



Creating Accessible Job Descriptions and Advertisements

www.untappedtalent.ca

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Introduction

A job advertisement is often the first contact an applicant has with your organization. A clear, accessible and inclusive advertisement can encourage more people with disabilities to apply. Taking time to get it right from the start can make the rest of the hiring process easier.

This guide helps employers review a job description and turn it into a clear, inclusive and accessible job advertisement. It covers essential duties, bona fide occupational requirements, qualifications, working conditions, plain language and the information applicants need before deciding whether to apply.



Job seekers spend on average 49.7 seconds reading a job ad before dismissing a position, so first impressions really count.

Weber, L. (2013). How We Really Read Job Ads.
<https://www.wsj.com/articles/BL-ATWORKB-911>

Takeaways From This Guide

After reviewing this guide, you should be able to craft job advertisements that provide applicants enough information to:

- Understand the actual job
- Decide whether they can perform its essential functions, with or without supports
- Understand how they will be evaluated
- Anticipate each stage of the hiring process
- Identify potential accessibility barriers
- Request accommodations or alternate formats without disclosing a diagnosis
- Participate equitably in applications, assessments and interviews

Key Information to Include



Include Information That Candidates Need

An accessible job advertisement helps candidates understand the role, decide whether it is right for them and complete the application process.

Provide clear and specific information. Do not make candidates search for important details or guess what the job involves.

Accessible Job Advertisements Include:

- A clear and familiar job title
- A short summary of the role
- The essential duties and expected results
- Only the qualifications that are truly needed
- The salary or salary range
- The work location and whether remote or hybrid work is available
- The expected schedule and type of employment
- Clear instructions for applying
- Information about how to request an accommodation or another application format

Put the Decision-Making Information First

Applicants should not have to search for the basic facts. Near the beginning, include:

- Job Title
- Employer and work location
- Remote, hybrid, or on-site expectations
- Salary or salary range
- Employment type and expected hours
- Application deadline
- Brief, concrete description of the role

Include an Accessibility Commitment Statement

An accessibility commitment statement should do more than say that your organization is an equal opportunity employer. It should tell applicants what support is available and how they can access it.

Your statement should:

- Welcome applications from persons with disabilities and other underrepresented groups
- Explain that accommodations are available at no cost throughout recruitment
- Offer alternate formats and help completing the application
- Provide clear contact information
- Protect the applicant's privacy



Example Statement

We welcome applications from persons with disabilities and other underrepresented groups. We provide accommodations at no cost during every stage of recruitment. To request an accommodation, help completing the application or another application format, contact [name or position] at [email or phone number]. You do not need to disclose a diagnosis.

Make Your Accommodation Policy Easy to Find

A commitment statement tells applicants what your organization promises. An accommodation policy explains how your organization will provide support.

Do not make applicants search for the policy. In the job advertisement:

- Provide a link to the policy or a plain-language summary
- Explain how to request it in another format
- Identify who applicants can contact
- Make sure that person can answer questions about accommodations and the essential requirements of the job

Example: Read our recruitment accommodation policy at [link]. To request the policy in another format or ask about accommodations or essential job requirements, contact **[name or position]** at **[email or phone number]**.

Explain What Happens After Someone Applies

Applicants should know what to expect before they enter the recruitment process.

Provide a short overview of the likely stages, such as:

- Application review or initial screening
- One or more interviews
- A work sample, presentation or assessment
- Reference or background checks
- An offer of employment

Include expected timing when it is known. Tell applicants that accommodations are available at every stage.

Example:

Our recruitment process:

1. We will review applications after the closing date.
2. Selected applicants will attend a 45-minute virtual interview.
3. Final candidates will complete a short work sample.
4. We will contact two references before making an offer.

