

## GUIDANCE: ACCESSIBLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

### EXPERIENCE BASED RATHER THAN 'WHAT-IF' QUESTIONS

Questions should be direct, specific, based on experience and literal. This removes the expectation to interpret ambiguous questions correctly, and the pressure to think hypothetically (predict a situation) which many autistic people find difficult.

#### **SAY:**

**'Tell us about a problem you have had to solve, what was the process you undertook to find a solution?'**

#### **DON'T SAY:**

'How do you approach problem-solving?'

### AVOID COMPETANCY QUESTIONS

Autistic people tend to have more difficulty with competency-based 'what did you do' type of questions, which are also by nature very vague. Autistic individuals may also find it difficult to recall past events.

We advocate that employers offer a task-based interview instead of asking questions so that autistic people can demonstrate, rather than talk about what they can do.

If it's not possible to remove competency-based questions, then make them as clear and specific as possible using the **S.T.A.R. method** . Using the candidate's CV as a basis for questions is a best-practice approach.

#### **Example:**

##### **DON'T ASK**

'What would you do, if you were finding it difficult to work with a colleague who consistently missed deadlines for their input into your project, and this potentially would cause the overall project delivery to be delayed?'

##### **DO ASK**

**(Situation):** Describe a situation where colleague or person missed deadlines for their input into a project or piece of work of yours?

**(Task):** What was the problem, task or project that you needed to deliver?

**(Action):** What action, if any, did you take to ensure that your colleague met their personal deadlines?

**(Result):** What was the result of the action you took?

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## ASK IF THE CANDIDATE WOULD PREFER NOT TO ANSWER BIOGRAPHICAL QUESTIONS

Some autistic people really struggle with answering questions which are meant to put them at ease, for example, 'where do you live' or 'what hobbies do you have/what do you like to do in your downtime'?

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## AVOID BIG, OPEN QUESTIONS

Asking a candidate 'tell me about yourself' doesn't make it clear exactly what you want to know. Instead, be specific and ask for example 'what is it about your past studies or experience that makes you interested in this role'?

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## GIVE EXAMPLES IN YOUR QUESTIONS

If asking a question such as 'Tell us about a problem you have had to solve?' you should then explain 'for example, the problem could have been with a task you had to get done in school, college, at home or work'.

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## ASK QUESTIONS RELEVANT TO THE ROLE

This may seem obvious, but many employers make the mistake of asking questions not related to the specific role. For example, you may be looking out for future leaders when interviewing for entry level roles, but asking questions not related to the role will likely disadvantage and overwhelm many autistic candidates. Design another way of assessing future talent if this is the case.

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## BE PREPARED FOR LITERAL ANSWERS TO VAGUE OR AMBIGUOUS QUESTIONS

Asking 'Why did you apply for this role?' could literally be answered with 'I need a job'. If this happens you could follow up with 'That's a good answer. What about (specific skill requirement of role) do you enjoy?'

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## AVOID MULTI-LAYERED QUESTIONS

This can overwhelm the candidate, and they may forget all the different parts of the question, use the **S.T.A.R.** method for breaking-down multi-layered questions. Also, using the **S.T.A.R.** method means you won't miss out on some useful responses.

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## ENCOURAGE THE CANDIDATE THAT IT'S GOOD TO CLARIFY IF THEY NEED TO

Applicants may worry that if they don't understand the question that this reflects badly upon them and so may not feel confident to clarify when they need to. You can avoid this by proactively inviting them to ask you to clarify their answer or ask the same question using different words if the answer is not what you expected.

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## AVOID USING JARGON

Autistic individuals often think in pictures and have a literal way of interpreting language, and so someone may have a literal image of someone putting a pin in the example below. Many autistic people can interpret the non-literal meaning of jargon, but it takes effort, and can be exhausting. It can slow down communication and the ability to respond meaningfully.

### DON'T SAY:

'let's put a pin in it'.

### DO SAY

**'we'll talk about that when the appropriate time comes'.**