a challenge in situations where I have to write extensively or give reports within a short timeframe. In the past, I have been allowed extra time to write; this has been very helpful for me. The extra time allows me to proof-read my written work. I am open to other reasonable accommodations as well and am happy to discuss further if you have any concerns or thoughts.

### Example 2

A co-op student that has Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) has applied for a Communications Co-op Student position and wants to disclose to an employer.

Prompt	Response
In simple terms, my disability is	one that affects my ability to easily re-focus once interrupted.
My valuable skills and abilities in relation to the job are	exceptional content creation and communication skills
The limitation(s) that might affect my ability to do a particular duty is/are	The challenge of concentrating or reorienting once distracted
The previous accommodation(s) I have successfully used in the past is/are	Working for an uninterrupted period of time and keeping doors closed while working

Prompt	Response
The accommodation(s) you might need is/are	Having a set work time without interruptions from others, and being allowed to close doors while working, to reduce distractions. I am also open to other alternatives.

Merging these responses together, the disclosure ensues as follows:

“I do not anticipate any problems. I am confident about my skills regarding content creation and other communication pieces. However, I think it’s important to mention that I have a condition that sometimes affects my ability to concentrate once I am interrupted or distracted, while writing. In the past, I have found having an uninterrupted work time to be extremely helpful. With regards to the job duties, of which I am aware writing is an essential part, I think that having a set time when I can focus on my work without interruptions would be great, especially since I have been successful doing so in the past. Nevertheless, I am willing to consider other accommodation alternatives. I just thought I’d share this with you, so that we can discuss further if you have any concerns or thoughts.”

Similar to the examples provided, complete the table below.

Prompt	Response
In simple terms, my disability is	

Prompt	Response
My valuable skills and abilities in relation to the job are	
The limitation(s) that might affect my ability to do a particular duty is/are	
The previous accommodation(s) I have successfully used in the past is/are	
The accommodation(s) you might need is/are	

**Note:** Remember to state that you are open to considering other suitable accommodations.

Now, merge all your responses into one cohesive narration,<sup>2</sup> and practice the speech out loud until you are comfortable saying it and it feels natural. It is helpful to practice with relatives, friends, and even in front of a mirror.

Your Co-op Coordinator will also go over your disclosure script with you to ensure that you have a well written one, and that you are able to smoothly have the disclosure conversation with an employer.

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<sup>2</sup> "Creating a Disclosure Script," University of Guelph, accessed June 26, 2020, <https://www.recruitguelph.ca/cecs/sites/uoguelph.ca.cecs/files/public/Disclosure%20Script.pdf>.



Bibliography

Dalgin, Rebecca Spirito. "Disability Disclosure in an Employment Interview: Impact on Employers' Hiring Decisions and Views of Employability." PhD diss., Syracuse University 2005.

University of Guelph, "Creating a Disclosure Script." Accessed June 26, 2020, <https://www.recruitguelph.ca/cecs/sites/uoguelph.ca.cecs/files/public/Disclosure%20Script.pdf>.