

Role Play Scenarios

How to create and implement neuro-inclusive Role Play Scenarios.



About Role Play Scenarios

Role Play Scenarios involve creating realistic situations that candidates are likely to encounter in their future roles. They're tasked to handle these scenarios using their skills and knowledge. This method tests how candidates react in real-time to situations relevant to the job, offering insights into their problem-solving skills, communication style, teamwork abilities, and how they handle pressure.

Benefits

There are many benefits, including:

- A practical assessment of how candidates apply their knowledge to the role.
- They can reveal behavioural traits and soft skills like empathy, negotiation, adaptability, and creativity.
- Assessors can directly observe candidate responses and interactions.
- Evaluate problem-solving and critical thinking skills, creativity, adaptability and ability to work collaboratively under pressure.
- Candidates can receive immediate, constructive feedback.
- Valuable in industries where interpersonal interactions and problem-solving are central to the role.



Ideal for:

Sales representatives, customer service agents, healthcare professionals, social workers, managers, and public relations specialists.

Applicable for:

Industries including retail, healthcare, social services, and media.

Example: Sales industry

In the sales industry, a candidate applying for a sales manager position may be tasked with conducting a simulated sales pitch to a prospective client. During the exercise, the candidate is required to uncover the client's needs, handle objections, and close the sale. Evaluators observe the candidate's communication skills, strategic thinking, and ability to adapt to client responses. This format provides a realistic context to assess how well the candidate would perform in client-facing situations while managing challenges effectively.



Create and implement neuro-inclusive Role Play Scenarios

Considerations and solutions

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

Considerations	Solutions
Advance notice: Candidates may find unexpected scenarios challenging.	Provide details about the format and objectives in advance to help candidates prepare.
Potential bias: Evaluators may misinterpret different communication styles or behaviours.	Train assessors to recognise diverse communication styles and focus on job-relevant behaviours.
Relevance: Abstract or irrelevant scenarios can confuse candidates and fail to assess their skills.	Ensure scenarios are realistic, directly tied to the role, and reflect actual job responsibilities.
Standardisation: Inconsistent evaluation criteria can lead to unfair assessments.	Use structured, standardised criteria to ensure all candidates are assessed equally.
Accommodations: Neurodivergent candidates may require tailored support during role-play exercises to allow them to perform at their best.	Provide tailored accommodations such as extra preparation time, alternative formats, or clear instructions to support their participation.

To ensure that Role Play Scenarios are neuro-inclusive, they must be thoughtfully designed, implemented, and evaluated.

Designing the assessment

Ensure that the tasks align with job requirements and accommodate varied cognitive styles.

Key strategies for design:

- Clear instructions**
Use straightforward language and provide instructions in multiple formats (written, verbal, visual). Offer context about the scenario, including its objectives and expected outcomes.
- Flexibility**
Allow candidates to approach Role Plays in ways that suit their strengths, such as through written or verbal interactions, if possible.
- Align tasks with the role**
Avoid abstract or irrelevant situations that could confuse candidates or fail to assess necessary skills.
- Standardised criteria**
Use structured evaluation frameworks to ensure consistent assessments across all candidates, focusing on objective performance metrics rather than subjective impressions.
- Timing flexibility**
Minimise strict timers and allow candidates ample time to complete tasks at their own pace.

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Pre-interview preparation

Providing detailed, accessible preparation materials helps candidates feel more confident and prepared for the assessment.

Neuro-inclusive strategies

Neurodivergent awareness training

Ensure all assessors understand common neurodivergent characteristics and how these may present in the assessment context.

Provide details

Share information about the role play format and objectives ahead of time. Include clear details about what the candidate will need to do and what the evaluators will be observing. Depending on the location and format, this may include:

- The schedule, including start and end times
 - Access details (location, parking, public transport, signing-in procedures)
 - Venue details, including sensory information and breakout spaces
 - Names, roles, and photographs of interviewer (as relevant)
 - Dress code recommendations
 - Necessary documents to bring
 - Contact details of a support person from the organisation to answer any questions.
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Support familiarisation

Offer candidates opportunities to practice similar scenarios or review mock examples beforehand to build confidence and reduce stress.

Accommodations

Communicate that candidates may bring a support person or use sensory tools to support them during the exercise.

Flexibility

Negotiate with the candidates a time of the day to do the assessment based on their preference.

