

# Job, Work Trials and Internships

How to create and implement neuro-inclusive Job, Work Trials and Internships



## About Job, Work Trials and Internships

Job, Work Trials and Internships are types of skills demonstrations that are different yet closely related, used by companies to evaluate candidates. These methods allow employers to assess both a candidate's practical skills and how their values align with an organisation. They allow candidates to be assessed in real-work scenarios, prior to deciding on whether to hire a potential candidate.

### What is the difference?

#### Job Trials

##### Short assessment

Typically shorter in duration, job trials focus on specific tasks or projects and are designed to assess a candidate's skills and suitability for the job. They might last only a few hours.

##### Ideal for

Commonly used in industries like hospitality, creative sectors, and education, where hands-on skills are critical.

#### Work Trials

##### Comprehensive assessment

These are more extensive and can last from several days to a few weeks, allowing a deeper insight into the candidate's abilities and inclusion with the team. Work trials are usually paid and involve a broader scope of responsibilities.

##### Ideal for

Effective in fields such as healthcare, IT, and teaching, where assessing a candidate's ability to handle complex responsibilities.

#### Internship

##### Learning experience

An internship is a professional learning experience that offers meaningful, practical work related to a student's field of study or career interest. Internships feature either paid or non-paid work, usually undertaken over a fixed and limited period.

##### Ideal for

Suited for entry-level roles across all industries, internships provide candidates with experience and allow organisations to identify future talent.

### Example: Hospitality industry

In the hospitality industry, a restaurant might conduct job trials for chefs. During the trial, candidates could be tasked with preparing signature dishes under time constraints, allowing the employer to assess their culinary expertise, ability to perform under pressure, and ability to work within a team.



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## Benefits

The benefits may include:

- Allows candidates to demonstrate their abilities in a practical work setting. For neurodivergent candidates, this can be particularly beneficial as it provides an opportunity to display skills that might not come across in more traditional methods.
- As a more comprehensive process, it can decrease the likelihood of early turnover.
- Provides an extended time to observe a candidate's skills and work ethic which can reduce pressure for candidates, allowing them more time to adapt to new environments or processes.



## Considerations and solutions

There are considerations to address to ensure the assessment is neuro-inclusive. These include:

### Considerations

#### Clarity in expectations:

Assumptions and lack of clarity around tasks or objectives can create confusion and stress, particularly for neurodivergent candidates who may thrive on clear instructions.

#### Consistent assessment:

Bias can occur when assessing candidates who approach tasks differently, potentially overlooking valuable skills or perspectives.

#### Fair compensation:

Unpaid trials or internships can be against Australian labour laws.

#### Transition support:

Transitioning into new roles or environments, even temporarily, can be challenging for some neurodivergent individuals.

### Solutions

Clearly outline objectives, tasks, and evaluation criteria. Use structured, step-by-step guidance to reduce uncertainty and enhance understanding.

Implement a standardised, outcomes-based evaluation framework to focus on results rather than the process. This ensures assessments are fair and objective.

Ensure trials and internships are conducted in alignment of Australian law.

Allow time for adaptation, particularly in longer work trials and internships. Provide structured feedback at regular intervals to guide performance and ensure candidates feel supported as they adjust.

# Create and implement neuro-inclusive Job, Work Trials and Internships

Job, Work Trials, and Internships can be valuable tools for evaluating candidates, and when designed inclusively, they can unlock the talents of neurodivergent individuals. Neurodivergent candidates often bring unique strengths to the workplace, such as innovative problem-solving, creativity, and strong attention to detail. This can lead to increased productivity, enhanced innovation, improved staff retention and a more inclusive workplace culture.

By implementing the following strategies, employers can create opportunities to access these benefits while ensuring all candidates can highlight their potential.

## Pre-trial or Internship preparation

Preparation is critical to setting neurodivergent candidates up for success. Many excel in environments with clear expectations, predictable structures, and accessible tools. Through effective and structured forward planning, employers can reduce unnecessary barriers and allow candidates to demonstrate their unique skills.

### Neuro-inclusive strategies

#### Detailed interview information

Provide details, including visuals about the process well in advance. This should include:

- Develop and share detailed schedules with start/end times, breaks, and task timings
- Provide clear expectations and accessible task descriptions in advance
- Ensure compensation for work trials aligns with Australian labour laws
- Contact details of a dedicated support person from the organisation to answer questions.

#### Clear instructions

- Use clear, direct language, and avoid idioms or jargon. **For example, “think outside the box!”**
- Provide instructions in multiple formats. **For example, written, verbal, and visual aids.**
- Break down complex tasks into simple, numbered steps with examples.

#### Environment familiarisation

- Offer pre-trial visits or virtual walkthroughs of the workplace to help candidates prepare
- Provide maps, building layouts, or transport directions to ease navigation
- Identify sensory preferences and discuss accommodations and adjustments.

#### Accommodations

- Encourage candidates to use personal aids. **For example, noise-cancelling headphones**
- Create sensory-friendly environments. **For example, adjustable lighting, minimal noise**
- Verify digital tools are compatible with assistive technologies, such as screen readers.

