

The Mask vs. Real Exercise

Fill in each column as we go. There are no wrong answers.

What I hide Things you mask or apologise for	What it actually is The honest reframe	How I say it in the room Language you walk in with
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My Reasonable Adjustments

What could you ask for? Tick what applies and add your own.

<input type="checkbox"/> Questions in advance	<input type="checkbox"/> Extra time	<input type="checkbox"/> Quiet interview room	<input type="checkbox"/> Bring notes	<input type="checkbox"/> Format /Device	Other: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Virtual Interview	<input type="checkbox"/> Extra time for tests				

Three Strengths I'm Walking In With

Not skills. Things your brain does that are valuable, even if you've been told otherwise.

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____

My Interview Checklist

How do you get yourself prepared for the meeting. Consider the time-line leading up to the interview

<p>As soon as interview is confirmed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Requested reasonable adjustments <input type="checkbox"/> Received response to request <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <p>Several days before</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Know the location and travel plan <input type="checkbox"/> Prepare answers to questions Reviewed <input type="checkbox"/> job description and notes Revisited my <input type="checkbox"/> CV and experience Completed my Mask <input type="checkbox"/> vs. Real worksheet <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> 	<p>The Night Before</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Clothes ready <input type="checkbox"/> Alarm Clock Set <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <p>On the Day</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Check connections e.g travel/tech <input type="checkbox"/> Pack your notebook / charged devices <input type="checkbox"/> Sensory Plan ready (earphones, grounding objects) <input type="checkbox"/> Reminded myself of my three strengths <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> 	<p>In the Room</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> I'm here because I CAN do this job <input type="checkbox"/> It's okay to pause before answering <input type="checkbox"/> I can say 'let me think about that' I'm here to show what I bring <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
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FAQS

How can I keep track of my answers while speaking?

There are a couple of strategies to employ here; starting with preparation, have those bullet points in front of you (in whatever format you choose to use for notes) and tick off what you have covered as the conversation progresses

You may choose to anchor answers through examples using a framework to tell the story ie what you did, how you did it and the result.

how do I advise my students with autism about their very long pauses after being asked a question? These are significant pauses of 30 seconds or more of complete silence

Name it openly: "I take a moment to process before I answer, that pause is me thinking." Then actually take the pause without apology. The explicit naming stops interviewers filling the silence awkwardly. This would also lean into the requirement for extra time and questions in advance

What adjustments can you request and how can panels accomodate?

Adjustments are legally backed (Equality Act 2010) and the list is longer than most people think. Frame the request around what helps you perform, not a deficit.

Common asks:

- extra time / breaks
- questions in advance
- quiet room
- task-based alternatives

Panels can accomodate by structuring their interviews; questions should be prepared in advance, not least to ensure all candidates are assessed equally and fairly. They should deliver structured interviews, clear non-jargon questions, avoid chained multi-part questions

Can I request reasonable adjustments without a formal diagnosis?

Reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act don't require a formal diagnosis, though employer willingness varies so it does need to be reasonable. You're describing what helps you work well, you don't owe a medical history

Do I have to disclose neurodivergence in an application/interview?

Most importantly you choose if, when, and how. No one else gets to decide.

- You don't need to disclose to get interview adjustments, just request what you need. If you choose to disclose, route it through HR or a trusted recruiter pre-interview, not the panel itself.
- In application: lead with strengths plus what supports you, not the medical label
- Post-offer is also a valid disclosure point, especially for Access to Work

How can I spot a neurodivergent-friendly workplace in an interview?

Ask: how does the team communicate, what does onboarding look like, how do you support different working styles, what's the flexibility like in practice. The response to your adjustment request is the actual answer, more than what they say on the website.

Look for specifics, not platitudes. "We treat everyone the same" is a red flag
Visible staff networks, leadership examples, careers-page language all tell you something

How do I find a balance between giving them what they want (STAR examples from your experience relevant to the job to show suitability) and being concise and focused?

