

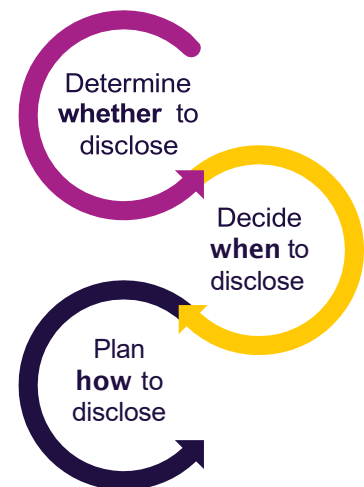
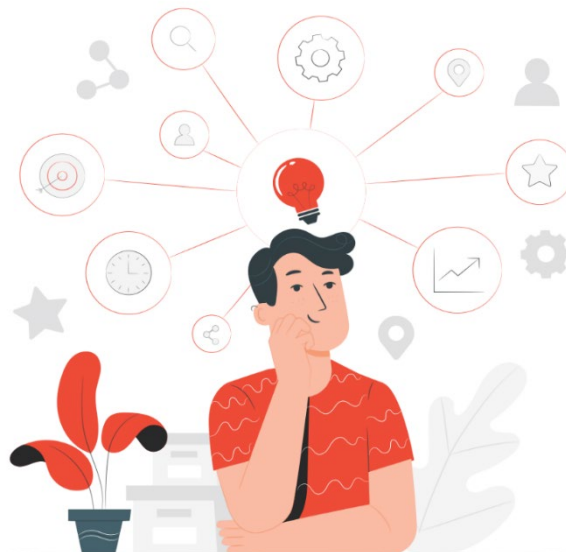
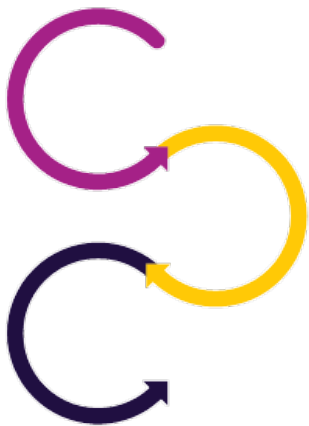


Students' Guide to Disclosure

Disclosure – The Basics

Disclosure is not a one-size-fits-all concept. There is no one right way or right time to disclose a disability. You may not wish to disclose your disability (to an employer) and that is okay!

- “Disclosure” is the act of making a disability known to others.
- Disclosure does not mean disclosing the nature/diagnosis of one’s disability.
- It is a very personal choice that must be an informed decision.

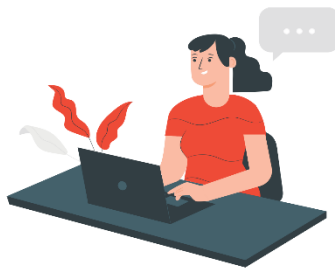




The “Whether” – Do I need to disclose?

There is no legal obligation to disclose information about disability unless:

- it affects the ability to perform the essential functions of the job;
- it affects the ability to work safely and to ensure the safety of co-workers; or
- accommodations are required to be successful such as alternate interview arrangements, modified equipment, or flexible working arrangements.



The “When” – What is the best time to disclose?

There are advantages and disadvantages of disclosing the disability at different stages of the employment process, such as at the time of job application, before or during the interview, on job offer, after you start work, or if a problem arises. Again, this is a personal decision.

Consider the following, based on The University of Guelph’s [Disclosure Timing Options chart](#), for more considerations of advantages and disadvantages at each stage.

Disclosure Timing Options

On a Resumé or Application

- Advantages: Honesty and peace of mind. Allows the employer to decide if disability is an issue. The organization may be looking to recruit diverse employees.
- Disadvantages: Might disqualify you with no opportunity to present yourself and your qualifications. Does not allow you to address employer concerns.
- Considerations: You may have a harder time finding work, but usually you will have no disability-related problems.



