



## ASPERGER'S ASSOCIATION OF NEW ENGLAND

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### **Sample Letter to Employers: A Tool for Workplace Disclosure**

The following letter is an example of what an adult with Asperger's might want to give to his or her employer, personnel officer, or supervisor to help explain what Asperger's is and how it may affect work and workplace relationships. The letter also suggests some of the basic accommodations the employer might make to help an employee with AS succeed on the job.

The authors would be glad if you want to use a version of this letter, but would suggest that you edit and shorten it to fit you and your situation. **Do not include aspects of Asperger's that do not apply to your particular circumstances!** Let us know if you would like some help tailoring the letter to your situation.

We hope you find it helpful. Feedback and suggestions are welcome. Please send comments to AANE.

YOUR STREET ADDRESS  
YOUR TOWN, YOUR STATE ZIP CODE  
October 9, 2007

Ms. Jane Doe  
ABC Company  
1234 First Street  
City, State 12345

Dear Ms. Doe:

Thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to work for ABC Company. I am looking forward to beginning work, and will try hard to understand and fulfill all my job responsibilities successfully. In this letter, I would like to offer you some important personal information that may affect how I perform in my new job. As you may already know, I have Asperger's Syndrome (AS for short). It may be helpful if you, as my supervisor at ABC Company, understand some characteristics of AS, and some reasonable accommodations for my different learning style, so that I can become a good employee who will contribute to ABC Company's success.

Asperger's Syndrome is a form of autism characterized by normal to superior IQ, accompanied by social and communication difficulties. These difficulties stem from neurologically based sensory and information-processing disabilities. Even though I may *look* just like everybody else, my mind works in a significantly different way, and sometimes my behavior and reactions will not be typical.

There is wide variation in the abilities and personalities of individuals with AS, but we do have a lot in common. I have difficulty understanding another person's perspective and reading messages that are conveyed by facial expression, or body language. This means that it is likely I will not understand office politics or occasionally put my foot in my mouth. On the positive side, once I understand the tasks and routines necessary to my job, I will perform them faithfully. I am honest and good-hearted.

With skillful supervision, you can minimize the impact of my differences, and make the best use of my many strengths. Here is a list of some suggestions for the kinds of accommodations that could help me feel comfortable and be a good employee. It would help if you, as my supervisor, can:

**PLEASE INSERT ONLY THOSE ITEMS FROM THE CHECKLIST THAT APPLY TO YOU.**

If you would like more information, you are welcome to call the Asperger's Association of New England (AANE). AANE is a small non-profit agency founded in 1996, with a mission of fostering awareness, respect, acceptance and support for individuals with Asperger's Syndrome. They provide programs for individuals with AS, their families,

and those in the community who work with them, including employers. You are always welcome to call them, to tap into knowledge and experience of AS. They can refer you to additional resources. They can be reached at 617-393-3824.

Thank you very much for taking the time to think about this important information. I look forward to working for you.

Sincerely,

YOUR NAME

Your new title

- Give me a *written* job description that spells out all my responsibilities in detail.
- Give me a written daily/weekly schedule.
- Give me specific, detailed, instructions for each new task that you assign to me.
- Present all new information *in writing*, rather than just orally.
- Give me *a little extra time* or coaching to master a new task or absorb new information.
- If possible, meet with me briefly at the beginning of each day to review and prioritize the day's agenda, and to forewarn me about any upcoming changes in the schedule/routine. (If more convenient, we could meet at the end of each day to preview the next workday.) I can adapt well and handle abrupt transitions or surprises if I am forewarned.
- Let me know to whom I should turn (and when and how) with questions about my assignments—to you, and/or an identified co-worker?
- Give me an explicit, detailed list of rules governing workplace protocol around such matters as appropriate dress, timing and length of breaks, when and where conversation with other employees is allowed. (I will probably *not* be able to intuit these rules for myself.)
- Train me thoroughly in the correct operation and rules for use of any workplace machinery or equipment such as copiers, postage meters, the telephone system, and fax machines.
- Try to allow me to focus on and complete one task at a time. If an interruption is unavoidable, please allow me a short time to adjust.
- If I say or do something inappropriate, I do not intend to be rude—I may just be neurologically overwhelmed. If this happens, please just give me chance to take a break and calm myself. Later we can discuss how to handle similar situations better.
- Try to avoid assigning me tasks where there are pressing deadlines, difficult personalities to deal with, or other factors that can ignite my anxieties.
- Understand that even though I may not make eye contact while you are speaking to me, I *am* listening to you. (It is hard for me to process auditory and visual information simultaneously.)
- Meet with me regularly and frequently to let me know how I am doing. Acknowledge whatever I am doing well. If you need to give negative feedback, the most effective approach is to suggest in a calm and neutral way any concrete steps I can take to correct the mistakes.
- Due to our disability, people with AS have trouble understanding other people's viewpoints. I may sometimes say things that are unintentionally hurtful or abrupt. I may need your feedback to realize this behavior is inappropriate, and replace it with more acceptable behavior.
- Recognize and accept my social or sensory limitations. Limit the amount of contact I have with the general public, and the amount of time I must interact with large groups or work in noisy settings. After working with a group, I may need a

“sensory break”—a walk to the mailbox, or some time working alone at a task in a quiet part of the office.

- Be patient and flexible. If you give directions and feedback calmly, I will feel less anxious, and can perform my best work for you.
- Help me decide if other people in the company should know I have AS. If personnel officers and co-workers can be understanding and accepting, they can help me succeed.
- Be compassionate. I have met with a lot of misunderstanding and failure in the past, despite my best efforts to meet society’s expectations. Although I may not always remember to express my thanks verbally, I will reward your patient supervisory efforts with a solid, reliable work performance.