

Simulated Work Tasks

How to create and implement neuro-inclusive Simulated Work Tasks.



About Simulated Work Tasks

Simulated Work Tasks are exercises that closely match the kind of work a candidate would do if they were hired. This approach allows employers to see how well a candidate can use their skills, solve problems, and fit into the role in a practical, hands-on way, without needing to commit to a job trial.

These tasks are designed to look like the actual work that will be done in the job and are usually part of the recruitment or interview process. They are set up to reflect the challenges of the role in a controlled setting. The purpose is to fairly assess a candidate's ability to do the job before making a hiring decision.

Benefits

The benefits may include:

- Provides a clear and practical demonstration of a candidate's ability to perform job-related tasks.
- Helps predict how a candidate will handle job pressures and solve real-world problems they would encounter in the role.
- Offers a more objective basis for evaluating a candidate compared to interviews alone, which can be influenced by interviewer bias.
- Ideal for evaluating technical skills, creativity, problem-solving, and adaptability.



Ideal for:

Engineering, agriculture, and creative industries.



Example: Agriculture industry

Sun Pork Farms, an agriculture industry, sets up a variety of agricultural-related tasks to simulate the real work environment. Candidates underwent tasks such as climbing over fences, injecting oranges (as a stand-in for veterinary practices), and recording data on a spreadsheet. This variety helps the hiring team identify candidates' strengths across several aspects of the job, ensuring a good match for specific roles within the farm.

Source: <https://sunporkfreshfoods.com.au/autism-and-agriculture/>

Create and implement neuro-inclusive Simulated Work Tasks

Considerations and solutions

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

Considerations	Solutions
Ethical implementation: Tasks should respect candidates' time and intellectual property.	Keep tasks reasonable in scope, ensuring they align with industry standards and job-tasks.
Time and resource management: Tasks should be meaningful, not excessively time-consuming or burdensome.	Design tasks that can be completed within a reasonable time limit, typically between 1-2 hours.
Realism vs. practicality: While tasks should reflect real-world responsibilities, they must also be achievable within an interview or recruitment context.	Ensure scenarios are realistic, directly tied to the role, and reflect actual job responsibilities.
Standardisation: Inconsistent evaluation criteria can lead to unfair assessments.	Focus on smaller, manageable components of the job that still offer meaningful insights into the candidate's capabilities.

Simulated Work Tasks are a valuable recruitment tool, allowing candidates to demonstrate real-world skills while giving employers insight into their capabilities. When designed inclusively, these tasks enable neurodivergent individuals to showcase their strengths in a supportive environment.

Pre-test preparation

Preparation is essential for creating an environment where neurodivergent candidates can succeed. Providing clear instructions, accessible formats, and a comfortable setup ensures all candidates can focus on demonstrating their full abilities without unnecessary barriers.

Neuro-inclusive strategies

Provide details

- Deliver instructions in multiple formats. **For example, written, verbal, and visual formats**
- Break down tasks into manageable steps and provide clear criteria for success
- Use consistent formatting and language to simplify processing and understanding
- Contact details of a dedicated support person from the organisation to answer questions.

Allow flexibility

- Allow candidates to choose their preferred response method, such as written, verbal, or visual formats, to align with their strengths
- Where feasible, provide options for adjusting the complexity or scope of tasks

Provide details

- Offer candidates the opportunity to visit the workspace or review a virtual tour beforehand
- Discuss potential sensory or environmental adjustments to create a supportive setting.

Create and implement neuro-inclusive Simulated Work Tasks

Task execution

Simulated tasks should focus on a candidate's ability to meet role-specific challenges, not on their ability to navigate unnecessary hurdles. By creating flexible, sensory-friendly environments and offering support, employers can ensure all candidates can perform at their best.

Neuro-inclusive strategies

Sensory-friendly environments

- Minimise loud, continuous noise
(For example, humming from coffee machines)
- Avoid sudden loud noises, like doors slamming
- Ensure consistent, non-flickering lighting
- Avoid strong smells from perfumes, kitchens, or nearby restrooms.

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

Accommodations

- Allow candidates additional time to complete tasks if required, ensuring performance is not penalised by processing speed
- Build in regular breaks and make it clear they are encouraged and will not affect the evaluation
- Have trained support personnel available to explain tasks and offer support.



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

Post-task follow up

Post-task reflection ensures continuous improvement of the skills demonstration process and provides candidates with the feedback they need to grow. By listening to candidates' experiences and adapting tasks based on their input, employers can foster a more neuro-inclusive hiring approach.

Neuro-inclusive strategies

Feedback opportunities

- Encourage receiving feedback on the process, focusing on inclusivity and accessibility.
- Offer candidates clear, constructive feedback on their performance.
For example, "Your demonstration was excellent, but next time, explain your steps more clearly. Does that make sense?"

Regularly update

- Regularly review task designs to ensure they remain fair and effective for all candidates
- Adapt tasks using the latest research, feedback, and advances in assessment tools.

Example of a neuro-inclusive Simulated Work Task

Scenario

A candidate for an engineering position at a tech company is given a simulated work task as part of the hiring process. The task involves solving a specific technical challenge related to circuit design using a simulation software.

Actions taken

- The company sets up a quiet and private workstation with ergonomic seating and controlled lighting to accommodate the candidate's sensory preferences.
- Detailed instructions are provided in multiple formats, written, visual (with diagrams), and a brief video explanation. The task involves designing a circuit that meets specified parameters, showing the candidate's technical and problem-solving skills.
- The candidate is allowed a full day to work on the task, with the flexibility to use the simulation software or physical components. They are encouraged to document their design process and reasoning either through written notes or a digital presentation.

Outcome

This setup not only allows the candidate to demonstrate their engineering skills and ability to handle complex challenges but also provides the employer with insights into how the candidate approaches problems creatively and adapts to technical requirements.



Neuro-inclusive Simulated Work tasks can provide an effective way to assess candidates' abilities while unlocking the potential of neurodivergent individuals. These strategies enable employers to identify exceptional talent while fostering a diverse and dynamic workforce. By removing unnecessary barriers, organisations can create a recruitment process that reflects their commitment to 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.

