The University of Southern California is dedicated to ensuring that all students with disabilities obtain equal access, whether it be in the classroom or achieving their life-long goals. We hope to enhance employability by providing tips, resources, and services that may benefit all individuals, regardless of ability. You can also find career management information 24/7 on connectSC or careers.usc.edu.

Rights and Responsibilities

The definition of disability
According to the Americans with Disabilities Act as Amended (ADAAA 2008), an individual with a disability is someone who experiences or lives with an impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities.

Rights in the workplace
The ADAAA protects qualified individuals with disabilities. To be “qualified” for a position, you must be able to perform the “essential functions” of the job, with or without reasonable accommodations. The law requires employers to provide reasonable accommodations to qualified applicants and employees with disabilities.

Reasonable accommodations
An accommodation is any change in the work environment or in the way things are customarily done that enables an individual with a disability to enjoy equal employment opportunities.

Examples of workplace accommodations:

- Accessible parking / facilities
- Modified work schedules
- Assistive technology
- Service animals
- Modified equipment

An accommodation is no longer reasonable if it imposes an “undue hardship” to the operation of the employer’s business. This may include financial hardship or the nature and structure of the business operation.
Disclosing Disability

→ Deciding when and if to disclose
Choosing to disclose your disability is your personal decision and taking the time to prepare is in your best interest. The timing is up to you.

Consider the following stages:

Knowing to whom to disclose
You will most likely correspond with Human Resources. HR may ask for documentation to confirm your status, but all information is confidential.

Clear Communication
Applicants and employees will be the ones to initiate the interactive process, and responsiveness will be expected of the employer. Through this process, both parties will jointly determine the best course of action and reasonable accommodations.

During your conversation, you may want to discuss (1) previous accommodations that have worked for you in the past and (2) potential accommodations that you anticipate on needing in the workplace.

Before engaging with your employer, it may be beneficial to practice with a friend or family member.

Outside Resources
Here’s some resources to get you started:

Lime Connect: This organization assists students with scholarships, professional development webinars along with information about internships and full-time job opportunities. Sign up for their newsletter to get the latest updates on upcoming application deadlines!

Job Accommodation Network (JAN): JAN is the leading source of free, expert, and confidential guidance on workplace accommodations and disability employment issues. Have a question about workplace accommodations? They are here to help!

AbilityJOBS: A career website dedicated to employment of people with disabilities. Host of the largest resume bank with tens of thousands of job seekers with disabilities, from entry level candidates to PhD.