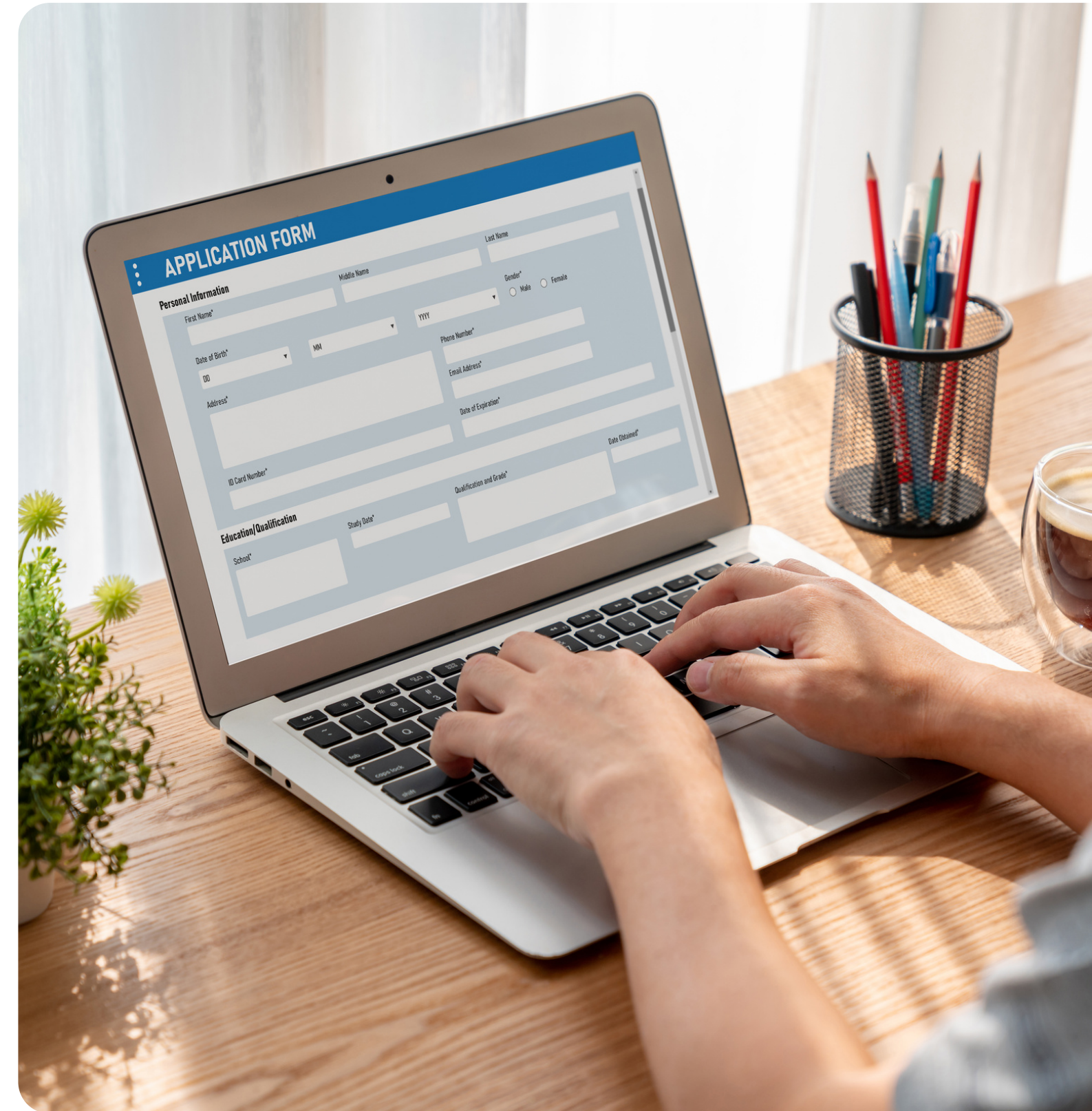
We provide accommodations during every stage of this process. Contact [name or position] to request support.

Applicant Tracking System (ATS) and Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Some employers use an applicant tracking system or artificial intelligence to help review applications.

If you use these tools, tell applicants early in the process. Explain how the tool will be used and what information it will consider.

Make sure that any screening or assessment tool is accessible and does not create barriers for qualified candidates.



Describe the Work Environment

Applicants need enough information to understand where and how they will work.

When relevant, describe features of the work environment that may affect accessibility. This helps candidates decide whether to apply and identify supports they may need.

Use clear, practical language. Describe the environment without assuming what a candidate can or cannot do.

What to include:

- Whether the work is remote, hybrid or on-site
- The office layout or workspace setup
- Noise levels, lighting and other environmental conditions
- Scent-free or chemical-sensitivity policies
- Accessible entrances, washrooms, parking or transit options
- Available equipment, assistive technology or workstation supports

Recognize Different Ways to Qualify

Candidates may have gained the knowledge and skills needed for a role in different ways. Focus on the experience, knowledge and results that the job requires. Do not require one specific path when other relevant experience could meet the same need.

When appropriate, invite applicants to provide:

- Relevant work, volunteer or lived experience
- Education, training or certifications
- A portfolio or work sample
- Examples of completed projects
- Other evidence that demonstrates the required skills

This can help employers identify qualified candidates who may not have followed a traditional career path.



Identify a Contact for the Posting

Applicants may have questions about the role before deciding whether to apply. Include the contact information for a person who can answer questions about the job posting, essential requirements and recruitment process.

The posting contact and accommodation contact can be the same person if they can provide both types of support.

