

# Tips and Considerations for Students when Disclosing a Disability to an Employer



The following chart from Guelph University helps to understand the **advantages and disadvantages** of disclosing a disability at different times throughout the job search process. There is no formula for determining the right time and place to disclose, it is entirely personal. Consider the following in your decision-making:

|   | ADVANTAGES   | DISADVANTAGES   | THINGS TO CONSIDER   |
|---|--|---|--|
| <b>On a resume or application</b>                     | Honesty and peace of mind. Allows the employer to decide if disability is an issue. The organization may be looking to recruit diverse employees.  | Might disqualify you with no opportunity to present yourself and your qualifications. Does not allow you to address employer concerns.                      | You may have a harder time finding work, but usually you will have no disability-related problems.   |
| <b>When the employer calls to set up an interview</b> | Honesty and peace of mind. Reduces catching the interviewer "off guard" if you have a visible disability.  | Employer may have preconceived notions about disability before you can demonstrate your skills.   | If you need accommodations for the interview itself, you should address them now.  |
| <b>During the interview</b>                           | Employer is already interested in you. Gives you the opportunity to advocate for your abilities/demonstrate positive self-perception. Discrimination is less likely to happen in person.                                 | "Shock value" may make employers uncomfortable. If you focus too much on presenting your disability, it could indicate a potential problem to the employer. | 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.  |
| <b>After a job offer is made</b>                      | You will know you landed the job as a result of your abilities. If disclosure changes their decision and you are certain you can do the job, legal recourse is an option. Gives employer time to prepare accommodations. | Employer may feel as though you should have told them earlier, which may lead to distrust. The offer may be rescinded.                                      | 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. |
| <b>After you start work</b>                           | Opportunity to prove yourself on the job and develop a good understanding of the job tasks and what accommodations you may need. Allows you to respond to disability questions with peers at work.                       | Nervousness on the job. Your employer may accuse you of falsifying your application. It could impact your interactions with co-workers.                     | It may difficult to identify who you should disclose to. The longer you put off disclosing, the harder it becomes.   |
| <b>After a problem on the job</b>                     | Allows you to prove yourself on the job prior to disclosure.   | Your employer may accuse you of falsifying your application. Could impact relationships with your manager and co-workers.                                   | Be aware if job problems are actually related to disability. If so, address your concerns as soon as possible.   |
| <b>Never</b>  | 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.   | If serious problems occur, you run the risk of being fired. You may unintentionally perpetuate disability myths and misunderstandings.                      | 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.                                    |

Source: University of Guelph: <https://www.recruitguelph.ca/cecs/students-alumni/students-disabilities/disclosing-your-disability>