Pre-set a length for each example, eg 90 seconds max. Situation and Task in one sentence each, most of your time on Action and Result. If you hit 90 seconds and haven't landed, stop and ask "would you like more detail?"

If the employer disallows your requested reasonable adjustments - whether actually reasonable or not, what could you do about it? Should you just go ahead with the interview anyway?

This ties in with how to spot an neuro-inclusive workplace. How a company responds to a reasonable adjustment request tells you more about their culture than anything on their careers page. If they refuse without a genuine reason, push back, or make you feel difficult for asking, that highlights the culture you'd be walking into every day, not just at interview. An adjustment refusal early on often saves you from discovering a bad fit six months in.

You can still do the interview if you want to, but go in with your eyes open. Legally, unreasonable refusal of adjustments may breach the Equality Act 2010, worth noting if it comes up in feedback or a formal complaint later. And "unreasonable" is the key word — cost, scheduling, or genuine operational reasons can make a refusal fair. Blanket "we don't do that" is a red flag. The bottom line: treat their response as data. It's telling you whether this is somewhere you'd actually thrive.

FAQS

I worry about my tone of voice, how can I improve how I sound?

Nerves flatten prosody because your brain is using all its bandwidth on content, not delivery. Slow down, breathe at punctuation, and mark two or three spots in your notes to deliberately lift or drop your voice, practice reading aloud and record yourself.

How do I know if I am over-prepared vs appropriately prepared?

You're over-prepared if you're scripting word-for-word answers that fall apart when the question shifts. You're well-prepared when you have 5–7 stories you know deeply and can flex to whatever they ask.

How do I demonstrate being a "team player" when I excel more as someone who is more autonomous?

Reframe, don't contradict. "I work best with clear ownership lands better than "I'm autonomous." Team player doesn't mean extroverted, it means you contribute reliably and communicate well. Give examples of collaboration that play to your strengths: async, structured, documented.

How do you get a grip of your nerves that are sending your brain into a tailspin? How do you stay calm?

Nerves are your body being ready, not broken. Box breathing (4-4-4-4) for 60 seconds before you speak. Feet on the floor, cold water nearby, and one grounding object in your pocket. You don't eliminate nerves, you give them somewhere to go. My calming app Dave has breathing, grounding and stabilisation tools to help you find ways to manage the anxiety

I find extreme difficulty in observing how the interviewers are perceiving me during my answers, and I do misinterpret their nonverbal cues.

Stop trying to read them. Ask instead: "Does that answer your question?" or "Would you like me to go deeper?" You're not guessing any more they'll tell you. At the end of the interview you can ask the interviewer whether they require further context to clarify suitability for the role

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How should I approach competency question?

Think of competency-based questions as your friend, because they are structured to allow you to tell a story and use a framework to answer them effectively. Pick stories that cover the common competencies (leadership, problem-solving, collaboration, resilience, initiative) and know them well enough to flex

Pause to choose the right story. "Can I have a moment to think" and watch the ND trap of spending too long on Situation and running out of time before Action and Result

How can I gauge the need for deeper meaning and expanding answers?

Open questions; those that can't be answered yes or no, will tend to lend themselves to more indepth answers. At the same time, it's learning what type of questions require more detailed answers.

Can I check what you're looking for with that question?" is completely acceptable and often respected. Identifying subtext is learnable. Mock interviews and coaching close the gap, so consider this part of interview prep.

How do you promote your skills without the academic background? A lot of employers look at academic qualifications that are not always a suitable for ND people's learning styles?

Whilst qualifications have their place in the recruitment process, many ND people learn through doing, through depth, through interest-led paths rather than linear curriculums. That isn't a gap, it's a different route to the same skills — often with more real-world application.

Lead with outcomes and evidence. Specific projects, measurable results, things you built, fixed, or shipped, what changed because you were there. These are the signals that actually predict performance.