

SUCCESS IN THE WORKPLACE

EMPLOYER TOOLKIT

Strategies from
Autistic Employees

ONBOARDING AUTISTIC EMPLOYEES



Easy adjustments for employers to make

Many of the adjustments that an autistic employee may need are simple, and cost little to nothing to implement.

Every autistic individual is different, so not all autistics will need the same adjustments.

Implementing adjustments ahead of the employee's start date will prevent the employee from being frustrated and overwhelmed on their first day of the job.

Here are some examples of easy adjustments that employers can make in advance of the autistic employee's first day on the job:

Commonly requested physical and sensory adjustments:

- Ability to have time between tasks
- Being able to take off my shoes while sitting down for long periods of time
- Being able to have a blanket with me
- Having access to a dark room
- Being able to wear sunglasses on shift indoors
- Being able to get up and wash my hands when I feel like it needs to happen
- *Closed captioning for meetings
- *Ability to ask my boss for written direction

autistic employees

**counts as sensory because of auditory*

Other physical and sensory adjustments frequently requested:

- Access to a quiet workspace that's free of visual and auditory distractions
- Permission to wear noise-cancelling headphones
- Ability to control temperature, fans, ventilation etc. for their immediate workspace
- Access to fidget toys
- Ability to get up and move when needed
- LED lighting or lighting that doesn't hum and flicker
- Flexible working hours
- Scent-free environment
- Access to weighted blankets, vests or lap pads
- Access to different chair/seating options

Providing **communication adjustments** ahead of time is also important.

Commonly requested communication adjustments:

- Text to speech software. I like both reading and listening at the same time for better retention.
- Instead of expecting me to verbally describe my challenges and history on the job with a new supervisor, being able to provide them with written information about what works well for me, what I need support with, areas that I know need improvement and what I've done so far about that.
- Having time to just work alone without being constantly interrupted.
- It is most helpful that instructions are given in a written list in the order of priority.
- ... My daily tasks having step by step instructions would be very helpful.
- Not being expected to have a meaningful response immediately. Need lots of time to process and think.
- It's not enough for others to understand my communication style, it needs to be given equal status with theirs. Because it's always me that 'has to learn to do things differently' not them. And since I can't, that's a big problem. I am looked down on because of my communication style instead of being respected for having a novel perspective and a positive attitude and a solution-orientated way of thinking.
- Not being judged by, or expected to make 'small talk'.

autistic employees

The above list is not exhaustive and does not include adjustments for social situations, or anxiety and emotional regulation, which are covered in the retention section. However, this list does cover the most commonly requested items to address both sensory and communication adjustments in a survey of 174 autistic employees. If requested, these are the most important adjustments to have in place for the employee's first day on the job.