When the Employer Calls to Set up an Interview

- Advantages: Honesty and peace of mind. Reduces catching the interviewer “off guard” if you have a visible disability.
- Disadvantages: Employer may have preconceived notions about disability before you can demonstrate your skills.
- Considerations: If you need accommodations for the interview itself, you should address them now.

During the Interview

- Advantages: Employer is already interested in you. Gives you the opportunity to advocate for your abilities and demonstrate positive self-perception. Discrimination is less likely to happen in person.
- Disadvantages: “Shock value” may make employers uncomfortable. If you focus too much on presenting your disability, it could indicate a potential problem to the employer.
- Considerations: Be prepared to explain your needs clearly and to answer questions about your disability. Make sure the focus is on your ability to do the job well.

After a Job Offer is Made

- Advantages: You will know you landed the job because of your abilities. Gives employer time to prepare accommodations. If disclosure changes their decision and you are certain you can do the job, legal recourse is an option.
- Disadvantages: Employer may feel as though you should have told them earlier, which may lead to distrust. The offer may be rescinded.
- Considerations: If you know you will require accommodations, you should consider disclosing at this point. You will need to clearly explain that your disability will not interfere with the requirements of the position.



After You Start Work

- **Advantages:** Opportunity to prove yourself on the job and develop a good understanding of the job tasks and any accommodations you may need. Allows you to respond to disability-related questions with peers at work.
- **Disadvantages:** Nervousness on the job. Your employer may accuse you of falsifying your application. It could impact your interactions with co-workers.
- **Considerations:** It may be difficult to identify who you should disclose to. The longer you put off disclosing, the harder it becomes.

After a Problem on the Job

- **Advantages:** Allows you to prove yourself on the job prior to disclosure.
- **Disadvantages:** Your employer may accuse you of falsifying your application. Could impact relationships with your manager and co-workers.
- **Considerations:** Be aware if job problems are actually related to disability. If so, address your concerns as soon as possible.

Never

- **Advantages:** You will not be asked to explain your disability. Employers and co-workers will not assume that work performance issues are a result of your disability.
- **Disadvantages:** If serious problems occur, you run the risk of being fired. You may unintentionally perpetuate disability myths and misunderstandings.
- **Considerations:** If you require no accommodations and you are certain that your disability will not be an issue for your job performance, the issue of disclosure becomes less critical.



The “How” – What should I say when disclosing?

Planning and preparing for a disclosure conversation is key! This can help you feel a sense of empowerment in your job search process. You may consider the following:

- Provide positive examples of when challenges were overcome.
- Demonstrate, with examples, the skills gained from managing a disability.
- Prepare a brief disclosure script and rehearse it.

Disclosure Script

It is highly recommended that a script be prepared and rehearsed in advance. Use the following as an example:

“I have/am (highlight your strengths/skills/abilities/qualifications relevant to the job) and can perform the essential functions of this job, but sometimes (mention your limitations) might impact my ability to (describe the duties you may have difficulty performing). I work best when (describe the specific accommodations you need to support the duties you have difficulty performing).”





Disclosure – The Process

1. Reflect

Start by considering the following:

- Strengths and abilities related to the position?
- Challenges and limitations related to the position or job duties that may be difficult to perform?
- Strategies, tools or accommodations used in the past that have allowed you to perform certain duties more successfully?

2. Develop

Using the answers to the previous questions, develop a disclosure script that frames your disability as an asset, highlights your abilities, and clearly states your limitations and needs.

3. Practice

You can practice saying the disclosure script in your head and out loud. You can also practice with a family member, friend, or support staff at the Employment Support Centre or Centre for Accessible Learning.

4. Approach

Once you are comfortable, you can approach a trusted source, such as your manager or human resources professional. They will respect the privacy of your information and be able to direct you to the right resources for support and accommodation.

5. Request

You can request your accommodation in writing and invite your manager or human resources manager to discuss it further.

6. Collaborate

Be open and willing to collaborate with your employer on your accommodation needs.



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Related DCOI Resource

Service Providers' Guide to Communicating with Students about Disclosure.

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