



ADA Compliant Language for Job Descriptions

You should be mindful of the language you choose when writing job descriptions. There are no forbidden words but it is important that the language in your job descriptions is not prejudicial to a qualified individual with a disability. When writing your job descriptions, focus on the essential functions of the job, not the ways they are currently or customarily performed. For example, an employee does not necessarily have to walk in order to move about the office; an individual in a wheelchair can accomplish the task even if unable to walk.

Below are a few ways you can express physical demands/essential functions in an ADA compliant way. Also, if a physical demand is not essential in performing the job, you should omit it from your descriptions.

Physical Demand	ADA-Compliant Words	Job Description Language Example
Stand or Sit	Stationary position	Must be able to remain in a stationary position 50% of the time.
Walk	Move, Traverse	The person in this position needs to occasionally move about the inside of the office to access file cabinets, office machinery, etc.
Use hands/fingers to handle or Feel	Operate, Activate, Use, Prepare, Inspect, Place, Detect, Position	Constantly operates a computer and other office productivity machinery, such as a calculator, copy machine, and computer printer.
Climb (stairs/ladder) or Balance	Ascend/Descend, Work atop, Traverse	Occasionally ascends/descends a ladder to service the lights and ceiling fans.
Stoop, Kneel, Crouch, or Crawl	Position self (to), Move	Constantly positions self to maintain computers in the lab, including under the desks and in the server closet.
Talk/Hear	Communicate, Detect, Converse with, Discern, Convey, Express oneself, Exchange information	The person in this position frequently communicates with students who have inquiries about their tuition bill or financial aid package. Must be able to exchange accurate information in these situations.
See	Detect, Determine, Perceive, Identify, Recognize, Judge, Observe, Inspect, Estimate, Assess	Must be able to detect funnel clouds from long distances.
Taste/Smell	Detect, Distinguish, Determine	Occasionally must be able to distinguish sweet and bitter flavors when creating desserts for customers.
Carry weight/Lift	Move, Transport, Position, Put, Install, Remove	Frequently moves audio/visual equipment weighing up to 50 pounds across campus for various classroom events and needs.
Exposure to work	Exposed, Work around	Constantly works in outdoor weather conditions.

Source: HR Daily Advisor