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Setting up the assessment environment

The physical and sensory environment can greatly affect a candidate's performance, especially those who have sensory preferences. Offering alternative environments to conduct the interview can support candidates to perform to their best.

Neuro-inclusive strategies

Workplace visit

Offer candidates an opportunity to tour the workplace prior to the assessment. This visit can help candidates familiarise themselves with the setting, reducing anxiety and allowing them to identify accommodations they may need.

Sensory-friendly settings

- Minimise loud, continuous noise. **For example, humming from coffee machine.**
- Avoid sudden loud noises, like doors slamming
- Ensure consistent, non-flickering lighting
- Avoid strong smells from perfumes, kitchens, or nearby restrooms
- Provide simple décor and communicate any potential sensory stimuli in advance
- Provide a range of sensory items that the candidate can use during the assessment
- Provide a range of alternative seating options and encourage them to move furniture around

A sensory friendly setting can support the candidate to feel comfortable and to do their best.

Accessible technology

Ensure tools used for virtual role plays are user-friendly and equipped with accessibility features like captions or screen readers.

Break spaces

Offer a designated quiet area or sensory space for candidates to take breaks if needed on site.



Ensure the quiet area or sensory space is signed and is easy to access.

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Conducting the assessment

A supportive and flexible approach during the role play ensures all candidates can perform to the best of

Neuro-inclusive strategies

Accommodate all communication styles

Train assessors to recognise and value different ways of expressing ideas, such as direct or literal communication. Avoid penalising candidates for not adhering to typical social norms like maintaining eye contact.

Time to get comfortable

Allow candidates time to get comfortable in the setting and address any potential distractions or causes of anxiety.

Provide context

Clearly outline the situation and objectives before the exercise begins to help candidates fully understand the task.

Timely feedback

Offer clarification or guidance during the exercise if the candidate seems unsure of expectations. Ensure feedback is provided in a supportive manner.

Contingency planning

Be prepared to adjust the approach if unexpected needs or situations arise.

Post-assessment feedback

Clear and constructive feedback helps candidates understand their performance and enhances their overall experience of the recruitment process.

Neuro-inclusive strategies

Transparent outcomes

Inform candidates about when they can expect results and what the next steps will be.

Detailed feedback

Share specific observations, highlighting strengths and areas for growth. Avoid vague or generic feedback that does not offer actionable insights.



Being transparent about when candidates will be notified can reduce anxiety around when and if they will hear the result.

Example of a neuro-inclusive Role Play Scenario



Scenario

A candidate for a sales manager position is tasked with delivering a simulated sales pitch to a prospective client. They disclose that they prefer structured tasks and a quiet environment.



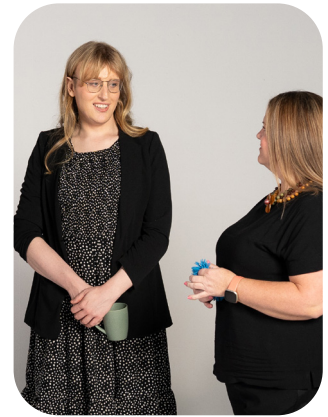
Actions taken

- The role play scenario is clearly explained, including the client's needs and objections to expect.
- The exercise is conducted in a quiet room with natural lighting, and the candidate is given written and verbal instructions in advance.
- The candidate is allowed to refer to notes during the pitch and given additional time to formulate responses.



Outcome

These accommodations enable the candidate to focus on demonstrating their communication, strategic thinking, and problem-solving skills, providing an accurate assessment.



Continuous improvement in Role Play design

To ensure assessments remain effective and inclusive, processes should be regularly reviewed and refined.



Strategies for improvement



Collect feedback

Collect feedback from participants to identify opportunities for improvement in scenario design, instructions, and evaluation methods.



Validation by neurodivergent reviewers

Involve neurodivergent reviewers in the creation and review of role play scenarios to ensure accessibility and relevance.



Regular updates

Conduct periodic reviews to confirm that scenarios align with current job requirements and meet accessibility standards.



Create and implement neuro-inclusive Role Play Scenarios

Role Play Scenarios, when designed and implemented inclusively, can provide valuable insights into a candidate's abilities and potential. By aligning scenarios with job requirements, creating supportive environments, and using structured evaluation methods, employers can foster a process that allows all candidates to demonstrate their full potential. These practices not only enhance the candidate experience but also can contribute to building innovative and high-performing teams.

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.

