

Handling a “No” to an Adjustment

TL;DR · QUICK SUMMARY

- A refused adjustment request is frustrating, but rarely the end of the road.
- Ask for the specific reasoning behind a “no”; it often opens up alternatives.
- You have options: propose alternatives, escalate, or seek external advice.
- Keep a written record of requests and responses throughout.

A Note Before You Read On

This resource offers general guidance and reflects common experience, not professional, legal, medical or financial advice. It is not a substitute for employment law, HR policy, occupational health guidance, or individual professional assessment. Every person's experience of neurodivergence is different, so please adapt anything here to your own situation. The Uniquely Wired Network does not accept liability for decisions, actions or outcomes arising from the use of this material. If you need advice specific to your circumstances, please consult a qualified professional (e.g. HR, legal, medical, or financial advisor).

Why This Matters

A “no” can feel personal, but it often reflects budget, precedent concerns, or simple unfamiliarity, not necessarily a fixed final answer.

What This Might Look Like

- A manager saying an adjustment “isn't possible” without much explanation.
- Being offered a partial adjustment instead of what you asked for.
- Feeling unsure whether to push back or accept the decision.

First Steps

- Ask specifically why the request was declined: cost, precedent, practicality, or something else?
- Ask if a trial period or partial version could be considered instead.

- Request the decision and reasoning in writing, if it wasn't already.

If You Want to Push Further

- Propose a specific alternative that addresses the same underlying need.
- Involve HR or occupational health if your manager isn't the final decision-maker.
- Ask about your organisation's formal grievance or appeals process, if one exists.

External Support

- ACAS ([acas.org.uk](https://www.acas.org.uk)) offers free, confidential advice on reasonable adjustments and next steps.
- In some cases, a solicitor specialising in employment law can advise on your legal position.
- Trade unions, if you're a member, can also support and represent you in these discussions.

Helpful Phrases You Can Borrow

You don't have to use these exact words. Take what fits and leave the rest.

"I'd like to understand the specific reasons behind this decision, so I can think about alternatives."

"Would a short trial period be possible, so we can review whether it actually causes the concerns you've mentioned?"

"Given this hasn't been possible, could we explore [alternative] instead, which addresses the same issue?"

Quick Tips

- Ask "why" before assuming the door is fully closed.
- Keep all requests and responses in writing.
- A partial "yes" is often a useful starting point, not a final defeat.
- You don't have to handle this alone; HR, unions and ACAS can all help.

- Document how the lack of adjustment is affecting your work, calmly and factually.
- It's okay to take time to decide how far you want to push this.

Want to Know More?

- ACAS (acas.org.uk): free, impartial employment advice, including on reasonable adjustments.
- Citizens Advice can help you understand your wider rights and options.
- See our companion guide: “Turning Your Assessment Into Reasonable Adjustments” for how requests are usually framed.

Before You Go

A “no” is disappointing, but it doesn't mean you were wrong to ask.

You deserve a workplace that at least engages seriously with what you need. Keep advocating for that, at whatever pace feels sustainable for you.