#### Educate hiring managers

Train hiring managers and support personnel on neurodiversity and inclusive practices to prevent unintentional bias and ensure fair, effective task design and evaluation.

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## Preparing the interview environment

Neurodivergent candidates often thrive when environments are structured, and tasks are clear. By ensuring the process is adaptable and accessible, employers can identify great problem-solvers, creative thinkers, and detail-oriented contributors. These strategies ensure that all candidates can show their strengths, resulting in better hiring decisions and a more innovative and productive workforce.

### Neuro-inclusive strategies

#### Structured environment

- Follow a consistent schedule with clear transitions and regular breaks
- Explain tasks with their purpose and relevance, using logical sequences to reduce ambiguity
- Ensure tasks reflect real-world responsibilities and are relatable.

#### Clear communication

- Deliver instructions in explicit, direct language, avoiding phrases like “play it by ear”
- Provide verbal and written summaries and encourage questions
- Use concrete examples to clarify expectations and ensure understanding.

#### Supportive workspaces

- Monitor sensory conditions (**For example, lighting, noise**) and provide quiet break spaces
- Ensure digital platforms are accessible and user-friendly.

#### Flexible assessment

- Evaluate candidates based on the quality of outcomes, not the methods used
- Allow flexibility in presentation, such as displaying results in verbal, written, or visual formats
- Provide clear time expectations for tasks and offer extended time where needed.

#### Real-time feedback

- Provide timely, constructive feedback in the candidate's preferred format
- Be specific, **for example, “Your report was clear and accurate”** rather than generic feedback
- Offer actionable suggestions for improvement.

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## Follow up from the Trial or Internship

A strong follow-up process ensures employers can assess candidates holistically while identifying ways to improve their recruitment processes. By providing actionable feedback and reflecting on the Trial or Internship's effectiveness, organisations can continuously refine their approach to access the unique strengths of neurodivergent candidates. This investment leads to better hiring outcomes, higher retention rates, and a more inclusive workplace culture.

### **Neuro-inclusive strategies**

#### **Comprehensive evaluation**

- Use standardised criteria focused on task outcomes and job relevance
- Document strengths and areas for improvement with specific examples.

#### **Feedback to candidate**

- Provide clear, actionable feedback tailored to the candidate's preferences
- Highlight contributions and offer practical advice for growth
- Share feedback in the preferred format, ensuring it is accessible.

#### **Reflection and improvisation**

- Gather feedback from candidates and staff to improve inclusivity in future trials.
- Adjust processes based on insights, such as refining instructions or offering more flexibility.
- Ensure tasks remain accessible and relatable to diverse candidates.

#### **Ongoing support**

- For successful candidates, maintain accommodations in their new roles
- Provide access to mentors or training to support long-term success
- Normalise discussions about accommodations and foster an inclusive workplace culture.

## Example of a neuro-inclusive Job, Work Trials and Internships

### Scenario

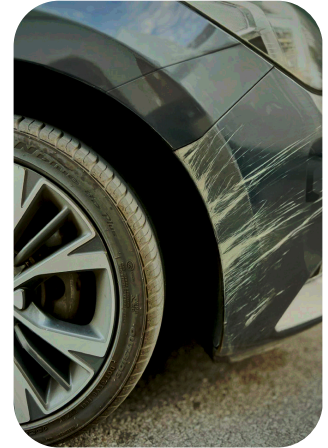
A neurodivergent individual applies for a mechanic position at an automotive repair shop. They are offered a work trial to evaluate their mechanical skills and ability to work in the shop environment.



Feedback sessions are scheduled at the end of each day using clear and direct language.

### Actions taken

- ✓ The shop ensures the work area is well-organised and quiet, with minimal background noise and distractions, allowing the candidate to focus on tasks.
- ✓ Detailed, written instructions are provided for the work trial tasks, which include diagnosing and repairing specific mechanical issues. Visual diagrams of the vehicle systems are also made available to aid understanding.
- ✓ The candidate is given several days to complete the tasks, with the flexibility to work at their own pace and the option to ask questions at any time.
- ✓ Feedback sessions are scheduled at the end of each day, using clear and direct language to discuss the work done and any adjustments needed, according to the candidate's preferred communication style.



### Outcome

These accommodations allow the candidate to demonstrate their technical skills and problem-solving abilities effectively. The structured and supportive trial environment provides a more accurate evaluation of their suitability for the position.

When employers create neuro-inclusive Job Trials, Work Trials, and Internships, they open the door to accessing the talents of neurodivergent individuals. These strategies lead to improved innovation, productivity, and team dynamics, while fostering a culture that values diversity and inclusion.

### Learn more and access resources

To learn more about Neuro-inclusive Recruiting and how to create and maintain neuro-inclusive workplaces, scan the QR code or visit [neuroinclusiverecruiting.org.au](https://neuroinclusiverecruiting.org.au).

