



RESUME CENTER

Should You Disclose a Disability on Your Resume?

by [Kim Isaacs](#)

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The [2000 US Census](#) reports that nearly one in five Americans has some type of disability. However, most of these people aren't working -- according to the [New Freedom Initiative](#), the unemployment rate for adults with disabilities is around 70 percent.

These statistics suggest that people with disabilities may have to work harder to land a new position. The most important job search tool -- the resume -- has to be in top shape. Follow these experts' advice on how to address a disability on your resume.

Should You Mention a Disability?

"The first thing job seekers need to ask themselves is, 'Can I do the job?'" says [Jonathan Kaufman](#), Monster Disability Advisor and president of DisabilityWorks.com. "If the answer is yes and the disability doesn't affect job performance, then don't mention it."

Jeff Klare, CEO of [Hire DisAbility Solutions](#), which is jointly operated by Monster, has a similar view. "Never reveal a disability on a resume," he says, citing the possibility of discrimination or preconceived, inaccurate notions about disabilities as the primary reasons to avoid the topic.

Dr. Daniel J. Ryan, author of The [Job Search Handbook for People with Disabilities](#) and director of career planning at the University at Buffalo, State University of New York, concurs. "Employers use resumes to weed people out, so anything on the resume that would allude to a disability -- given the realities of the marketplace -- will probably work against you," he explains.

Top 3 Reasons to Avoid Disclosing a Disability

1. **Fewer Interview Invitations:** "Not securing an interview is one of the major potential pitfalls of revealing a disability on a resume," Klare says.
2. **A Reason to Eliminate You:** Your resume is a marketing document. "Show that you have the requirements the employer is seeking, and eliminate anything that might move you to the 'reject pile,' whether that's [typos](#), coffee stains on your document or having a disability," Ryan says.
3. **The Law Is on Your Side:** "Under the [Americans with Disabilities Act](#), you don't have to say anything," Kaufman points out.

Exceptions

"I would only reveal a disability on a resume if I knew that it would increase my chances of getting the job," says Ryan. "This is rarely true, except for when applying for programs designed specifically to recruit people with disabilities, or if the disability is related to the position (for example, a visually impaired counselor for those who are visually impaired)."

Disability-Related Employment Gaps

How should you handle [employment gaps](#) caused by medical-related absences? "If there's a big gap (two or more years), it helps to have a filler," suggests Klare.

But Klare advises against disclosing your disability on the resume or cover letter as the reason for the gap. "There are many ways to fill gaps," he says. Options include [volunteer work](#), continuing education or other activities you performed during your time away from the workforce.

Additional Resume Pitfalls to Avoid

Be careful about including achievements on your resume that could unintentionally reveal your disability. That doesn't mean you have to omit all references to organizations that are tied to your disability, but use common sense.

"Clearly, 'Gold Medal, 2006 Special Olympics,' implies you have a disability,"

says Ryan. "However, 'Treasurer, American Cancer Society Chapter' does not."

Interview Concerns

People with visible disabilities (e.g., noticeable impairments to speech, hearing, sight or mobility) might want to [disclose the disability](#) so there are no surprises at the interview. Ryan advises against this. "Get your foot in the door for interviews, and if the disability is visible, put their minds at ease early on in the process, assuring employers that you have the skills to do the job," he says.

Special Accommodations

"Each disability has a built-in [accommodation requirement](#), from none to many," says Klare. So you need to know the accommodations you will need for your disability and [pose proactive solutions](#) once there's mutual interest in your candidacy. "For example, a diabetic might need two 15-minute breaks for insulin and access to a refrigerator, but it's best to discuss this after you get the job," he adds.

Klare recommends knowing what equipment may be needed to accommodate your disability and where to source it. "Become a team player from the beginning," he says.

Kaufman points out that the average cost for [accommodations](#) is \$500 or less. "And many times it's nothing," he says, adding that employers can often leverage or adapt technology, resources and other tools already in place.

Klare's final advice: "Use the resume to open the door, and then let the person come out in the interview."

The purpose of this article is to both provide information and facilitate general dialogue about various employment-related topics. No legal advice is being given and no attorney-client relationship created. Please see the [disclaimer](#) for further limitations and conditions.

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