Job Descriptions
Should Only
Include **Bona Fide**
Requirements



What Are Bona Fide Requirements?

A bona fide occupational requirement is a task or qualification that is essential to doing a job safely and effectively.

When you define a job, separate its requirements into two groups:

- **Essential requirements:** The person must be able to meet these requirements, with accommodation when needed.
- **Non-essential tasks:** These tasks may be flexible, changed or reassigned.

A disability does not automatically prevent someone from meeting an essential requirement. An accommodation may help a qualified candidate or employee do the work.

Bona Fide Requirements Example

For example, a job posting may require a valid driver's licence because the employee sometimes travels between work sites.

However, the essential requirement may be the ability to travel between locations—not the ability to drive. A qualified candidate may be able to meet this requirement by using public transit, a taxi, carpooling with co-workers, or another transportation option. A driver's licence should only be required when driving is truly an essential part of the job.



Do not include requirements that are not truly essential.

Unnecessary requirements can discourage **qualified people with disabilities** from applying.

Clearly defining the essential requirements of a job also helps you:

- Write fair and accurate job postings
- Plan accommodations
- Assess candidates and employees consistently
- Make fair decisions about hiring, promotion, discipline and termination

Reviewing The Job Description

When you are preparing a job posting, review these questions:

- Is the job description up to date?
- Does it accurately describe what the organization needs from the role?
- How often is each duty performed?
- How much time does each duty take?
- What would happen if the duty were changed, reassigned or removed?
- Based on these answers, which duties are essential?
- Has HR or the Hiring Manager confirmed that every listed requirement is accurate and necessary?





Unionized Environments

For unionized roles, union representatives can identify relevant collective-agreement or accommodation considerations when reviewing job descriptions. Their input can help ensure the job description accurately reflects the role and its essential duties.

Using Inclusive Language



Inclusive Language in a Job Advertisement

The way you describe a job affects who applies. Requirements that are unnecessary, overly specific or focused on one way of doing the work can screen out qualified people with disabilities.

Focus on the results the employee must achieve. Include only the skills, experience and qualifications that are truly needed for the job. When possible, recognize different ways a candidate may have gained the required knowledge or experience.

Write Requirements That Focus On The Job

Instead of	Consider
Valid driver's licence required	Must be able to travel between work locations
At least 10 years of medical administration experience	Experience managing patient appointments and records and communicating with healthcare partners
At least three years of experience as an insurance auditor	Experience auditing complex files across different industries
Bachelor's degree in economics	Knowledge of economics gained through education, training or relevant work experience

Writing in Plain Language

When you are writing a job advertisement, it is important to consider that your audience is external to your company. This means they won't understand your company jargon.

Say you've included a duty, "Run a daily safety meeting with the team." A lot of trade workers may call a morning meeting a "toolbox meeting", a meeting with the team to go through the expectations of the day and important reminders. But if your company calls it a "safety meeting", this may seem like a more technical meeting they may be expected to run, but perhaps it is the same as a toolbox meeting just with a stronger emphasis on safety as a part of your company culture.

