

DRAFT

Building Employer Confidence

**Access requirements and
reasonable adjustments
- Scripts**

Talking about access requirements and reasonable adjustments

What is needed to have an effective conversation about adjustments

Safety

Create a space where the person feels psychologically safe to have the conversation.

Trust

Build trust to create a safe space. Check if the person wants to keep any part of the conversation discreet or confidential.

Curiosity

Be curious about how you can help the person. Avoid assumptions and seek clarification.

Openness

Be open to new ideas, solutions, and ways of working. You both need to talk openly about what you need and what you can provide.

Vulnerability

Have the conversation even though you may not 'get it right' the first time. It is better to try and to learn from experience than to not try at all.

Flexibility

Be flexible with communication preferences and where and how the conversation is had. Try to be solution-focused.

Mutual agreement

Make sure you are both clear about next steps and who is responsible for each action.

Collaboration

Encourage two-way communication and learning and share responsibility for what has occurred and future actions.

Genuine commitment

All parties need to be committed to find solutions.

Person-centeredness

Remember the individual is the expert on their own needs. There is no 'one size fits all' solution.

How to have the conversation

People with communication access requirements have told us they want employers to:

- use plain language during these conversations
- move away from the term 'reasonable adjustments', in favour of terms like 'support', 'what you need', or simply 'adjustments'.

When to have the conversation:

Regularly

The time frame for checking in should be transparent and agreed upon by the employee and manager.

When the person's role changes

Whenever the person experiences changes to responsibilities, workload or reporting lines.

When the work environment changes

When the person experiences changes to work location, technology upgrades, new business policies or processes.

When personal circumstances change

When the person experiences health challenges, extended time off, or big life changes like moving house or the death of a family member.

When the person's work performance changes

A change in performance or behaviour indicates a need to check in with an employee, both generally, and with specific regard to adjustments. This check-in should occur early and identify what supports are needed.

At the right time

Certain times, like probation or performance review periods, may make employees less likely to feel comfortable requesting reasonable adjustments. Managers should be sensitive to this and reassure employees that they will not be negatively impacted by requesting adjustments during these periods.

Giving information and advance warning prior to having the conversation can help the employee to prepare. Information could include: what reasonable adjustments are, how the organisation supports and encourages reasonable adjustments, and what to expect during and after the conversation.

'I'm worried about asking someone about their access requirements. What can I do?'

Some employers told us that they are concerned that asking about access requirements and reasonable adjustments could offend the employee, or could have them appear to be making a judgement.

As an employer/manager, it is good practice to start the conversation about access requirements and reasonable adjustments with all of your employees in all stages of the employment life cycle.

This means these conversations are more likely to become familiar and embedded in your organisational culture. When talking about needs and adjustments is the norm, there is less risk of employees feeling singled out.

Structuring the conversation:

Steps	You might say:
<p>Raise the topic as a statement of support</p> <p>Explain that your organisation values having a diverse workforce and recognises that employees work best when their unique needs are met.</p>	<p>‘It’s important to us that all our employees are able to do their best at work. We have adjustments/supports in place for our employees for lots of different reasons.’</p>
<p>If you use the term ‘reasonable adjustments’.</p> <p>Explain what it means in plain language.</p>	<p>‘We make changes to how our employees work, to make sure they can perform at their best.’</p>
<p>Invite requests</p> <p>If the person is a new employee, make sure they have enough information about their role and the organisation to know what is already in place and what adjustments may be beneficial.</p>	<p>‘We encourage you to let us know how we can best support you in your role.’</p> <p>‘We encourage you to tell us what you need to thrive at work.’</p> <p>‘We welcome candidates telling us their preferences.’</p> <p>‘What would help you to do your best at work?’</p> <p>‘Is there anything we can change to help you do your job?’</p> <p>‘What do you need from us in order to do your job successfully?’</p> <p>‘Have you got ideas about better ways of doing your job?’</p> <p>‘What support do you need to make sure this is a great place to work?’</p>

<p>Reiterate that the person will not be disadvantaged by requesting adjustments</p>	<p>‘We’re happy to make adjustments for our employees because we’re committed to having a diverse and productive workforce. We aim for all employees to succeed.’</p>
<p>Share examples of the adjustments that are available</p> <p>Note that adjustments are not limited to these examples.</p>	<p>Examples of adjustments could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • physical, such as workspace modifications • technology, such as alternative software and assistive technologies • flexibility, such as adjusted start/finish times or reduced hours • communication, such as preferences for communication mode or more regular catch-ups • plans for support workers.
<p>If the person identifies some adjustments</p> <p>Discuss whether these adjustments are necessary, reasonable and possible.</p> <p>You may not be able to confirm this in the moment – if not, let the person know you will need to look into what support is available.</p>	<p>‘Thanks for sharing that. That sounds reasonable. We would be happy to make that adjustment.’</p> <p>‘Thanks for sharing that. I will have to check if that is possible. I will get back to you as soon as I can.’</p> <p>‘Are there any other supports or changes that would help you at work?’</p>
<p>If the person does not identify any adjustments</p> <p>Interviewees or new employees may need settle in before they can identify reasonable adjustments - let them know that if they have any ideas in the future, you would be happy to hear and discuss them.</p>	<p>‘That’s okay. If any ideas do come up, please let me know. I’m happy to revisit this at any time. How about we put this as a standing item on our regular meeting agendas so we can remember to discuss it.’</p>

<p>Let the person know that this will be an ongoing conversation</p> <p>This will not be their only chance to discuss reasonable adjustments. Set a timeline for when you will check in again.</p>	<p>‘I will check in with you again in two weeks but let me know if you’d like to discuss anything before then.’</p>
<p>Check in again</p> <p>Checking in conveys a commitment to getting it right.</p> <p>Demonstrate an openness to testing options until something works.</p> <p>Make sure you check in at the time you said you would.</p>	<p>‘How is your reasonable adjustment plan going?’</p> <p>‘Is there anything else you need?’</p> <p>‘What’s working / not working for you?’</p>

Commit to the adjustment

Once a reasonable adjustment is in place, it should stay in place until otherwise agreed by the employee and manager. If a change is required, this should be discussed and agreed upon.

What if the person suggests an adjustment that is not reasonable?

You must determine whether an adjustment is:

- reasonable
- necessary
- possible

If the adjustment does not meet the criteria above for any reason, explain this clearly to the person.

Make sure they understand why the adjustment has not been considered reasonable, necessary or possible.

You may suggest an alternative adjustment that is reasonable. Let them know this does not mean other adjustments cannot be considered, now or in the future.

You might say:

- ‘You had requested we make an adjustment to ... ‘
- ‘Thanks for raising this with us – we appreciate you bringing it to our attention. Unfortunately, we won’t be able to offer this adjustment.’
- ‘We don’t consider this possible/reasonable/necessary because ...’
- ‘We still want to make sure you feel you can perform your best at work.’
- ‘What about if we ...?’

Scope’s Building Employer Confidence is made possible by an Information and Linkages Capacity Building Project funded by the Department of Social Services and the National Disability Insurance Scheme. This training has been co-designed with the valuable input of people with communication access requirements, pilot organisations and our valued partner, Thriving Communities Australia. Contributions from co-designers have directly influenced its design, ensuring it is informed, inclusive and reflective of diverse experiences. We recognise and appreciate the personal stories shared in shaping this impactful learning experience.

This information provides guidance on how to support communication in the workplace with people who have communication access requirements. It should not be relied upon in relation to employment law matters - independent advice should be sought.