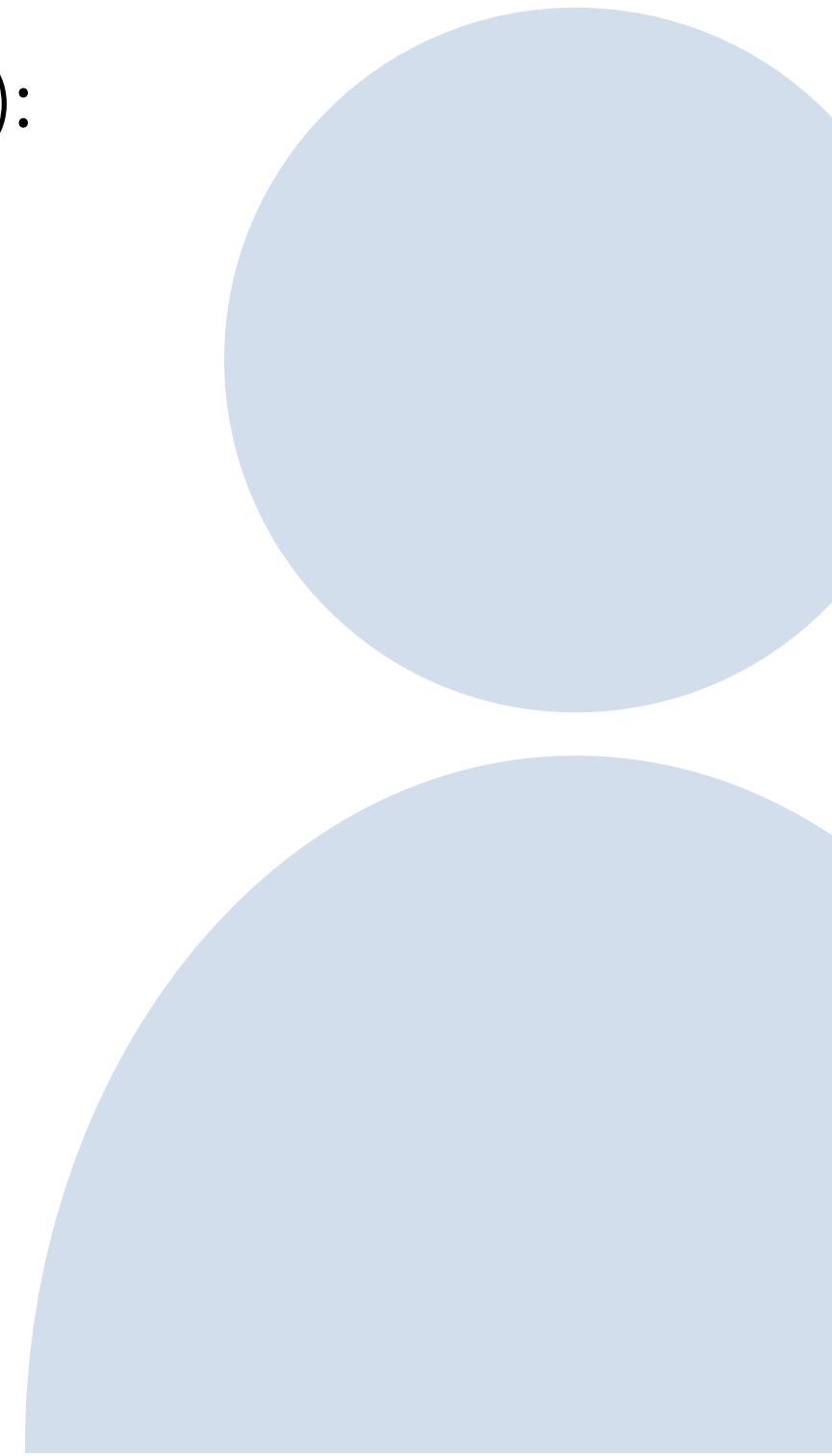


Identifying Your Audience

Before drafting, consider your audience (a key part of writing in plain language):

- Who is likely to apply
- What they need to know before deciding
- What knowledge you can reasonably expect them to have
- What could make the advertisement confusing or difficult to use

Do not write primarily for human resources, hiring managers, or lawyers. The main audience is the potential applicant.



Use Clear Statements To Explain Duties

Instead of	Consider
Drive strategic stakeholder engagement initiatives	Build relationships with employers, community partners, and service providers.
Provide administrative support across multiple functional areas.	Schedule meetings, prepare documents, and respond to staff questions.
Facilitate the implementation of organizational communications strategies.	Create and publish newsletters, website updates, and social media posts.
Leverage data-driven insights to optimize program outcomes.	Review program data and recommend ways to improve services.

Use an Inclusive and Respectful Tone

Avoid language that suggests a preferred age, personality, lifestyle, communication style or physical ability unless it describes a genuine job requirement.

Examples:

- Young and energetic
- Digital native
- Rock star or ninja
- Able-bodied
- Cultural fit
- Native English speaker
- High-energy personality
- Must thrive under pressure

Removing Unnecessary Information

Shorten lengthy company histories, generic cultural statements, repeated diversity language, and promotional descriptions that push the practical information further down the page. Ask yourself:



Does this help someone understand the job?



Does it help them decide whether to apply?



Does it help them complete the application?

Publishing



Before You Publish

Prior to going live with your job posting, take a few practical steps to make sure the posting is easy to find, read and respond to.

Check that:

- The posting includes all essential information in the main text, not only in an attachment
- Links have clear names, such as “Apply for this position” rather than the raw url (<https://example.com/...>)
- Any attached documents are available in an accessible format
- Images are not used to share essential job information
- Contact information is provided for requesting an alternative format

If you identify a barrier in the careers page, website or hiring platform, report it to the appropriate person.

Next Steps



Next Steps You Can Take



Job Descriptions and Advertisement Review

Allow our accessibility experts to review a collection of your standard job descriptions and postings to give you direct guidance on how to make them more accessible.



Complete AccessPath

Our self-directed assessment tool will help you identify other accessibility gaps in your organization. This will help you see other ways you can improve your recruitment process.

Have additional questions?

Ask our online community of accessibility leaders at www.untappedtalent.ca

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